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## **Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy**

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## Editorial

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As the editorial board of the ESJP, we aim to enrich the philosophical environment of our faculty and of the Erasmus University. We enable our authors to realize their first official academic publication during their time as a student, and we provide members of the editorial board with the opportunity to develop their own editing and writing skills. Besides aiming for all these things, we, the editorial board, must make sure to find people who are interested in reading our journal. The most critical among us sometimes describe being a philosopher as ‘dedicating your life to writing papers that no one will ever read’. And of course, without anybody listening, publishing becomes a self-serving process. As a student journal, we are facing this risk. You, the readers, might simply be too few.

Yet, the value of a journal does not solely lie in the impact it has on its readers. The authors who get to publish in the ESJP for example, receive a glimpse into what the publishing world looks like. To be published in the ESJP, papers must pass three review-rounds. First, the teacher who nominates the paper must be convinced, then the ESJP editors, and then another external reviewer. After all this hassle, for a paper, which already took at least a month of work to be written and to get nominated, the authors go through an editing process which takes another 2 months. Sentences are picked apart, arguments are questioned, the references and formatting get adjusted... Overall, it’s a lot of work. Considering this, it is truly impressive how patient, considerate, and enthusiastic the authors of this edition were. Erica Yu, Kas Molenaar, Erik Huijsman, and Chiara Stenico, our compliments and thanks go to you. It was a true pleasure to work with you. All of you have shown your great potential as philosophers!

Perhaps the most obvious value the ESJP creates is the exchange between the authors and editors. As editors, we experience our horizon widening. We become better at giving feedback, and at understanding someone else paper. We critically and attentively read articles on topics which are not part of the regular curriculum. The job of the editor is, to a large extent, the same as the one which Socrates supposedly ascribed to himself: to help the students who publish in our journal ‘give birth’ to their great ideas. In our case, this means that we help the authors to make their texts more intelligible and more accessible to the reader (who may be an advanced professor, or a student in their first year of studying). We help the authors be understood. For this edition, all our editors and especially our lead editors Lara Rose Eikamp, Kas Avedissian, Ties van Gemert, Ina Jantgen and Margot van Baarsen, have done an amazing job. And of course, our Secretary Maximilian Gasser, who put at least as much work into this edition, if not more, as I. To all of you, thank you.

Despite only being able to interact online, we managed to review, edit, and publish these four wonderful papers. We have moreover followed many projects in this past year: we hosted events, we worked on two bigger collaborations, one with students-for-students, the other one with the Master *Philosophy Now*, with whom we organized a research symposium, and a special edition of the ESJP. On top of that, the ESJP will soon launch its own website. Because the current edition marks the ESJP’s 10th anniversary, we also interviewed the founder of the ESJP and first editor-in-chief, Daan Gijsbertse. Our gratitude goes to him for taking the time to speak to us. During our conversation it became clear that one of the major reasons for why the ESJP could exist for so long is that it is a relatively simple idea which adds value to all parties involved. The ESJP is in that sense a big collaboration between many people who all work together to celebrate, cherish, and acknowledge the work of the students who get their papers published. We are truly grateful for everyone who worked with us; the teachers, professors, and PhD students who nominated the papers

and worked as reviewers, the Jury for the Pierre Bayle trophy, the authors, and the editors. This project will hopefully continue for many more years, and I encourage all of you to be part of it! By writing papers, by reviewing and nominating them, by editing them, and by reading them.

Sincerely,

Nathalie Maria Kirch  
*Editor-in-chief*

## About the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy

The Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy (ESJP) is a double-blind peer-reviewed student journal that publishes the best philosophical papers written by students from the Erasmus School of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam and from the Humanities Programme of the Erasmus University College. Its aims are to further enrich the philosophical environment in which Rotterdam's philosophy students develop their thinking and bring their best work to the attention of a wider intellectual audience. Aside from serving as an important academic platform for students to present their work, the journal has two other goals. First, to provide members of the editorial board with the opportunity to develop their own editing and writing skills. Second, to enable students to realize their first official academic publication during their time as a student at ESPhil or the Humanities Department of the EUC. A new issue of the ESJP appears on our website every January and June.

To ensure the highest possible quality, the ESJP only accepts papers that (a) have been written for a course that is part of the Erasmus University College or Erasmus School of Philosophy curriculum and (b) nominated for publication in the ESJP by the teacher of that course. Each paper that is published in the ESJP is subjected to a double-blind peer review process in which at least one other teacher and two student editors act as referees.

The ESJP encourages students to keep in mind the possibility of publishing their course papers in our journal, and to write papers that appeal to a wider intellectual audience.

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Although the editors of the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy have taken the utmost care in reviewing the papers in this issue, we cannot exclude the possibility that they contain inaccuracies or violate the proper use of academic referencing or copyright in general. The responsibility for these matters therefore remains with the authors of these papers and third parties that choose to make use of them entirely. In no event can the editorial board of the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy or the Faculty of Philosophy of the Erasmus University Rotterdam be held accountable for the contents of these papers.

## In this Issue

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The Tudors, the Borgia, the Kennedys, the Bushs. Dynasties, whether regal or political, are a concept most of us are vaguely familiar with as families who hold a lot of power. In her piece, Erica Yu takes a critical approach to them. Using the Philippines as an example, Yu points out how power centred in families contributes to systemic inequalities, which benefit members of the dynastic family and are to the detriment of the body of citizens under the political system that family is active in. Erica Yu does this by introducing two different notions of freedom, liberal and republican, and explaining the implications of arbitrary power and dominion. These concepts aid Yu in refuting three arguments for allowing political dynasties: Firstly, barring members of political dynastic families from political positions increases, not diminishes, freedom. Secondly, political dynastic families should never be permitted, despite possible positive outcomes, because this creates arbitrary power. Thirdly, mechanisms that diminish a political dynastic family's negative impact are insufficient. The conclusion is that a law banning members from such dynasties to be politically active is justified. Yu ends with a note on implications for policy implementation.

In the paper *Nietzsches rijm voor een Vrolijke Wetenschap*, Kas Molenaar explores a side of Friedrich Nietzsche's *De Vrolijke Wetenschap* that is not discussed very often; namely, Nietzsche's talents as a poet, and the significance of his use of rhymes for understanding his philosophy. Nietzsche, one of the most influential philosophers of our time, appears in a new light. At one time we get to know him as *De Huisvriend*, a term which was first introduced by Martin Heidegger and Johann Peter Hebel. Another time, the nursery rhyme-like character of Nietzsche's rhyme turns him into a *gebedsvader*. These two different ways of reading Nietzsche's rhymes serve different functions. *De Huisvriend* teaches us something new, the *gebedsvader* helps us to internalize what we have learned. Molenaar finishes his work by exploring four themes presented in Nietzsche's work *De Vrolijke Wetenschap* and by giving the reader the space to interpret the rhymes in terms of the two earlier introduced concepts. Overall, it is an amazingly creative take on a philosophical classic with a poetic writing style to fit the theme. The paper is valuable for both first-time readers of Nietzsche, as well as those who are already familiar with him, in order to learn yet something new about this philosophical giant.

Experimenting with name meaning opens by recounting how philosophy over the last hundred years has lost significant parts of its field of inquiry to scientific enterprises. According to Erik Huijsman, there is one branch of philosophy that seems to have escaped the encroachment of science: semantics. Nevertheless, even the questions and problems of this branch are - more and more - being addressed by means of empirical methodology. It is experimental philosophy and especially the work of Machery, Mallon, Nichols, and Stich (MMNS) that have launched and furthered this endeavor. In the paper, Huijsman aims to analyze and determine the value of experimental philosophy by examining the ramifications of MMNS' experiments for semantics and, in particular, Kripke's descriptivism. He does so by considering the critical concerns of Deutsch and Devitt about the inferences that MMNS draw from their results. According to Huijsman, the arguments that Deutsch and Devitt give to support their critique are fundamentally misguided. He argues that the results concerning folk intuitions of MMNS' experiments are crucial in assessing semantic theories since semantic phenomena are ontologically subjective. If semanticists espouse theories that are inconsistent with or cannot explain the folk intuitions determined by MMNS, then these theories - which include the

causal-historical view and weak descriptivism of reference - are to be considered defective.

Some decisions in life are hard to make. Which career to pursue, what to study, whether to have children. Depending on the path you choose the way you see the world and what you value in it might change fundamentally. According to L.A. Paul, these kinds of 'transformative decisions' challenge rational choice theory, a framework aiming to guide your decision-making. One side of this challenge is an epistemic one. Before experiencing it, you cannot know what it would be like being a parent, working in the banking sector or studying philosophy. Such profound uncertainty about the consequences of your choice precludes rational choice theory from providing valuable decision guidance, argues Paul. And still, you must choose which path to pursue. In her essay "One day I shall be Queen?" Thinking about Rational Choices in the face of Epistemic Transformations", Chiara Stenico engages with Jennifer Carr's reply to this epistemic challenge. Using so-called conceptual resources, Carr models the epistemic transformation you undergo when making transformative choices. Conceptual resources, a form of cognitive abilities, allow you to form beliefs about different aspects of the world. Faced with a transformative choice, you lack conceptual resources available to you after you chose. Modelling this conceptual change, so Carr, solves the epistemic challenge such decisions pose for rational choice theory. Stenico disagrees. She argues that Carr's conceptual resources are not apt for this task. Instead, she proposes a qualified version of conceptual resources, allowing you to form more beliefs about more consequences of your transformative choice. Thereby, qualified conceptual resources, so Stenico argues, help to overcome the epistemic challenge. And while choosing between different careers, what to study or whether to have children might be difficult decisions to make, choosing to dive into Chiara Stenico's argument is certainly one the reader will not regret.

## Jury report Pierre Bayle Trophy 2021

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A date had been set. The meeting that would determine the winner of the 2021 Pierre Bayle Trophy was to be held on May 13. Aware of ESJP's track-record of publishing outstanding papers, the jury members knew they were in for a tough decision. Preparations were made. The eight contending papers were carefully scrutinized by the jury members and short-lists were drawn up. Eleven o'clock on the day and Zoom was booted up. Initial discussion revealed that three papers stood out as exceptional in the minds of the jury.

Joost De Raeymaecker's "The Politesse of Scepticism" is a masterfully crafted piece of philosophical writing. Taking as a point of departure the crippling effects of scepticism on urgently needed action on climate change, De Raeymaecker seeks to amend the destructive politics of scepticism. Philosophy can no longer only raise fingers but must tell us 'how to act when we don't know what to do'. In a stroke of creative genius, De Raeymaecker introduces and consults three sceptic figures in the quest for a politesse of scepticism: the welcoming servant, an examining apostle, and a betraying diplomat. As the reader gets acquainted with these characters and the *modi operandi* they embody, the reader is treated to a smorgasbord of canonical works in the history of ideas, ranging from texts by Sextus Empiricus, to Pierre Bayle, to Friedrich Nietzsche, to Michel Serres, to Isabelle Stenger, and beyond. The breadth and sophisticated incorporation of the literature in the paper had the jury swooning—clearly, "The Politesse of Scepticism" is a top contender for the trophy.

Matheus Paim expertly navigates complex issues surrounding the relation between self and time in "Split Mind in a Split Time". The Disturbance of Internal Time Consciousness in Schizophrenia. Paim starts off the paper by astutely delineating and explaining the central elements of Edmund Husserl's account of time consciousness. Our experience of time is based on our ability to retain fleeting impressions of enduring objects and project them into the future. Without this continuity in our consciousness, we lose track not only of time, but ourselves. Armed with this insight, Paim proceeds to explain how Husserl's account helps us better grasp the terrors of schizophrenia. Schizophrenic patients experience a fragmentation of the self, which disrupts the machinery needed to comprehend time. By disturbing the person's self-awareness, the condition detaches the person from both her identity and from properly experiencing time. This analysis helps us better understand many central symptoms of schizophrenia. The jury was thoroughly impressed by the clarity of the paper's exposition of an intricate issue and the careful and considered analysis that followed. Undoubtedly another contender for the best philosophical paper.

Does informed consent protect patients' autonomy? Ahmed AlJuhany challenges common wisdom by answering in the negative in his paper "Why Tell Them How: Rethinking Autonomy and Informed Consent in Healthcare". The target of AlJuhany's critique is Tom Beauchamp's claim that informed consent ensures autonomous action by satisfying the conditions of his 'concise theory' of autonomy—informed consent safeguards people's ability to act (i) intentionally, (ii) with adequate understanding, and (iii) in the absence of controlling influences. By carefully dissecting the conditions of Beauchamp's account, AlJuhany observes that they do not hold up to scrutiny. Providing a patient with an adequate understanding of the procedure in question may in fact defy her will, thereby infringing on her autonomy. The remaining conditions of 'intentionally' and 'absence of controlling influences' are not sufficient to ensure the protection of the patient's autonomy. AlJuhany concludes that informed consent must be justified on other grounds than

autonomy. The paper is impeccably structured, admirably accessible, sharp and to the point, and impactful in its argument on an important topic. In short, an analytical triumph and obvious contender for the Pierre Bayle Trophy.

Three exceptional papers—all worthy of winning the trophy. Yet there can only be one victor. The jury assiduously deliberated the novelty, creativity, argumentation, rigour, and pertinence of the contending papers. In the end the jury was unanimous in its decision. One paper stood out for its precision, clarity, and display of argumentative prowess. That paper is none other than.... Ahmed AlJuhany's "Why Tell Them How: Rethinking Autonomy and Informed Consent in Healthcare"! The jury congratulates Ahmed AlJuhany on winning the 2021 Pierre Bayle Trophy and commend him for his elegantly crafted and thought-provoking piece on informed consent and patient autonomy. Well done!

M. H. D. Abrahamson, W. van Bunge, M. Wehrle  
Jury of the Pierre Bayle Trophy 2021

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## Controlling political dynasties in the Philippines: A breach or a promotion of freedom?

Erica Yu

Maguindanao is a province in the South of the Philippines notorious for the politically motivated massacre of fifty-eight people in broad daylight (Jorgio and Griffiths 2019). On November 23, 2009, the Ampatuan political family carried out this brutal attack to stop a political opponent from challenging a member of the family for the top office in the province. It took ten years of lengthy trials for the two most prominent members of the family to be convicted for their role in the massacre. However, this did not stop thirty members of the Ampatuan clan from being newly elected for positions all over Maguindanao in the same year (Commission on Elections 2019).

The example above illustrates how a political dynasty is able to self-perpetuate in politics despite their demonstrated abuses of power. Political dynasties are defined as families wherein several members hold elected office simultaneously.<sup>1</sup> The Ampatuan family, for example, is a political dynasty as thirty members currently hold elected positions in Maguindanao.

Political dynasties are present in many democracies,<sup>2</sup> but the concentration of dynastic politicians in the Philippines is especially remarkable in both the national and local levels: The percentage of dynastic politicians in the national legislature is 66.67%, in the provincial level 80.25%, and in the city level 53.38% (Mendoza, Jaminola, and Yap 2019, 3).<sup>3</sup> This is all despite the following directive being clearly stated in the Philippine Constitution: “The State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service, and prohibit dynasties as may be defined by law” (Article II Section 26).

Legislators have been attempting to pass a law that would fulfill this directive and ban dynasties, but so far to no avail. The arguments brought against such a law run as follows:<sup>4</sup>

**Premise 1:** Prohibiting individuals from running for elected office goes against their freedom of access to opportunities for public service.

**Premise 2:** Political dynasties are not necessarily bad for society; some dynasties have even done well for the people under their rule.

**Premise 3:** There are already mechanisms in place to hold bad dynasties accountable, such as anti-corruption laws and periodic elections.

**Conclusion:** An anti-political dynasty law is unjustifiable.

In this paper, I argue for the passage of an anti-political dynasty law in the Philippines. First, I disprove the above argument against the law. I then show how prohibiting political dynasties promotes equality of access to opportunities for public service.

1 This definition of a political dynasty—a family wherein members occupy elected positions *simultaneously*—corresponds to what Mendoza, Jaminola, and Yap (2019) call a ‘fat’ dynasty’. ‘Thin’ dynasties’, on the other hand, are families wherein members occupy the same elected position *sequentially*. In this paper, I only consider the case of fat dynasties.

2 See, for example, Hess (2015) and Hess (2017) about political dynasties in the United States, and Van Coppenolle (2017) on political dynasties in the United Kingdom.

3 This number has grown 1% per election period since 1988 (Mendoza, Jaminola, and Yap 2019, 6).

4 See, for example, Gregorio (2018) and Mercado (2020).

I disprove the argument against the anti-political dynasty law by showing that it makes use of a limited notion of freedom, namely as freedom from interference (liberal freedom). In doing so, the argument neglects to acknowledge the structural relationship of domination between political dynasties and the people under their rule. The republican notion of freedom is able to take these forms of structural domination into account by conceiving of freedom as freedom from subjection to arbitrary power. Political dynasties hold arbitrary power over the people under their rule as there are no sufficient mechanisms in place to control their behavior and punish them when they misbehave. Thus, prohibiting individuals from the same family from holding elected office simultaneously is justified because political dynasties subject people under their rule to arbitrary power, thereby making them unfree.

I then argue that even in an idealized situation with full accountability of politicians to the people under their rule, an anti-political dynasty law would still be justified because of its positive effects on the equality of access to opportunities for public service. Dynastic politicians are able to accumulate political, economic, and social capital that puts them at a stark advantage compared to non-dynastic politicians. Thus, to level the playing field, political dynasties should not be allowed to exist.

The arguments and examples in this paper focus specifically on the case of the Philippines. As detailed earlier, the concentration and prominence of political dynasties in the Philippines is remarkable, compared to other democracies in the world. The research on political dynasties in the Philippines is also well-established, in contrast with the preliminary research on political dynasties in other countries (Purdey 2016). Moreover, the drafting of an anti-political dynasty law is currently at the forefront of Philippine politics, making the case of political dynasties in the Philippines timely and relevant.

This does not mean that the arguments presented here can only apply to the Philippine context. The arguments may also apply to other countries to the extent that they share certain similar political and social characteristics with the Philippines. I discuss these issues further after presenting my argument for an anti-political dynasty law.

### **1. Dynastic rule as domination**

In this section, I argue against the first two premises of the argument against the anti-political dynasty law. Premise 1 states that prohibiting individuals from running for elected office would be an undue *interference* in their choices and activities. Premise 2 appeals to the existence of ‘benevolent dynasties’ who do *not interfere* with the choices and activities of their people under their rule. Both of these premises refer to the liberal conception of freedom, understood as a ‘freedom from’ interferences in one’s choices and activities (Berlin [1969] 2002).

This understanding of freedom has strong limitations. Take for example the case of a benevolent dictator. As a dictator, she has complete control over the lives of her subjects. She could, for instance, unilaterally decide to have those who are critical of her regime hanged. But as she happens to be a benevolent dictator, she does not impose any such harsh punishments on her critics. Under the liberal conception of freedom, the subjects of the benevolent dictator are “free” to criticize her—she does not interfere with their doing so. However, this conception does not capture the intuition that the subjects of the benevolent dictator are dependent upon the good will of their ruler to be able to criticize her, and are thus, in some sense, unfree to do so (Skinner 2002).

This is where the republican conception of freedom comes in.<sup>5</sup> Republicans argue that for an individual to be free, it is not enough to be free from actual interference. She should also be free from structural relationships of domination where another party has the capacity to interfere on an arbitrary basis in her choices and activities (Pettit 1997). Otherwise, she will still act in deference to the will of the dominating party. Take the benevolent dictator and her subjects. Even if the dictator does not punish those who criticize her, the fact that she has the capacity to deal out this punishment arbitrarily may mean that her subjects will avoid criticizing her.

In the same way, ‘benevolent dynasties’ that do not interfere with the choices and activities of the people under their rule still subject them to arbitrary power and domination. Political dynasties where members hold several elected positions simultaneously are able to disburse public funds to promote the interests of the family and its allies, often at the expense and to the detriment of the people under their rule. Take, for example, a dynasty wherein members hold seats in both the House of Representatives and the city government under the same jurisdiction. The House Representative secures funds from the national government, which she can then decide on disbursing either to the mayor who is a family member to fund a vanity project, or to another non-related mayor who would invest the funds in much-needed health infrastructure in her city. A ‘malicious dynasty’ would withhold funds from the second mayor, interfering in the lives of the people under its rule. They would be kept from accessing health services that are vital to their well-being.<sup>6</sup> A ‘benevolent dynasty’ would disburse the funds to the second mayor, even if it had the power to divert it to the family member.

The opponents of the anti-political dynasty law argue that such ‘benevolent dynasties’ exist. Unlike ‘malicious dynasties’ who would divert public funds away from where they are needed for private gain, ‘benevolent dynasties’ would always disburse these funds for their best use. Politicians who belong to ‘benevolent dynasties’, they argue, should not be hindered from running for elected office. However, such an argument fails to acknowledge that like the benevolent dictator and her subjects, even ‘benevolent dynasties’ and the people under their rule are in a structural relationship of domination. The people under the rule of political dynasties are dependent on the good will of dynastic politicians to disburse funds where they are most needed, and not just on where the interests of the family are best promoted.<sup>7</sup>

To illustrate this, take the following example: Mayoral elections are being held in a city where the House Representative is part of the Cruz family. There are two candidates for mayor, one of whom is also part of the Cruz family (let’s name him Tom). Both Tom Cruz and his opponent Jerry promise to build much-needed health facilities in the city. Additionally, Jerry wants to pay the city’s public school teachers better. Everyone knows that Tom would rather use that money for a more visible and less useful project, such as a new bridge that would be named after his family. However, if Jerry wins, the House Representative from the Cruz family faces a conflict of interest: she has an incentive to withhold the funds from Jerry in order to make him look incompetent and lessen his chances of re-election. If these funds are withheld from Jerry, then he would not be able to build the much-needed health facilities in the city. Knowing this, the safer choice for voters to ensure that funds will be able to reach them would be to elect Tom. Thus, even if the Cruz family does not actively interfere in the lives of the people under their rule (and even if they have no plans of doing so), the voters may still tend to act with deference to the family’s will by voting in Tom even if they prefer Jerry.

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I assume that the republican criticism of the liberal conception of freedom is correct. That is, that the liberal conception of freedom as ‘freedom from interference’ fails to account for cases such as the one of the benevolent dictator. This has been challenged by, among others, Carter (1999, 2008) and Kramer (2003, 2008), but I do not engage in the liberal vs. republican freedom debate in this paper as it is not necessary for the argument that I am making.

<sup>6</sup> There is evidence of such power being used by political dynasties in the Philippines. Tusalem and Pe-Aguirre (2013) found that provinces governed by political dynasties tended to have lower public goods provision in terms of infrastructure and health despite acquiring a higher internal revenue allotment (IRA) from the national government. Moreover, Ravanilla (2015) showed that public funds heavily tended to be disbursed by members of Congress to family members and allies over other local politicians.

<sup>7</sup> Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive. In fact, many times what is best for the people under their rule may also be what is best for the interests of the family and its allies.

At this point an important question arises. To what extent is this relationship of dominance unique to political dynasties defined in familial terms? Put differently, can non-dynastic politicians subject people under their rule to the same arbitrary power with other non-familial alliances? Indeed, other non-familial alliances such as political parties, religious groups, and even informal clubs such as fraternities can subject people under their rule to the same kind of arbitrary power that political dynasties do. The example of Tom Cruz could be modified to make him and the House Representative members of the same political party instead of the same family, for instance.

While this may be true, it is important to first focus on political dynasties defined in familial terms for the following reason: Families are generally much smaller groups with much stronger and more persistent ties than other non-familial alliances. This means that the arbitrary power they accumulate is much more concentrated among fewer individuals. As Querubin (2016, 178) argues, “a political system organized around dynasties creates tighter entry barriers into the political system and creates the potential for capture by an even narrower set of interests” compared to a system organized around parties. Moreover, families do not play any important role in the political system unlike parties, who are tasked with ‘organizing politics’ (Stokes 1999). Thus, in dismantling structural relationships of domination in politics, the logical first target is the political dynasty.

## 2. Dynastic rule as arbitrary power

In the previous section, I argued that individuals can justifiably be prohibited from holding elected office simultaneously with another family member. These individuals hold arbitrary power that makes the people under their rule unfree. In this section, I discuss what exactly makes the power of political dynasties arbitrary. In so doing, I argue against the premise that there are sufficient mechanisms in place to hold ‘malicious dynasties’ accountable—dispensing with the need for an anti-political dynasty law.

What exactly makes the power of political dynasties arbitrary? Pettit (1997) defines power as arbitrary when there is a lack of control of the conditions under which it materializes. Lovett (2010, 111) provides a similar definition, where power is arbitrary when “there are gaps in the network of effective social conventions [...] governing the possible exercise of social power.” In the case of the benevolent dictator, what makes her power arbitrary is the fact that no person or process could prevent her from interfering with her subjects’ lives, or hold her accountable if she decides to do so.

This points to two kinds of controls or constraints that would serve to reduce the arbitrariness of an agent’s power. The first class involves *filters*: these are preconditions of action in place which make interference in subjects’ lives more difficult. These could be, for example, procedures that would only allow certain actions to be done after a process of assessment and deliberation that concludes that the agent’s actions are permissible. The second class of constraints involves *penalties*. Examples of these would be mechanisms that remove the agent from her position of power if she were found guilty of such wrongdoing.

Opponents of the anti-political dynasty law could argue that such controls do already exist. Take the case of disbursements of public funds. One filter to ensure that dynastic politicians disburse funds to the appropriate place is that the proposed allocation of the national budget has to be deliberated on by citizens, government agencies, and local, regional, and national government before being enacted. This would mean that dynastic politicians cannot simply claim parts of the national budget without undergoing some checks. After disbursement, agencies and local government units are then required to submit accountability reports to determine whether the funds were used properly and for their most efficient purpose (Department of Budget and Management 2016). This would mean that dynastic politicians cannot simply use their share of the budget for questionable purposes as they please.

There are also punishments that can be given should dynastic politicians choose to exercise the arbitrary power they have over citizens by misallocating the funds they are given: If found guilty under the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act (1960), these politicians can be permanently disqualified from running for office, in addition to the fines and possible jail time that they face. Moreover, elections are a way where voters can keep them in check. If they suspect or discover that the politician has misused or misallocated public funds (whether or not it is against the law), they can simply vote her out of office during the next election.

Thus, opponents of the anti-political dynasty law argue that the legal and electoral systems in place are sufficient to ensure that the power that political dynasties have over the people under their rule is controlled, and not arbitrary. Contrary to this claim, I argue that the filters and punishments currently in place are not sufficiently able to control the exercise of power of political dynasties over the people under their rule. Even in the presence of these filters and punishments, political dynasties are still able to exercise their power to disburse public funds to promote their families' interests over those of the people under their rule in a manner that is legal. For example, strictly speaking, it is legal for a House Representative to disburse funds to a mayor who is a family member over another mayor, knowing that the money will go to a vanity project that will benefit the family politically instead of towards building much-needed health facilities. Despite being legal, however, this would still entail interference in the lives of the people under their rule: those who would have a claim to and are in need of public services are not being given access to them.

But elections can also ensure that the bad behavior of 'malicious dynasties' is controlled by removing them from their positions of power, opponents of anti-political dynasty law would argue. Empirically, this claim does not hold either. Despite political dynasties being strongly associated with higher poverty and worse governance, they are also more likely to be elected and re-elected at higher rates over time (Mendoza, et al. 2012; Tusalem and Pe-Aguirre 2013, Mendoza et al. 2016). The reason behind this lies precisely in the relation of domination between political dynasties and the people under their rule. To illustrate this, recall the example of Tom Cruz and his opponent Jerry running for a mayoral seat, where another member of the Cruz family is the House Representative for that jurisdiction. Voters know that they are more likely to get more funds from the national budget if they vote for Tom rather than Jerry. Moreover, observe that the bigger the dynasty gets, the greater the incentive to vote in the dynastic politician as there is an even bigger chance that the funds will make their way to them. This would happen, for instance, if another Cruz family member ran for a local council position in the same jurisdiction. People in the jurisdiction have an incentive to vote in all three Cruz family members to ensure that the funds will make it all the way from the national government to their local council.

The opponent of the anti-political dynasty law could then respond, "Could these filters and punishments not be strengthened in order to account for any possible abuse of power that political dynasties might exercise?" While definitely worth pursuing, these institutions and mechanisms to control and hold accountable 'malicious dynasties' would not be enough to disprove the structural relationship of domination between

political dynasties and the people under their rule. Dynastic politicians will always be confronted with a conflict of interest when faced with a choice between maximizing benefit for the family and maximizing benefit for the people under their rule. Moreover, even with these institutions and mechanisms in place, political dynasties undermine political competition and the equality of access to public service. I develop this argument in the next section.

### 3. Towards equality of access to public service

In an ideal situation where political dynasties' power is no longer arbitrary, would prohibiting political dynasties still be justified? In this section, I argue that it is. Prohibiting political dynasties from existing promotes equality of access to public service by promoting political competition and providing opportunities for public office to those without access to the same political, economic, and social capital that dynastic politicians do.

The presence of a political dynasty in a jurisdiction is strongly associated with low levels of political competition (Querubin 2016). Dynastic politicians tend to win elections by larger margins than non-dynastic politicians (Mendoza et al. 2012). This is true even when political dynasties are strongly associated with higher poverty and worse governance (Mendoza, Beja, Venida, and Yap 2012; Tusalem and Pe-Aguirre 2013; Mendoza et al. 2016). One reason for this, as discussed in the previous section, is by virtue of the structural relationship of domination that the example of Tom Cruz and Jerry illustrates. Another reason which exists even in ideal conditions where dynasties' power is controlled is that political dynasties are able to accumulate much higher levels of political, economic, and social capital than their non-dynastic counterparts.

In a clientelistic democracy such as the Philippines, political capital, measured through the electoral advantage enjoyed by a candidate, is passed on to relatives through access to office and public resources (Querubin 2016). "Incumbent congressmen and governors are roughly five times more likely to have a relative serve in these offices in the future, relative to similar candidates who run but do not serve" (178). This effect is even more pronounced for relatives of sitting incumbents, whose electoral advantage is twice as large as that of candidates whose relative in office has already retired (178). The clientelistic networks that an incumbent politician is able to build are bequeathed to her relatives in order to expand the political dominance of the family (176).

Public office can also be used by incumbents to further political dynasties' economic interests. Dynastic politicians possess higher net worth than non-dynastic politicians (Mendoza et al. 2012). Cullinane (1994, 187) draws attention to how "all the assets of [a political dynasty in Cebu]—revenues, land, agricultural commodities, industries, power, and influence—were derived from success at the polls." An incumbent politician's relatives are also more likely to be employed in the public sector, while relatives of non-successful politicians are less likely to be employed in the public sector (Fafchamps and Labonne 2017). This shows how public office is not only used to strengthen the family's power, but also to weaken that of potential challengers.

Political dynasties are also able to accumulate social capital by passing on voters' allegiances to other family members. Social capital is defined as an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals (Fukuyama 1999). In the case of political dynasties and the people under their rule, the informal norm would be 'vote for our family member, and we will ensure that public funds will be able to reach you.' The weak political party system in the Philippines exacerbates this as voters rely on personalism and name recognition instead of past performances or future platforms when deciding to whom to give their

votes (Hutchcroft and Rocamora 2003). To reiterate a point made earlier, even if other non-familial alliances such as political, religious, or social affiliations are also able to accumulate such social capital, the stronger and more persistent familial ties enable political dynasties to concentrate this social capital among fewer individuals. The effect of political dynasties on inequality of access to public service is thus much larger than other non-familial alliances.

The ability of political dynasties to accumulate large amounts of political, economic, and social capital exists regardless of the presence of sufficient filters and punishments to ensure that they do not interfere with the choices and actions of the people under their rule. Thus, even in an ideal world where dynasties' power is controlled and not arbitrary, this leads to a highly uncompetitive political environment where dynastic candidates are always at an advantage compared to their non-dynastic counterparts. An anti-political dynasty law would make the accumulation and concentration of political, economic, and social capital much more difficult to achieve. This would lead to more equal opportunities for individuals seeking public office, as the playing field would be more level and the barriers to entry much lower.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have provided both an argument against opponents of an anti-political dynasty law, and an argument for why such a law is good even under ideal conditions of perfect control over and accountability for abuses of power. I first showed that the arguments brought against the anti-political dynasty law confine their understanding of freedom as liberal 'freedom from interference'. In doing so, they fail to acknowledge the structural relationship of domination between political dynasties and the people under their rule. What about ideal conditions where political dynasties' power is able to be controlled? I argue that even in such a case, an anti-political dynasty law would still be justified for its positive effect on equality of access to opportunities for public service.

To conclude, I respond to two possible challenges to my argument. First, in how far can these arguments apply to countries other than the Philippines? The generality of the arguments presented in this paper rest on (i) the dynasty having the same power to disburse funds at their discretion, (ii) this power being insufficiently controlled and checked by mechanisms and institutions, and (iii) the accumulation and concentration of political, economic, and social capital in these dynasties and alliances. Indonesia, for example, would be an interesting case study. The House of Representatives passed a Regional Elections Law which prohibited family members of incumbents in national office from running for a regional position (Aspinall and As'ad 2016, 421). However, this was overturned by the Constitutional Court which argued that this ran against equal opportunity for public office (421).

Second, there is then the question of the feasibility of passing an anti-political dynasty law, given that more than two-thirds of the lower house and most of the upper house of the legislature in the Philippines are part of political dynasties. A promising alternative lies in a people's initiative, where citizens can directly propose and enact laws after a petition is signed by at least 10% of the total number of registered voters, where each legislative district should be represented by at least 3% of its registered voters (1987 Constitution, Article VI Section 32). This, of course, has its own difficulties of organization and coordination, but it is better than relying on dynastic politicians to control their own power.

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# Nietzsches Rijm voor een Vrolijke Wetenschap

Kas Molenaar

***Einladung.***<sup>8</sup>

*Wagt's mit meiner Kost, ihr Esser!  
Morgen schmeckt sie euch schon besser  
Und schon übermorgen gut! [...]*

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (Reclam, 2012), 15, rijm 1. Rijmen worden voorzien van de vertaling afkomstig uit de boven genoemde Nederlandse vertaling.

***Uitnodiging*** *Probeer het maar met mijn menu, jij eter! / Morgen smaakt het je al beter / En overmorgen al heel goed! [...]*

## 1. Inleiding

De filosofie is niet de afspiegeling van een voorafgaande waarheid, maar evenals de kunst de verwerkelijking van een waarheid.<sup>9</sup>

In *De vrolijke wetenschap* vagebondeert Friedrich Nietzsche vanuit ziekte naar een vrijere attitude waarin er geen ruimte meer is voor absolute, opgelegde waarheden, maar juist ruimte om te experimenteren,<sup>10</sup> het ‘versieren’ van het eigen leven,<sup>11</sup> en het volmondig affirmeren van het lot.<sup>12</sup> In 383 aforismen, verdeeld over vijf boeken en voorzien van een vierdelig voorwoord, toont Nietzsche de lezer zijn gedachtestroom van het eb en vloed,<sup>13</sup> tot het afschudden van de laatste zorg, en met volle borst zingen op de berg.<sup>14</sup> Naast deze veelvuldig bestudeerde aforismen, trakteert Nietzsche ons op een Voorspel in Duitse rijmen, waar hij in 63 korte rijmen grote gedeelten van *De vrolijke wetenschap* reeds uiteenzet. Opvallend is dat deze rijmen weinig aan bod komen en in weinig literatuur worden vermeld. In deze verhandeling wil ik nader ingaan op deze rijmen en proberen te tonen op welke wijze deze in te zetten zijn voor het begrip van Nietzsches beweging en gedachtegoed. Sommige mensen behoeven geen filosoof, maar een poëet – Nietzsche vervult in *De vrolijke wetenschap* beide rollen; de filosoof vindt men in de aforismen, de poëet vindt men in de rijmen.

Echter, voordat ik *De vrolijke wetenschap* zelf in kan duiken, lijkt het mij vruchtbaar om enkele woorden te wijden aan de wijze waarmee filosofie tot uitdrukking kan komen in rijm, of in poëzie. Hiervoor zal ik eerst een conceptuele verantwoording geven aan de hand van Martin Heidegger: Nietzsche als huisvriend. Vervolgens zal ik de focus op Nietzsches rijmen verantwoorden met Nietzsche zelf, aan de hand van Kathleen Higgins’ *Nietzsche’s Nursery Rhymes*, en Nietzsche introduceren als gebedsvader. Tot slot, zal ik bepaalde hoofdgedachten uit *De vrolijke wetenschap* schetsen aan de hand van de rijmen die deze boeken begeleiden. Hiermee hoop ik de lezer de kracht van Nietzsches rijmen te kunnen tonen. De *Liederen van Prins Vogelvrij*, die Nietzsche als aanhangsel aan het slot van dit boek heeft toegevoegd, laat ik in deze verhandeling buiten beschouwing.<sup>15</sup>

### *Dichter-Eitelkeit.*<sup>16</sup>

*Gebt mir Leim nur: denn zum Leime*

*Find’ ich selber mir schon Holz!*

*Sinn in vier unsinn’ge Reime*

*Legen – ist kein kleiner Stolz!*

9 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Fenomenologie van de waarneming*, vert. Douwe Tiemersma en Rens Vlasbom (Amsterdam: Boom, 2017), 49.

10 Friedrich Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, red. Hans Driessen, vert. Pé Hawinkels (De Arbeiderspers, 1999), 74, aforisme 51.

11 Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 53, aforisme 17.

12 Ibid., 163, aforisme 276.

13 Ibid., 37-40, aforisme 1.

14 Ibid., 256, aforisme 383.

15 De geïnteresseerde lezer kan Nietzsche over deze liederen vinden in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, vert. Pé Hawinkels (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1978), 92-93.

16 Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 28, rijm 56. *Dichtersijdelheid* Geeft mij de lijm: want om te lijmen / Sleep ik zelf het hout wel aan! / Zin te geven aan zinloze rijmen / Dat is pas iets om prat op te gaan!

## 2. Nietzsche als huisvriend

De huisvriend wil beleren noch opvoeden. Hij laat de lezer gewaarworden.<sup>17</sup>

Een van de wijzen waarop wij Nietzsches rijmen tot ons kunnen laten komen, is door ze als een product van een *huisvriend* te beschouwen. Om goed uit te kunnen leggen wat een huisvriend is, moet ik een blik werpen op Martin Heideggers *Hebel, de huisvriend*. Hierin schrijft Heidegger over de door hem zeer gewaardeerde dichter Johann Peter Hebel. Na een beknopte biografie stelt hij de vraag “wie is Johann Peter Hebel?”<sup>18</sup> Het antwoord luidt: “Johann Peter Hebel is de *huisvriend*.”

De term huisvriend werd door Hebel zelf gekozen bij het uitbrengen van een *kalender*. Deze kalender zou – in tegenstelling tot de meesten in die tijd – de mens niet “van overheidswege” opgedrongen worden, maar moest door de lezer in vrijheid begroet kunnen worden om diens wel en wee te *bevorderen* en te *verzachten*.<sup>19</sup> Hebel wilde de kalender tot huisvriend maken, waarbij de eigenaar zichzelf door het herhaalde lezen en nadenken waakzaam kon houden.<sup>20</sup> Heidegger schetst, hierop voortbouwend, het beeld van Hebel als een huisvriend in “het huis dat de wereld is”.<sup>21</sup> De huisvriend is niet alleen geschikt voor mensen die een woning bezitten, hij is voor iedereen die op deze wereld woont. Maar, zo stelt Heidegger enigszins onverwacht, Hebel is niet de *eigenlijke* huisvriend. De *eigenlijke* huisvriend, dat is de *maan*.<sup>22</sup>

Zoals de maan door haar schijnen, zo brengt de aardse huisvriend Hebel door zijn spreken een licht, en wel een mild licht. De maan brengt het licht in onze nachten. Maar het licht dat ze brengt heeft ze niet zelf ontstoken. Het is slechts de weerkaatsing van wat de maan eerder ontvangen heeft – van haar zon, waarvan de glans tegelijk de aarde beschijnt.<sup>23</sup>

[...]

In de aanblik van de maan laat Hebel ons het wezen van de huisvriend aflezen. Gaan en staan, houding en gebaren van de huisvriend zijn een uniek, kenmerkend schijnen, ingetogen en wakend tegelijk, dat alle dingen in een mild en nauwelijks merkbaar licht doet baden.<sup>24</sup>

17 Martin Heidegger, *Hebel, de huisvriend*, vert. Jacob van Sluis (Gorredijk: Bornmeer, 2009), 27.

18 Heidegger, Hebel, 16.

19 Ibid., 17.

20 Ibid., 18.

21 Ibid., 22.

22 Ibid., 23.

23 Ibid., 23-24.

24 Ibid., 24-25.

De huisvriend werpt een mild licht op de wereld, een licht waarin de aanschouwer de wereld om hem heen op een nieuwe manier kan bezien. Het gaat hier niet om het opleggen van een specifieke manier van zien: er is geen sprake van een *opvoeden*, maar er is hier sprake van de lezer laten *gewaarworden*.<sup>25</sup> Ook in *De vrolijke wetenschap* probeert Nietzsche ons niet op te voeden volgens een absolute waarheid; hij probeert ons te laten zien dat de wereld bestaat in eb en vloed, en *uit korte gewoontes* – gewoontes die je tijdelijk vullen met hartstocht, maar waarvan je zonder weerzin ook weer afscheid neemt.<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche schrijft lovend over de korte gewoontes, zijn gehele natuur is op hen ingesteld. Hij is daarom ook niet droevig dat de gewoontes op een zekere dag hun tijd hebben gehad, en in vrede afscheid van hem nemen – het tegendeel lijkt hem zelfs verschrikkelijk. Vergelijkbaar met een korte gewoonte moet ook elk licht, dat mij laat rondkijken in de wereld en mijn omgeving een vorm geeft, uiteindelijk weer plaats maken voor een andere lichtval. Zoals de maan het eb en vloed laat komen en gaan, ver- en herlicht zij ook onze wereld. Nietzsche probeert het wel en wee van zijn lezer te bevorderen, en hem waakzaam te houden – evenals de huisvriend.

Ik zou de status van huisvriend niet louter willen toekennen aan de rijmende Nietzsche; ook de aforistische Nietzsche kan voor mensen een huisvriend zijn. Echter, zij zullen beide voor een ander publiek de goede huisvriend zijn. Als Nietzsche ons wil leren dat wij voor *onszelf* moeten ordenen of improviseren, dan zullen sommige mensen de huisvriend herkennen in het aforisme *L'ordre du jour pour le roi*.<sup>27</sup> In dit aforisme oppert Nietzsche om de ordening voor de dag niet te formeel en te vorstelijk te maken, en te “doen als iedereen”: de dagindeling improviseren. Echter, anderen zullen baat hebben bij een rijm als *Für Tänzer*. Op deze wijze geeft de huisvriend in een andere taal dan onze alledaagse taal, de poëtische taal, de lezer toegang tot, wat Heidegger naar Goethe noemt, de “diepere omstandigheden”:<sup>28</sup> voorbij de oppervlakkige wereld, voorbij het alledaagse, in vriendschap met de dichter “die zelf als dichter vriend is voor het huis der wereld”.<sup>29</sup> Voor wie de poëet een huisvriend is, schijnt het indirecte maanlicht zich op de wijze hoe wij normaliter onze dag invullen. In het maanlicht toont de oppervlakkige, alledaagse wereld zich anders oppervlakkig: oppervlakkig *uit diepte*.<sup>30</sup> Over oppervlakkigheid uit diepte komen wij later nog verder te spreken. Voor nu kunnen wij genoeg nemen met het maanlicht van Nietzsches rijmen. Dit milde licht toont ons het bekend geachte oppervlakkige op nieuwe wijze. Zo wordt Nietzsche onze huisvriend.

*Für Tänzer*.<sup>31</sup>

*Glattes Eis*

*Ein Paradeis*

*Für Den, der gut zu Tanzen Weiss*

25 Ibid., 27.

26 Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 174-175, aforisme 295.

27 Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 57-58, aforisme 22, vertaling: de orde van de dag van de koning.

28 Heidegger, *Hebel*, 36.

29 Ibid., 37.

30 Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 14-15, voorwoord 4

31 Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 18, rijm 13.

**Voor dansers** Het gladde ijs / Een paradijs / Voor de man die dansen kan.

### 3. Kinderrijmen en gebeden

Een toestand, een innerlijk, gespannen pathos over te brengen door middel van tekens, met inbegrip van het tempo dezer tekens – dat is de zin van iedere stijl; en in aanmerking genomen, dat de veelheid van innerlijke toestanden in mijn geval buitengewoon groot is, zijn er bij mij veel stijlmogelijkheden aanwezig[.]<sup>32</sup>

Een andere wijze om de rijmen van Nietzsche te lezen vindt men in Kathleen Higgins' *Nietzsche's Nursery Rhymes*. Higgins zet in dit essay, aan de hand van Nietzsches werk, uiteen hoe de rijmen passen in Nietzsches visie op stijl, vorm en inhoud. Ik zal de hoofdlijnen hier uiteenzetten.

Higgins prijst Nietzsches aandacht voor de vervlochtenheid van filosofie, poëzie en literatuur. Als voorbeeld noemt ze *Zo sprak Zarathoestra* – hier laat Nietzsche zijn filosofie naar voren komen door middel van *kunst*, in de vorm van poëzie.<sup>33</sup> Ze vindt echter dat te weinig mensen aandacht schenken aan de rijmen in *De vrolijke wetenschap*. De rijmen appelleren aan een populairdere volkscultuur; door deze vorm te gebruiken *verhoogt* Nietzsche het bewustzijn van het alledaagse bij de lezer.<sup>34</sup> Higgins wijst er bovendien op dat Nietzsche dit niet *alleen* met rijm doet. Volgens haar *speelt* Nietzsche met verschillende vormen om zijn boodschap over te brengen.<sup>35</sup> Een citaat uit *Ecce Homo* lijkt dit te onderschrijven: “Goed is iedere stijl, die een innerlijke toestand werkelijk overbrengt[.]”<sup>36</sup> Door zijn heruitgave van *De vrolijke wetenschap* te laten beginnen met rijmen, toont Nietzsche dat deze vorm óók geschikt is om zijn ideeën over te brengen. Hoe komt het dan dat de rijmen toch weinig aandacht lijken te krijgen?

#### *Vademecum – Vadetecum.*<sup>37</sup>

*Es lockt dich meine Art und Sprach  
Du folgst mir, du gehst mir nach?*

*Geh nur dir selber treulich nach: –  
So folgst du mir – gemacht! gemacht!*

32 Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, 62.

33 Kathleen Higgins, “Nietzsche’s Nursery Rhymes,” *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 21, no. 3 (1995): pp. 397-417, 397.

34 *Ibid.*, 397-398.

35 *Ibid.*, 398.

36 Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, 62.

37 Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 16, rijm 7.  
**Vademecum – Vadetecum** (Ga met mij – Ga met jezelf) Mijn taal, mijn handelswijze lokt je wel? / Je wilt me volgen, komt achter me aan? / Ik raad je eerst jezelf na te gaan:– / Dan volg je mij – maar niet te snel!

Een mogelijke reden voor het overslaan van de rijmen is hun kinderlijke vorm, zo benadrukt ook Higgins: de rijmen lijken zelfs op *nursery rhymes* – kinderliedjes. De reden voor deze vorm is volgens haar geen zelfoverschatting, hoogmoed of krankzinnigheid, maar een bewuste vorm die geschikt is om het leven te esthetiseren in een *dagelijkse mogelijkheid* – het oplezen van deze rijmen kan een alledaagse bezigheid zijn.<sup>38</sup> De rijmen behandelen belangrijke thema's uit Nietzsches filosofie op een eenvoudige, lichtvoetige en speelse wijze, waardoor zij ook kinderlijker aanvoelen. Higgins stelt, aan de hand van het voorwoord uit *De vrolijke wetenschap*, dat Nietzsche terugkeert naar de basis: de Griekse oppervlakkigheid uit *diepte*.<sup>39</sup> Het kleine meisje dat aan haar moeder vraagt of het wel *netjes* is dat God overal tegenwoordig is – en daarmee de meeste private momenten van haar dag gewaarwordt – *dat* is de oppervlakkigheid uit diepte die Nietzsche zoekt;<sup>40</sup> het abstracte concept wordt oppervlakkig beschouwd, maar de oppervlakkige beschouwing draagt zelf een nieuwe 'diepte' met zich mee. Vergeet ook niet: in de filosofie van Nietzsche is "kinderlijk" geen negatief, maar juist een positief oordeel.<sup>41</sup> De kinderlijkheid van de rijmen kan hierdoor juist *uit diepte* zijn. Door zijn traditiebrekende filosofie te verhullen in regelmatige rijmen, probeert hij een alternatief begin voor het leren van waarden te bewerkstelligen.<sup>42</sup>

Naast de voorkeur voor eenvoud en het kinderlijke, speelt het *ritme* van de rijmen ook mee. De regelmatigheid van de rijmen is wat ze effectief maakt.<sup>43</sup> Dit valt op te maken uit de waarde die Nietzsche in *De vrolijke wetenschap* toekent aan de muziek, voornamelijk aan het gebruik van ritme.<sup>44</sup> Zo stelt hij dat degene die de *tromroffel* bezit de macht heeft,<sup>45</sup> en elders stelt hij dat *ritme* de mens bijna *dwingt* in stemmen, zowel met de voeten als met de ziel; volgens Nietzsche ontstond op deze wijze de poëzie.<sup>46</sup> De *kinderliedjes* die Nietzsche heeft geschreven dwingen de luisteraar mee in hun ritme en zijn op die manier makkelijk te internaliseren. Higgins gaat nog een stap verder: de kinderliedjes die Nietzsche hier heeft geschreven zijn *gebeden*.<sup>47</sup>

Nietzsche heeft een opvallende opvatting over bidden. Het gebed zou zijn uitgevonden voor mensen die van zichzelf geen gedachten hebben, zodat ze "een poosje zoet zijn en een draaglijke aanblik opleveren".<sup>48</sup> Met deze houding prijst hij enerzijds het bidden, aangezien de mensen die een hogere geest hebben niet gestoord worden door hen die dat niet hebben. Anderzijds past het bidden, als onderwerping van het individu aan een religie, niet in de filosofie van Nietzsche. Higgins probeert deze spanning duidelijker te maken met een voorbeeld uit *Zo sprak Zarathoestra*, waar Zarathoestra in eerste instantie mensen die een ezel aanbidden wil berispen, maar vanwege het "uit zichzelf voortkomen" van hun viering bijdraait en daarmee hun viering toch weet te waarderen.<sup>49</sup> Het bidden kan voor Nietzsche positief zijn, mits het niet voorkomt uit meegaandheid in opgelegde gebeden en vieringen, maar voortkomt uit de mensen zelf. Higgins stelt:

He admires and sees a healthy future for both the form of prayer and its psychological role in human life. What he questions systematically is the idea of a God who demands subordination from human beings and the related use of prayer[.]<sup>50</sup>

38 Higgins, "Nietzsche's Nursery Rhymes," 401.

39 Ibid., 403. Higgins refereert hier aan Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 13-15, voorwoord 4.

40 Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 14-15, voorwoord 4.

41 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zo sprak Zarathoestra*, red. Hans Driessen, vert. Ria van Hengel (Utrecht: De Arbeiderspers, 2013), 27-29

42 Higgins, "Nietzsche's Nursery Rhymes," 404.

43 Ibid., 405.

44 Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 114, aforisme 106

45 Ibid., 146, aforisme 175.

46 Ibid., 95-97, aforisme 84.

47 Higgins, "Nietzsche's Nursery Rhymes," 406.

48 Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 133, aforisme 128.

49 Higgins, "Nietzsche's Nursery Rhymes," 406-408.

50 Ibid., 408.

Als het bidden voor iemand een *korte gewoonte* is – iets dat voor een bepaalde tijd voor jou goed werkt, maar niet beoefend wordt als absolute waarheid – dan zal Nietzsche deze vorm van bidden accepteren als een oprechte en waardevolle gewoonte;<sup>51</sup> het moet een product zijn van “dapperheid en vindingrijke rede” en niet van “tallose kleine lafheden”.<sup>52</sup> Zo zou het aanbidden van de ezel door Zarathoestra afgekeurd worden als doctrine, maar als *korte gewoonte* nog niet.

Wetende dat de rijmen een ritme hebben en dat het ritme het lichaam en de ziel dwingt mee te gaan; wetende dat de rijmen een speelse kinderlijkheid hebben; wetende dat verschillende vormen goed zijn voor het overbrengen van verschillende *innerlijke toestanden* en dat Nietzsche het bidden niet categorisch verwerpt, maar kan waarderen als een mogelijke oprechtheid, dient zich een nieuwe wijze van het lezen van Nietzsches rijmen aan: het lezen van de rijmen als *gebeden*. Nietzsche wordt *gebedsvader*. Het oplezen en het herhalen van Nietzsches rijmen kan toegang geven tot het gedachtegoed dat verder in *De vrolijke wetenschap* wordt behandeld, ook al oogt het in eerste instantie ontoegankelijk. Zoals Nietzsche schrijft in *Einladung*: “Morgen schmeckt sie euch schon besser.”<sup>53</sup>

We hebben nu twee wijzen van het lezen van de rijmen gevonden: Nietzsche als huisvriend, waarbij mensen wijs worden met zijn rijm, die als een steeds veranderende verlichting op de wereld om hen heen schijnt; en Nietzsche als gebedsvader, waarbij mensen leren zijn houding ten opzichte van de wereld om ons heen te internaliseren. De eerste laat je zijn wereld voorzichtig zien, de tweede voedt je op. Gewapend met deze twee leeswijzen, is het tijd om daadwerkelijk *De vrolijke wetenschap* in te duiken.

#### 4. Overdrachtelijke kerngedachten

Om de waarde van Nietzsches rijmen ten behoeve van zijn filosofie te tonen, wil ik vier denkbewegingen uit *De vrolijke wetenschap* uitleggen aan de hand van relevante aforismen, gekoppeld aan relevante rijmen, en laten zien hoe Nietzsche zijn ‘speelveld’ opent. Het is aan de lezer om deze rijmen als wijsheid van de huisvriend, die zijn licht op de wereld om ons heen laat schijnen, of als gebed in zich op te nemen en de wijsheid uit de repetitie van het gebed te halen. Om het gedachtegoed en de rijmen voor zich te laten spreken, zal ik mij weerhouden van het geven van verdere interpretaties of commentaren.

51 Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 174-175, aforisme 295.

52 Ibid., 182, aforisme 308.

53 Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 15, rijm 1.

**1 – Dichotomieën.** Het eerste boek van *De vrolijke wetenschap* exploreert veel dichotomieën: eb en vloed,<sup>54</sup> edel en laag,<sup>55</sup> lust en onlust.<sup>56</sup> Als wij niet tot een van de uitersten behoren, kunnen wij naar een van hen beginnen te verlangen, alsof deze als een berg in ons uitzicht ligt. Echter, wanneer wij haar beklimmen, wacht ons louter teleurstelling.<sup>57</sup> In beide uitersten, zowel de grond beneden als de top van de berg, vinden wij niet wat we dachten te kunnen vinden. Moeten wij ons wellicht halverwege de berg opstellen? Of moeten we ons uitzicht afwisselen, waar we eens in de zoveel tijd naar de top zullen trekken, om later weer af te dalen naar de grond beneden ons?

***Wählerischer Geschmack.***<sup>58</sup>

*Wenn man frei mich wählen liesse,  
Wählt' ich gern ein Plätzchen mir*

*Mitten drin im Paradiese:*

*Gerner noch – vor seiner Thür!*

***Welt-Klugheit.***<sup>59</sup>

*Bleib nicht auf ebnem Feld!  
Steig nicht zu hoch hinaus!*

*Am schönsten sieht die Welt*

*Von halber Höhe aus.*

**2 – De dood van God.** In het derde boek van *De vrolijke wetenschap* is de dood van God het overkoepelende thema. De aankondiging van zijn dood komt abrupt aan het begin van het boek, waarin Nietzsche gelijk duidelijk maakt dat de dood van God niet de onmiddellijke afwezigheid van God betekent – ondanks zijn dood zullen wij nog millennia lang in zijn schaduw leven.<sup>60</sup> In dit spanningsveld leest men over de dolle mens, die komt wanneer mensen hun geloof en vertrouwen in God hebben verloren, maar nog niet de implicaties daarvan kunnen overzien.<sup>61</sup> De dolle mens stelt zelf dat hij te vroeg komt, dat het zijn tijd nog niet is. Maar, hij komt ook te laat: de mensen hebben de afwezigheid van God al geaccepteerd als een eenvoudig feit, en lachen de dolle mens uit. Nietzsche, de boodschapper, het diogenesachtige figuur, is te vroeg en te laat gekomen. De dolle mens ondergaat het onbegrip van zijn omstanders en zoekt zijn heil in kerken – die niets anders meer zijn dan grafmonumenten van God.

***Für immer.***<sup>62</sup>

»Heut komm' ich, weil mir's heute frommt« –  
*Denkt Jeder, der für immer kommt.*

*Was ficht ihn an der Welt Gered':*

»Du kommst zu früh! Du kommst zu spät!«

<sup>54</sup> Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 37-41, aforisme 1.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 41-42, aforisme 3.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 48-49, aforisme 12.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 52, aforisme 15.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 29, rijm 57.

**Kieskeurige smaak** Had ik de keus in vree en pais / Dan koos ik liefst een plaatsje uit / In het midden van het paradijs: / Of liever nog – bij 't opschrift 'Uit'!

<sup>59</sup> Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 16, rijm 6.

**Wereldwijsheid** Blijf toch niet op vlakke bodem! / Stijg er ook niet té ver boven uit! / Want van een plaats ter halver hoogte / Ziet de wereld er het mooiste uit.

<sup>60</sup> Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 119, aforisme 118.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 130-131, aforisme 125.

<sup>62</sup> Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 26, rijm 45.

**Voorgoed** 'Heden kom ik, daar 't mij heden deugd doet' – / Denkt een ieder, die komt – voorgoed / Wat deert hem allemans gepraat: / 'Je komt te vroeg! Je komt te laat!'

**3 – Lichtvoetige wendbaarheid.** *De vrolijke wetenschap* is “geschreven in de taal van de dooiwind”, in een stroom aan dankbaarheid van iemand die aan het genezen is.<sup>63</sup> De filosoof heeft tijdelijk de ogen voor zichzelf gesloten, maar heeft op het juiste moment zichzelf weer *betragt*.<sup>64</sup> Nietzsches ziekte geeft hem het inzicht dat de filosofie nooit om *waarheid* ging, maar om verschillende vormen van macht. Hij heeft middels het lijden een vrijheid gekregen waar nog lang uit te putten valt.<sup>65</sup> Deze wendbaarheid vindt men ook terug wanneer hij zijn *korte gewoonten* bespreekt – zijn natuur is volkomen op deze korte gewoontes ingesteld vanwege zijn ellende en ziek-zijn.<sup>66</sup> De gehele vrolijke wetenschap, gedreven door de wens tot *amor fati* – de liefde tot het lot – komt voort uit deze verkwikking. Deze wendbaarheid tracht hij telkens weer opnieuw over te brengen en telt als leidraad van het werk. Nietzsche toont ons het ijs, en leert de lezer dansen.<sup>67</sup>

***Mein Glück.***<sup>68</sup>

*Seit ich des Suchens müde ward,  
Erlernte ich das Finden.  
Seit mir ein Wind hielt Widerpart,  
Segl' ich mit allen Winden.*

**4 – Openen van het speelveld.** Niet alle rijmen in *De vrolijke wetenschap* schetsen de hoofdlijnen uit het boek. Enkele schetsen het speelveld waarin Nietzsche zijn gedachten verder ontwikkelt. De zelfstandigheid van de denker in *Der Einsame*,<sup>69</sup> zijn noodzaak voor het *blijven* bewegen in *Sternen-Egoismus*, en de hardheid die bij deze beoogde houding komt kijken zoals geschetst in *Meine Härte* zijn hiervan enkele voorbeelden.<sup>70</sup> Een lezer die vreemd is met Nietzsches gedachtengoed krijgt op deze wijze toegang tot het door Nietzsche beoogde speelveld, en raakt goed op pad richting een vrolijke wetenschap.

***Sternen-Egoismus***<sup>71</sup>

*Rollt' ich mich rundes Rollefass  
Nicht um mich selbst ohn' Unterlass,  
Wie hielt' ich's aus, ohne anzubrennen,  
Der heißen Sonne nachzurennen?*

63 Nietzsche, *De vrolijke wetenschap*, 9-10, voorwoord 1.

64 Ibid., 10-12, voorwoord 2.

65 Ibid., 12-13, voorwoord 3.

66 Ibid., 174-175, aforisme 295.

67 Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 23, rijm 35.

68 Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 15, rijm 2.

**Mijn geluk** Ik ben het zoeken meer dan zat: / Nu heb ik geleerd te vinden. / Sinds ik de wind eens tegen had, / Zeil ik met alle winden.

69 Ibid., 23, rijm 33.

70 Ibid., 21, rijm 26.

71 Ibid., 22, rijm 29.

**Sterrengoisme** Als ik niet zo onvermoebaar was / In 't tollen om mijn eigen as, / Hoe kon ik dan zonder te schroeien, / Om de hete zon blijven stoeien?

## 5. Conclusie

Waar normaliter Nietzsches rijmen weinig aandacht gegund wordt en de academische blik zich voornamelijk richt op de aforismen in *De vrolijke wetenschap*, hoop ik de lezer de mogelijke waarde van de rijmen te hebben getoond. Voor iemand die zich vertrouwd voelt met Nietzsches filosofie, zullen de rijmen zich mogelijk oppervlakkig voordoen en misschien wat kinderlijk overkomen. Echter, wanneer men de diepte aan de oppervlakte leert zoeken, en in de kinderlijkheid, evenals Higgins, een mogelijke kracht ziet, dan zal men de rijmen beter leren waarderen. Waar sommige rijmen in eerste instantie oppervlakkig leken, ziet men nu Nietzsches gedachtegoed ingeleid op behapbare, makkelijk te delen wijze.

De lezer die nog voorgesteld moet worden aan – en mogelijk bevriend zal raken met – Nietzsche hoop ik voorzien te hebben in verschillende leeswijzen om de rijmen, en daarmee Nietzsches gedachtegoed, te appreciëren. Nog voordat men de aforismen gaat bestuderen, kan men er goed aan doen de rijmen in zich op te nemen en ze als vernieuwend licht of gebed te beschouwen. Het gedachtegoed dat gedurende het boek wordt ontwikkeld wordt reeds in de rijmen voorgekookt.

Aan de hand van de concepten “Nietzsche als huisvriend” en “Nietzsche als gebedsvader” hoop ik de lezer handvatten te hebben gegeven voor het lezen, herlezen, waarderen en herwaarderen van Nietzsches rijmen; de rijmen kunnen een ander licht werpen op de voor u bekende omgeving, of kunnen dienen als mantra voor een nieuwe levenshouding.

Wat meer is, ik hoop dat ik de lezer een impliciete boodschap mee heb kunnen geven. Als Nietzsche zijn eigen gedachtegoed inleidt met rijmen, dan doet hij dit uiteraard niet willekeurig. Op een gelijksoortige manier kan men filosofie, waar men goed bekend mee is, op alternatieve wijze over leren brengen. Mogelijk door zelf rijmen te schrijven, passende rijmen te zoeken, of door naar andere middelen te creëren dan wel zoeken. Wanneer Nietzsche ons leert dansen op het ijs, en daarmee het beeld van improviseren bij ons oproept, doet hij meer dan rijmen – hij deelt ons op toegankelijk wijze zijn filosofie mee.

Mijn eigen mening over de filosofische concepten die Nietzsche behandelt in *De vrolijke wetenschap* is hier minder relevant dan wat ik reeds gepleit heb ten behoeve van de rijmen: ze worden vaak overschaduwd, en ik wil ze in het (maan)licht zetten. Voor nu wil ik de lezer die reeds bekend is met Nietzsche, maar zijn rijmen vooralsnog heeft laten liggen, aansporen om *De vrolijke wetenschap* op te pakken en de blik louter op de rijmen te laten rusten. Voor de vooralsnog ongeïnitieerde lezer: pak het boek op, lees enkele rijmen, lees enkele aforismen, en kijk welke Nietzsche het duidelijkst spreekt: Nietzsche de filosoof, of Nietzsche de poëet – zij het als huisvriend of als gebedsvader.

Op naar *De vrolijke wetenschap!*

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# Experimenting with name meaning

On the relationship between empirical evidence and proper name semantics

Erik Huijsman

## 1. Introduction

An often heard narrative, perpetuated by the likes of Martin Heidegger (1972, 55-73),<sup>72</sup> paints the following picture of the relationship between science and philosophy: ever since sound scientific investigation got off the ground, science started to rapidly replace philosophy as the leading epistemic authority in many fields of research.<sup>73</sup> With every scientific discipline arriving at the scene, or so the story goes, philosophers were left with a more and more limited set of questions to which their answers were considered insightful. This view — that science is the superior method for knowledge acquisition — referred to as ‘scientism’ (Sorell 1991, 1; Bunge 2014, 24), has been met with vehement opposition from the philosophical community. It has not only been argued that scientific inquiry relies heavily on philosophical thinking (Putnam 2010, 95-96), but also that empirical findings don’t invalidate philosophical thought as thoroughly as is commonly claimed (Sorell 1991, 139-140). Still, some questions can undoubtedly only be answered empirically, and the consequences of scientific research for the practice of philosophy have not been insignificant. The scientific revolution has forced each philosophical branch to take a step back and closely examine the impact of science on both the content and methodology of their area of study.

One branch of philosophy that has long evaded this reflective exercise is *semantics*: the study of the meaning of language. Semantics doesn’t seem connected to empirical research in a straightforward manner, likely because of its historical ties to ideal language projects (Kluge 1980), its connection to mathematics (Searle 2010, 15-16), and its frequent use of abstract concepts from both logic (Newen and Schröder, 2011) and metaphysics.<sup>74</sup> However, in the last two decades the nature of the relationship between semantics and scientific research has become a topic of heated debate. This debate was instigated by Machery, Mallon, Nichols and Stich (henceforth ‘MMNS’) in 2004, when they broke with the traditional methodology of semantics — under the wings of an exciting new research direction, experimental philosophy<sup>75</sup> — by performing an experiment in which they examined some of the core intuitions used in semantic theorizing about *proper names*.<sup>76</sup> The results of that study appeared to challenge the *universality* of these intuitions, which diminishes their evidential value for semantic theories, according to MMNS (Mallon et al. 2009, 344-351).

72 In Heidegger’s 1964 lecture “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking” one can find an explicit expression of the idea that philosophy (metaphysics specifically) has been replaced by science.

73 This view arguably has its roots in the attempts of natural philosophers in the late 18th century to (re)construct epistemic authority by invoking science after the skeptical crisis (*la crise pyrrhonienne*) of the late 16th and early 17th centuries (Dettelbach 1998). And although (largely) unintended, I think we can safely say that the characterization of philosophy as obsolete to most knowledge inquiries was perpetuated by the positivist movement of the early 20th century.

74 E.g. identity, necessity and possibility.

75 The aim of experimental philosophy is roughly to empirically test the content of ‘folk intuitions’ regarding philosophical thought experiments (Kauppinen 2014, 5).

76 ‘Proper names’ are a subset of *noun phrases* (syntactically speaking). Expressions that are considered to be proper names (in English) are phrases like ‘Donald Trump’, ‘The Golden Gate Bridge’, ‘Sarah’, etc. Proper names usually apply to single objects. They can be contrasted with *general* names that mostly apply to *classes* of objects. Whenever I use the term ‘name(s)’ in this paper, I am referring to (a) proper name(s).

If MMNS' conclusion is correct, the repercussions of their experiment for the semantic study of proper names (and potentially for semantics more broadly) are substantial. For the intuitions MMNS empirically researched concern two of the most influential<sup>77</sup> thought experiments in philosophical semantics: the 'Jonah case' and 'Gödel case', introduced by Saul Kripke (1981, 66-67, 83-84) in his seminal 'Naming and Necessity' (henceforth 'N&N') lectures at Princeton in 1970. The arguments that Kripke developed from these thought experiments delivered a near fatal blow to *descriptivism*, the theory of proper name meaning that had dominated analytic philosophy since the early 20th century (Martí 2014, 18). The two cases also provided evidence for Kripke's *causal-historical view*, a theory of reference he advanced in N&N that is widely regarded as a valuable contribution to proper name semantics. On top of that, Kripke's line of reasoning in N&N has provided the groundwork for a whole new approach to the study of meaning: *semantic externalism*,<sup>78</sup> "one of the most significant philosophical developments of the past fifty years" (Baghrahmanian and Jorgensen 2013, 594). So, if it turns out that the intuitions related to Kripke's thought experiments lack evidential power, a vast amount of monumental semantic thought is constructed on a rotten foundation. As a result, many of Kripke's important ideas, like the causal-historical view, would be discredited.

It should come as no surprise then, that most semanticists were reluctant to embrace MMNS' conclusion. The idea that scientific evidence could topple Kripke's argumentation in N&N proved to be rather provoking. A lively debate ensued among philosophers of language, persisting to this day,<sup>79</sup> about the impact of MMNS' study on proper name semantics.

In this paper I will focus on a particular reaction within this debate that I have dubbed *relevance critique*. Specifically, I will discuss some concerns about MMNS' inferences that Deutsch (2009) and Devitt (2011) have voiced. Both of these philosophers have downplayed the implications MMNS' test results have for the semantics of proper names. They have done so by arguing, in their own way, that the folk intuitions MMNS inquired into are of limited relevance to the assessment of semantic theories. I will argue in this paper that this view is misguided. I will introduce a principle condition semantic theories have to satisfy, the *Enumerative Consistency Requirement* (ECR), before their veracity can be explored. I maintain that knowledge regarding the folk intuitions that MMNS investigated is crucial for determining whether semantic theories comply with ECR. As such Deutsch and Devitt are wrong to devalue the importance of those intuitions for theory evaluation in semantics.

To help the reader appreciate how I intend to argue for my position, here follows a brief outline of this paper's structure: in section 2 I will give the reader the necessary philosophical tools to understand both the MMNS experiment and the relevance critique expressed by Deutsch and Devitt. An elemental categorization from semantics, as well as ECR will be discussed. Section 3 contains a brief overview of descriptivism and Kripke's causal-historical view, and outlines the methodology and results of MMNS' 2004 experiment. In section 4, the relevant parts of the responses of Deutsch and Devitt to MMNS are summarized. Section 5 constitutes my criticism of the relevance critique presented by Deutsch and Devitt, followed by a brief conclusion on the role of empirical evidence in semantics more broadly in section 6.

<sup>77</sup> Kripke's thought experiments from N&N are perhaps only rivaled in their importance to the development of 20th century semantics by Hilary Putnam's 'Twin Earth' thought experiment. See Putnam (1973) for his first version of this experiment.

<sup>78</sup> The philosophical view that broadly states that the meaning of linguistic expressions is (at least partly) given by aspects of the 'outside world' (Soames 2003, 336).

<sup>79</sup> See Islam and Baggio (2020) for one of the most recent additions to this debate.

## 1. Semantics: some key principles

To come to the point at which we are able to critically analyze how theories of meaning and reference can be assessed, we need to know some very basic facts about the (philosophical) field of research that is semantics.

### Meaning and reference

As mentioned in the introduction, semantics has the meaning of language as its object of study. More specifically, semantics only studies the meaning of *linguistic expressions*: spoken or written strings of verbal communication, i.e. words and sentences. While we would normally say that signals like gestures or facial expressions can be meaningful (in the sense that they can be understood), those kinds of phenomena are not part of semantic study.<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, compared to how ‘meaning’ is used in ordinary English speech, semantics has a rather narrow understanding of meaning (Palmer 1981, 3-9). In semantics, the term ‘meaning’ is reserved for a special kind of meaning: the kind responsible for the (non)synonymy of linguistic expressions.<sup>81</sup> This meaning is also referred to as the *semantic content* of a linguistic expression, or ‘content’ for short:

two expressions E1 and E2 have the same **semantic content** =df. two expressions E1 and E2 are synonymous

Another (linguistic) phenomenon that is of vital importance to semantics, especially the semantics of proper names (which is our main focus in this paper), is *reference*. Reference is a relationship between expressions and objects that I will define as follows, largely following the definition of Van Woudenberg (2002, 25):

an expression E **refers to** set S =df. S is the set of all objects in a possible world that expression E applies to

The word ‘cat’, for instance, applies to every cat in our actual world, so ‘cat’ refers to the set of all cats in our world. However, it doesn’t follow that the [set of all cats]<sup>82</sup> is the *semantic content* of ‘cat’. We wouldn’t say that ‘Tigger is a cat’ is *synonymous with* ‘Tigger is the set of all cats’. Reference is not the same linguistic phenomenon as semantic content, although the two are closely related. A key feature of the dynamics of the relationship between meaning and reference — identified by Frege (1948, 211) — is that expressions only refer in virtue of them having a certain meaning. As an example, take a word like ‘blackback’, which refers to the set of all adult male gorillas. It seems that the only reason why ‘blackback’ refers in this way is because that word *means* [an adult male gorilla]. This connection between meaning and reference plays an important role in semantics because it allows us to draw conclusions about an expression’s meaning on the basis of knowledge about that expression’s referent, and vice versa. This aspect of the meaning/reference relationship is relevant to most of Kripke’s argumentation regarding proper name meaning in N&N.

80 Though the meaning of such phenomena surely seems *related* to the meaning of linguistic expressions, they are nonetheless considered as belonging to the domain of a research program broader than semantics: semiotics, the study of signs (Nöth 1995, 103).

81 That is to say, when we conceive of ‘meaning’ *classically* as ‘whatever makes a sentence true or false’ (Speaks 2019) and we ignore the role pragmatic elements play in semantics.

82 The term between two square brackets represents the content of an expression only.

Before we continue, a clarificatory note on the use of the adjective ‘semantic’. Apart from my use of this adjective in the expression ‘semantic content’, I will only be using ‘semantic’ in a non-specific, catchall manner in this paper, meaning [having to do with (the study of) meaning]. So, when I speak of ‘semantic theories’ (for example) I mean [theories having to do with meaning]. As such, theories of reference qualify as semantic theories in my terminology, since meaning and reference are intimately connected. Similarly, the expression ‘semantic intuitions’ denotes intuitions regarding both meaning and reference, just to name another phrase we will frequently encounter.

### Classifying semantic theories

To understand whether and how (MMNS’) experimental findings relate to the evaluation of theories in semantics, we need to acquaint ourselves with a classification system based on the different kinds of questions those theories might answer. We can best understand this system by first looking at the explananda around which theories of *meaning* revolve.

‘Meaning’ is a multi-faceted concept that we can explore from different angles, and within semantics we can distinguish between projects that reflect these different perspectives. The distinction in the aims of these projects is manifest in the questions philosophers have put at the center of their respective semantic inquiries. Usually, one of three related but distinct questions is the focal point of attention:

- (1) For any particular expression in a language, what is its meaning?
- (2) What is the nature of meaning?
- (3) How do linguistic expressions acquire their meaning?

As these questions are formulated above, they pertain to the meaning of all expressions, to meaning *tout court*. But, we can also limit the domain to which the answers to these questions apply. We might, for example, decide to only look at the meaning of indexicals,<sup>83</sup> just to name a specific type of expression that philosophers have focused on a lot (Braun 2017). This is a sensible move to make, since there are good reasons to assume that ‘meaning’ is not a unitary concept. Not only does the meaning of words and sentences clearly differ,<sup>84</sup> but different word types seem to have a different nature too: for instance, there is an obvious difference in the way verbs and nouns function semantically. For different types of linguistic expressions we are likely to find different kinds of meaning associated with them.

For the purposes of this paper, we are solely interested in the meaning of *proper names*. Thus, all the theories and arguments we will cover in the rest of this paper concern proper names only (unless I explicitly mention otherwise). Nonetheless, I will give a more general sketch of the research programs behind questions (1), (2) and (3) in the next few paragraphs. I merely do so for the sake of completeness, however. Keep in mind that we will only be using the broader semantic framework outlined in the text below to classify semantic claims about proper names.

<sup>83</sup> Designating expressions whose reference is context-dependent. Think of expressions like: ‘you’, ‘we’, ‘this’, ‘tomorrow’, etcetera.

<sup>84</sup> What it means for words to be synonymous is something different than what it means for sentences. While we can use sentences to declare something, to state that something is the case, this is not true for words. Words are often only be said to be meaningful in the sense that they contribute some content to the meaning of the sentences in which they occur (Davidson 1967, 97). To emphasize this fact, we might add that the content of sentences is necessarily *compositional content* — a more complex meaning built on the content of its parts — while the content of words is necessarily not. While sentences have smaller meaningful elements, words do not: they are the smallest unit of language with content.

Question (1) incites us to determine what each expression in a particular language, like English, means. That is to say: we are supposed to identify the semantic content of each word or combination of words in a people's speech. This is a project akin to constructing a translation manual for a language. For every linguistic expression, such as 'bachelor', we are asked to produce an answer somewhere along the lines of "bachelor' means [unmarried man]". For the more mathematically informed reader: we have to provide a mapping from linguistic expressions (the domain) to semantic contents (the co-domain). Our mapping needn't be one-to-one (and so it needn't be a function, mathematically speaking): especially in natural languages, some expressions have multiple meanings, and different words or sentences might have the same content.

Question (2) requires us to examine the *general* properties of semantic content. Instead of describing what specific expressions mean, we have to establish what it means for an expression to be meaningful on a more abstract level. What kind of things are the 'contents' in the co-domain of linguistic expressions exactly? What are some necessary or sufficient conditions for membership of the co-domain? Answers to (2) can often be put in the form of an identity statement, like 'the semantic content of linguistic expressions is  $x$ ', where  $x$  is a variable to be replaced with the proposed notion that supposedly corresponds to 'content'. For example, we might conjecture that 'the semantic content of linguistic expressions is the mental picture a competent speaker associates with those expressions'. Note that this semantic claim is a far cry from being a means to telling what the content of any specific expression is. An answer to (2) doesn't give us the meaning of 'bachelor' or any other (combination of) word(s) in a direct manner. However, the aforementioned claim does specify the conditions entities have to satisfy to be regarded as 'semantic content'. Contrastingly, an answer to (1) gives no such insight.

Question (1) and (2) are closely related in that both call for an explanation or theory that simply describes *what* semantic contents are (in either the specific or general sense, respectively). However, these questions do not urge us to explore why semantic content is what it is, or *how* specific expressions have come to obtain their meaning. These are the kind of enterprises we can expect to be encouraged by question (3). To answer this question, we need to identify by which processes or under what conditions words and sentences become meaningful.

Now that we have identified the three different questions central to semantic inquiry, how can we use them to classify theories of meaning? The common practice in semantics is to categorize theories of meaning based on their explanandum, based on which of the three questions they answer. A theory of meaning that gives us insights into problem (3), for example, is categorized as a *foundational* theory. Although a theory could hypothetically answer any combination of (1), (2) and (3), in practice almost no theory is extensive enough to answer multiple questions. So, for all intents and purposes we need no more than three categories<sup>85</sup> to capture the variation in the subject matter of theories of meaning.

85 Often, theories are even subdivided into only two types of theories in (philosophical) semantics: *descriptive* and *foundational* (or *meta-semantic*) theories (Pilatova 2005, 10; Stalnaker 2017, 903; Wikforss 2017, 98). The descriptive theories have (1) or (2) as their explanandum, foundational theories answer question (3). Descriptive theories are then sometimes subdivided into *weak* (or *modest*, see Dummett [2003, 5]) semantic theories and *strong* semantic theories (Häggqvist and Wikforss 2015, 115). These theories have (1) and (2) as their focal point, respectively. So, depending on whether one makes this last mentioned distinction, we end up with either two or three categories of theories of meaning.

However, for the purposes of this paper the commonly used categorization device is insufficient. Next to theories of meaning, we also want to be able to classify theories of reference, intuitions, predictions, and so forth. The classification system described above does not allow for this, but luckily, we can extend it so that it does. We simply have to realize that to each of the explananda (1), (2) and (3) corresponds a *level of application*, which means that each of these three questions delineates a certain subject matter to which theories, but also intuitions or predictions *apply*. For instance, if we make predictions about meaning at the *level of application* associated with (2), our predictions pertain to the nature of ‘meaning’ — since this is what question (2) is about, as explained earlier.

For easy reference, I will name the level of application dictated by (1) as the *enumerative* level, borrowing a term from the philosophy of welfare (Crisp 2006; Woodard 2013). The point of view related to (2) will be called the *conceptual* level. And finally, any phenomenon related to question (3) functions at the *foundational* level. For the sake of convenience, I will sometimes refer to the conceptual and foundational level together as *meta-semantic* levels.<sup>86</sup>

As intended, the ‘level of application’ categorization can be applied to theories of *reference*. The end result is this: an enumerative theory of reference maps expressions onto their referents; a conceptual theory of reference details what the essence of this reference relationship is; a foundational theory of reference lays out the facts in virtue of which expressions come to refer. Identifying the level of application at which a theory of reference functions will prove to be a fundamental aspect of the analysis of the evidential value of MMNS’ results. So, whenever necessary, I will address what kind of theory of reference we are dealing with.

### On enumerative consistency

There are a few important things we need to know about the relationship between the different levels of application before we can continue. First of all, there is a good reason I have grouped conceptual and foundational levels of application together under the name ‘meta-semantic’ levels: in the end, semantic theorizing at the conceptual or foundational level is contingent on enumerative semantic facts. In other words: the semantic mappings at the enumerative level are *primitive*, in the sense that without these mappings there is nothing to be explained at the conceptual or foundational level. Conceptual and foundational semantic theories are ultimately theories about enumerative facts: only at the enumerative level do expressions have the content that is semantics’ object of study. And so, the veracity of meta-semantic theories (and trivially: enumerative theories) depends on whether they are in agreement with enumerative semantic facts:

#### Enumerative Consistency Requirement (ECR)

Each theory of meaning or reference needs to be consistent with enumerative facts about meaning or reference, respectively.

To clarify, with enumerative semantic facts I mean true statements about the semantic mapping of an expression in a particular language. We have already encountered some examples of such facts, such as “bachelor’ *means* [unmarried man]’ and “blackback’ *means* [an adult male gorilla]’ for the English language.

<sup>86</sup> Usually, the term ‘meta-semantics’ is reserved for semantic projects at the foundational level only (Hägqvist and Wikforss 2015, 4).

Of course, when it comes to the evaluation of semantic theories, ECR is not the final word. When we use ECR to assess semantic theories we run into the same problem of *underdetermination* that we encounter when testing scientific theories. That is to say: multiple semantic theories may be consistent with the same set of enumerative facts. However, we can derive the following conditional statement from ECR that must be used in the assessment of semantic theories:

ECR<sub>CONDITIONAL</sub> If a semantic theory ST is correct, then ST is consistent with the set of enumerative semantic facts about a language L

How many languages we should take into account when evaluating a semantic theory depends on the aspirations of that theory. If I have an enumerative theory about the semantics of Spanish, I need only account for enumerative facts about the Spanish language. However, most conceptual or foundational semantic theories are more ambitious, and presume that semantic phenomena like meaning and reference are universally shared, and function the same in all (natural) languages. In those cases, a semantic theory should be consistent with enumerative semantic facts about any language.

The importance of the ECR<sub>CONDITIONAL</sub> as an evaluative tool for semantic theories should not be underestimated. After all, it follows from ECR<sub>CONDITIONAL</sub> that a failure to comply with ECR immediately invalidates any semantic theory. As an example, say we uphold the following peculiar conceptual semantic theory: *Searlism*, the view that the semantic content of linguistic expressions is whatever John Rogers Searle believes it to be. Searlism only has a chance of being correct if Searle's semantic mapping lines up with all enumerative semantic facts about any language. If we take "bachelor' means [unmarried man]" to be an enumerative fact in English, and Searle believes that "bachelor' means [unpaid athlete]", the consequent<sup>87</sup> of ECR<sub>CONDITIONAL</sub> is false under Searlism. We can now apply *modus tollens*<sup>88</sup> to deduce that Searlism is an incorrect semantic theory. So, although ECR doesn't provide us with a method to *confirm* the veracity of a semantic theory — we can't say that a semantic theory is accurate because it satisfies ECR — we can use it to *discredit* semantic theories that are inconsistent with enumerative semantic facts.

## 2. Kripke's argumentation empirically tested

In this section, I will describe the 2004 MMNS study that Deutsch and Devitt criticize and some of the contents of Kripke's N&N on which that study was based, beginning with the latter.

<sup>87</sup> In propositional logic 'consequent' is used as a term for the second half of a conditional statement (as opposed to the 'antecedent').

<sup>88</sup> Modus tollens is a valid form of argumentation in propositional logic. It says that if we take a conditional and the denial of its consequent as our two premises, we can deduce that the denial of its antecedent obtains. In this case, ECR<sub>CONDITIONAL</sub> is our conditional statement.

### Descriptivism

N&N is famous for its argumentation against descriptivism, a view used both as a *conceptual* theory of proper name meaning and a *foundational* theory of reference for proper names. Kripke (1981, 27) introduces descriptivism in N&N by first discussing what he calls the “Frege-Russell view”. This name suggests that the view represents the combined ideas of Frege and Russell on names. Whether this is the case is a matter of dispute (Wettstein 1990), but for the purposes of this paper we may simply assume that Kripke’s depiction of Frege’s and Russell’s beliefs is correct. What are the contents of the Frege-Russell view? Kripke (1981, 27) tells us that “... a proper name, properly used, simply... [is] a definite description abbreviated or disguised.” In other words, the meaning of a proper name is a definite description. Kripke (1981, 24, emphasis original) defines definite descriptions as follows “phrases of the form ‘the  $x$  such that  $X$ ’, such as ‘the man who corrupted Hadleyburg’”, where  $x$  is some object and  $X$  is some property or predicate. Thus, the Frege-Russell view insists that while the outward (syntactic) appearance of a name is that of a simple expression, its semantic content takes the form of a definite description.

What kind of description makes up the content of a name? According to the Frege-Russell view, it is the *single* description a speaker  $S$  associates with the name. So, I might associate the description ‘The first Emperor of the French’ with the name /Napoleon/<sup>89</sup>, and then this description constitutes the meaning of /Napoleon/ for me. Some obvious problems<sup>90</sup> with this view of proper name have incited philosophers like Searle (1958) to adjust the Frege-Russell view. This modified theory, called the ‘cluster concept view’, allows for speakers to associate multiple descriptions with a name. Instead of a single description, a speaker (or a community of speakers) associates a cluster (or family) of descriptions with a name. The descriptions in the cluster could have a different weight attached to them, in the sense that some of them might contribute more to the semantic content of a name than others.

In N&N, Kripke is primarily focused on disqualifying the cluster concept view as a theory of name meaning. However, for the sake of simplicity he often brings up hypothetical situations (such as the Gödel case) in which a single description is associated with a name. This is unproblematic: for Kripke’s arguments to work, it doesn’t matter whether we take the meaning of a name to be a single description or a cluster of descriptions (Ahmed 2007, 15-16). His critique applies to the descriptivist project as a whole, to ascribing *any* descriptive content to proper name meaning. So, to ease understanding, I will make use of single descriptions only to talk about descriptivism in the rest of this paper. I will refer to the Frege-Russell view and the cluster concept view conjointly as ‘strong descriptivism’.

Strong descriptivism as I have described it above is a theory of name meaning. But often, the descriptivist view is also used as a theory of *reference* that is commonly referred to as ‘weak descriptivism’. Weak descriptivism is a foundational theory of reference that explains how proper name reference is determined. It states that whoever uniquely satisfies the description associated with a name is the referent of that name. If the description is not uniquely satisfied by anyone, the name fails to refer. So, to the question of *why* /Napoleon/ refers to the *person* Napoleon — the first Emperor of the French — weak descriptivism answers that Napoleon satisfies the description ‘The first Emperor of the French’ that we associate with the name /Napoleon/. It’s precisely this view of how reference is determined for proper names that is the main target of Kripke’s thought experiments like the Gödel case.

89 To oppose a name (the *expression*) to the person to whom that name refers, I will enclose a proper name between two forward slashes.

90 First, different speakers may identify different descriptions as the semantic equivalent of a name, which means the name would have a different meaning for these speakers. As worded by Kripke (1979, 240): “Differences in properties associated with such names, strictly speaking, yield different idiotelects.” Second, for hardly any proper name we would be willing to assert that a single description defines the name *fully*. We usually relate more than one description to a name, and often none of these apply to a person *uniquely*. To quote Kripke (1981, 30): “... even a single speaker when asked ‘What description are you willing to substitute for the name?’ may be quite at a loss.”

### The Gödel case

Kripke provides us with three different lines of reasoning against descriptivist theories of names in N&N. The thought experiments presented to participants in the MMNS study are only related to what Devitt (2010, 420) calls the ‘Ignorance and Error’ argument, so out of the three arguments that’s the one we need to take a closer look at. The Ignorance and Error argument can be summarized as the idea that the person matching the description coupled with a name need not be the referent of that name. Specifically, in situations in which a speaker has limited or inaccurate knowledge of an individual’s properties, weak descriptivism gives an erroneous picture of proper name reference. Kripke attempts to demonstrate this by presenting a number of cases in which the descriptions that we are likely to associate with a name intuitively pick out the wrong referent for that name. MMNS modeled their experimental vignettes after two of these cases: the Jonah case and the Gödel case. Of these cases, the one most widely discussed in the literature is the Gödel case. For the sake of simplicity, I will only detail the Gödel case in this paper.

The Gödel case is a thought experiment in which Kripke lets us imagine the following scenario: say that we are under the impression that Gödel is the man who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic, but other than that we know nothing about Gödel. As such, we associate only one description with the *name* /Gödel/, namely ‘the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic’. As it turns out, however, unbeknownst to us Gödel did not discover the incompleteness of arithmetic. His friend Schmidt did, and Gödel simply stole his manuscript with the proof and took credit for it. Kripke now leaves us with the following question to answer: to whom does the name /Gödel/ refer? The thief of the proof — whom I will refer to as person *t*(hief) — or the mathematician who *actually* discovered the incompleteness theorem — whom I will refer to as person *d*(iscoverer)?

What’s the correct answer from the viewpoint of weak descriptivism (as we have sketched it above)? Given the assumption that ‘the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic’ is indeed the lone description that any speaker *S* associates with /Gödel/, it’s clear that weak descriptivism would predict that person *d* is the referent of /Gödel/. After all, Schmidt uniquely satisfies the description associated with /Gödel/, and weak descriptivism subscribes to the biconditional ‘if and only if person *x* uniquely satisfies the description related to a name *X* then *x* is the referent of *X*’.

As weak descriptivism would have it, Kripke observes, when we used the name /Gödel/ in the past (before the fraud was revealed), we actually referred to Schmidt all along, not to the manuscript thief. Kripke considers this conclusion to be counterintuitive. Why would the name /Gödel/ refer to person *d*, a man whose existence we were not even aware of? Moreover, when we do find out that person *d* proved the incompleteness theorem, it’s unlikely that we would now claim to know the true referent of /Gödel/. Rather, we would probably insist that Gödel, who we still label as /Gödel/, deceived us. We would hold the statement ‘Gödel is a thief’ to be true, which indicates that we regard person *t* to be the referent of /Gödel/.

If we agree with Kripke that the name /Gödel/ in his thought experiment refers to Gödel (person  $t$ ), we have found a case that challenges descriptivism as a foundational theory of reference. (It must be added: given that we also accept that speakers associate a description with /Gödel/, like ‘the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic’, that is satisfied by person  $d$  in the Gödel case.) Extrapolating our conclusion concerning the Gödel case to other situations in which a speaker has vague or wrong beliefs about a person’s properties, we can say that weak descriptivism *in general* makes reference go awry in such circumstances. Those circumstances are ubiquitous, according to Kripke. For example, most of the time the description we relate to names (even the names of famous people) is too ill-defined to refer *uniquely*. Consequently, if proper name reference works like the descriptivist account sketches, widespread reference failure would obtain. Since this is not what we observe (on a daily basis), Kripke deems it implausible that the descriptions we associate with names have anything to do with how reference is commonly determined. Via a line of reasoning that space does not permit me to talk about,<sup>91</sup> we can also conclude that it’s unlikely that any descriptive content is part of a name’s *meaning* (as strong descriptivism defends).

### The causal-chain theory

As an alternative to weak descriptivism, Kripke presents another foundational theory of proper name reference in N&N, known as the *causal-chain theory* or the *causal-historical view*. According to Kripke, through some procedure — one might call this a *baptism*<sup>92</sup> — a speaker starts calling an individual by a certain name. That is to say: a speaker picks out a specific person and labels her by using a proper name. From that point onwards, the referent of the name is *fixed*: the name keeps on referring to the same person. The speaker’s use of the name might spread through a language community: “Someone, let’s say, a baby, is born; his parents call him by a certain name. They talk about him to their friends. Other people meet him. Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain” (Kripke 1981, 91). Kripke argues that because each use of the name — each link in the chain — is causally linked to the original use, the original (fixed) reference relationship carries over from the initial use to subsequent uses of the name.<sup>93</sup> So if I introduce a name to refer to a specific person, and someone else adopts my use of that name, she necessarily refers to the same person I denoted.

It follows from the causal-chain theory that proper name reference doesn’t depend on any descriptions speakers might associate with a name (unlike weak descriptivism would claim). Although a description may be used to pick out the referent of a name initially (‘My firstborn son I shall call Ludwig’), after the baptism fixes the referent of the name, the description does not determine reference in successive uses of the name. Moreover, even though people might *associate* various descriptions with a name, the referent of a name needn’t satisfy any of these descriptions.

What would a causal-chain theorist say about the referent of /Gödel/ in the Gödel case? If we stipulate that the name /Gödel/ was originally introduced to refer to person  $t$  (Gödel), the causal-chain theory would predict this person to be the referent of /Gödel/. As such, Kripke’s foundational theory seems to be in line with our intuitions about the Gödel case, contrary to weak descriptivism.

91 In a nutshell, it is assumed that strong descriptivism entails weak descriptivism in such a way that if strong descriptivism is a true theory of name meaning, then the referent of a name is correctly determined by weak descriptivism. Given this assumption we can falsify strong descriptivism by showing that weak descriptivism fails to identify the referent of a name correctly.

92 The procedure needn’t *literally* be a baptism, nor need it be a statement along the lines of ‘As of now this person will be referred to as  $X$ ’.

93 Kripke (1981, 96-97) mentions an additional condition for reference to carry over: any subsequent speaker has to *intend* to refer to the same person as the speaker from which she adopted the name use.

### The MMNS experiment

What makes Kripke's thought experiment work against weak descriptivism? It seems that the evidential power of the Gödel case hinges on the fact that person *t* is the *intuitive* referent for /Gödel/. But do we have good reasons to believe that this is actually the case? According to MMNS the answer is no. Finding out what competent speakers intuit about reference in relevant cases is at heart an *empirical* question. But, as MMNS complained, most philosophers of language simply generalize their own intuitions about particular cases to the population of competent language users at large. That is to say: they simply assume that their intuitions about reference are widely shared by members of their language community (Machery et al. 2013, 621). Sytsma and Livengood (2011, 315) call this *a priori* assumption the *uniformity conjecture*. Any justification for this conjecture often lacks (Mallon et al. 2009, 339), or is simply given in terms of 'self-evidence'. A brief look at how Kripke (1981, 84) defends his intuitive judgement concerning the Gödel case reveals as much: "... since the man who discovered the incompleteness theory of arithmetic is in fact Schmidt, we, when we talk about 'Gödel', are in fact always referring to Schmidt. But it seems to me we are not. We simply are not." That intuitions of competent speakers might vary considerably is seldomly recognized.

So, in 2004 MMNS set out to experimentally research whether we can in fact say that referential intuitions are as universal as is often claimed (without empirical evidence) by theorists. If not, most philosophers of language appear to have categorically overestimated the evidential value of their argumentation that is based on the assumption that certain judgements are *intuitive*.

A prime motivating factor for MMNS to conduct their experiment were their suspicions that referential intuitions are not universal. These doubts did *not* come out of thin air: earlier research into laypeople's intuitions regarding philosophical thought experiments in epistemology had revealed intercultural differences in intuitions concerning what counts as 'knowledge' (Weinberg, Nichols and Stich 2001, 438-446). MMNS expected that were they to test and compare referential intuitions for different cultural groups, they would find similar results. To verify this, they performed an experiment in 2004 in which they presented a 'Western' and 'East Asian'<sup>94</sup> group of students — a group of American students, and a group of students from the University of Hong Kong — with stories modeled after Kripke's Gödel case (and Jonah case<sup>95</sup>).

Participants were given two Gödel stories, one that precisely mirrored Kripke's thought experiment in N&N (including the original names), and one that was slightly adapted from the original (featuring a Chinese name<sup>96</sup>). For easy reference, I will only familiarize the reader with the vignette in which the name /Gödel/ was used:

<sup>94</sup> Machery et al. (2004, B6) note: "A standard demographics instrument was used to determine whether subjects were Western or East Asian."

<sup>95</sup> Again, for simplicity the Jonah case will not be discussed in this paper.

<sup>96</sup> Instead of 'Gödel', the name 'Tsu Ch'ung Chih' was used. In the 'Tsu Ch'ing Chih' vignette the description 'the man who discovered the solstice times' was associated with that name (by a speaker 'Ivy').

Suppose that John has learned in college that Gödel is the man who proved an important mathematical theorem, called the incompleteness of arithmetic. John is quite good at mathematics and he can give an accurate statement of the incompleteness theorem, which he attributes to Gödel as the discoverer. But this is the only thing that he has heard about Gödel. Now suppose that Gödel was not the author of this theorem. A man called “Schmidt”, whose body was found in Vienna under mysterious circumstances many years ago, actually did the work in question. His friend Gödel somehow got hold of the manuscript and claimed credit for the work, which was thereafter attributed to Gödel. Thus, he has been known as the man who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic. Most people who have heard the name “Gödel” are like John; the claim that Gödel discovered the incompleteness theorem is the only thing they have ever heard about Gödel. (Machery et al. 2004, B6)

The vignette was followed up by the following probe question:

When John uses the name “Gödel”, is he talking about:

- (A) the person who really discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic? or
- (B) the person who got hold of the manuscript and claimed credit for the work?

(Machery et al. 2004, B6)

Subjects had to pick one of these two answer options. Notice that the description behind (A) is satisfied by Schmidt (person *d*) and the description next to (B) is satisfied by Gödel (person *t*). According to MMNS, this makes option (A) the reference outcome as produced by the *descriptivist* account of reference (of proper names), and option (B) the referent of /Gödel/ as predicted by the *causal-chain* theory of reference.

MMNS coded the answers of the participants in a binary way, such that the descriptivist answer (A) got a score of 0, and the causal-chain answer (B) got a score of 1. For each pair of Gödel stories in the experiment the scores of each participant were added up, so that a score of 2 represents two ‘causal-chain’ answers and a score of 0 represents two ‘descriptivist’ answers. MMNS hypothesized that the mean scores of the Western students were higher than those of the East Asian students. They based this hypothesis on research in cultural psychology that had indicated that “EAs [East Asians] are more inclined than Ws [Westerners] to make categorical judgments on the basis of similarity; Ws, on the other hand, are more disposed to focus on causation in describing the world and classifying things” (Machery et al. 2004, B5).

For the Gödel cases, MMNS’ hypothesis was supported by the experimental results: for both probes, Western students had significantly higher scores than the East Asian students (Machery et al. 2004, B7). The averages indicate that the East Asian students (MEAs = 0.63) were more inclined to pick the referent consistent with weak descriptivism, while Westerners (MWs = 1.13) chose the referent predicted by the causal-historical view. MMNS argue that the results of their experiments give *prima facie* evidence that at least sometimes (in Gödel cases specifically) our intuitions about what the referent of a name is depend on cultural background. This indicates that our referential intuitions cannot unproblematically be assumed to be the same across cultural groups.

On the issue of the uniformity of intuitions, the message that referential intuitions possibly depend on cultural background is not the most unsettling one we can take away from the MMNS study. Another important finding from MMNS' experiment is that the dispersion of scores *within cultural groups* is high, relative to the possible range (between 0 and 2) of scores. For example, the standard deviation for Westerners in their total score for the Gödel cases was SDWs = 0.88. So, for students with the *same* cultural background, intuitions about proper name reference (in Gödel cases) also vary considerably. Even within cultural groups, it seems that we can't safely assume that referential intuitions are shared by all. Of course, one might argue that the high within-groups variance simply reveals that the (untrained) undergraduates are confused by far-fetched thought experiments like the Gödel case. But remember, we are talking about one of the "best known thought experiments in recent philosophy of language" (Machery et al. 2004, B12) that is supposed to show beyond doubt that 'we' — laypeople included — would intuitively reject the descriptivist reference option.

So, the findings of the MMNS study seemingly indicate that the uniformity conjecture is false. But it's precisely this *a priori* assumption that allowed philosophers to use specific cases (such as the Gödel case) as evidence for (or against) a theory of reference. Seeing that MMNS' results suggest that the referential data for the Gödel case exhibit high variance, the two theories of reference we have discussed both appear to predict proper name reference incorrectly (at the enumerative level). Neither weak descriptivism nor the causal-historical view can explain the fact that intuitions about the referent of /Gödel/ vary substantially (across or within cultures). Thus, at first glance, both these theories of reference are falsified by the outcome of MMNS' experiment.

### 3. Relevance critique

Among the replies of semanticists to the 2004 MMNS experiment we can distinguish two common types of reactions that I have named 'methodological critique' and 'relevance critique'. Those who have put forth the first type of critique<sup>97</sup> predominantly focus on identifying problematic aspects of the experimental procedure MMNS use to measure referential intuitions. The main aim of this critique is to cast doubt on the *validity* of MMNS' results. Contrastingly, philosophers who have expressed some form of relevance critique have instead concerned themselves with the question 'If the 2004 MMNS study indeed proves that the referential intuitions tested are variable, what ought we conclude from this?' So, rather than worrying about whether MMNS' findings are correct (in a methodological sense), these semanticists have assumed them to be valid, and have subsequently looked critically at the *inferences* MMNS have made from them.

Unlike MMNS, these critical philosophers have argued that the 2004 empirical results have no bearing on, or are only indirectly related to the assessment of theories of reference. The conclusion that follows is that empirical studies like those of MMNS do not directly affect the semantic practice in a consequential manner.

In this paper we will not be looking at any methodological critique, but we will rather direct our attention to the specific kind of relevance critique that Deutsch (2009) and Devitt (2011) have voiced. Both Deutsch and Devitt have, in their own way, downplayed the implications MMNS' test results have for views on reference. They have done so by arguing that folk intuitions are of limited relevance to the assessment of semantic theories. While Devitt still connects some evidential value to particular folk intuitions, Deutsch seems to deny that such intuitions have any role to play at all in semantic theory evaluation. In what follows I will outline the reasoning of the two men, starting off with Devitt, the least radical thinker of the two.

97 I mainly have Lam (2010), Sytsma and Livengood (2011), and Heck Jr. (2018) in mind here.

### Devitt's defense of Kripke

Devitt grants that the intuitions of laypeople are somewhat relevant to the construction and the appraisal of theories of reference. But he criticizes MMNS' characterization of these intuitions as fundamental to semantics. Especially the specific intuitions MMNS have tested (those related to the Gödel case) are of limited interest to semanticists, Devitt maintains. The Gödel case is a hypothetical (somewhat fanciful) story, and those are not the best type of cases to consult laypeople on. The folk are not particularly good in thinking through hypothetical situations, which increases the likelihood of them making judgement mistakes. Folk intuitions regarding *actual* cases are far more reliable and hence more valuable for semanticists.

Devitt insists, however, that even within the domain of actual cases, folk intuitions are mostly relevant for *ordinary* uses of names. There are real life (less murderous) analogues to the Gödel case — the Peano axioms being attributed to Giuseppe Peano instead of Richard Dedekind is a famous example Kripke uses in N&N (Kripke 1981, 84-85) — but these cases are not your run-of-the-mill uses of names, and reference might work abnormally in those instances. It's far more important to look at folk intuitions for *humdrum* cases, because laypeople are very acquainted with such cases, and thus a layperson is "... likely to be able to judge in a fairly immediate and unreflective way what an expression refers to" (Devitt 2011, 426). In short: the intuitions MMNS tested are of little relevance to semantics compared to folk intuitions about actual, humdrum cases.

In a 2013 article, MMNS have responded to this criticism by stressing that there are as many humdrum uses of names that speak for as against descriptivism (Machery et al. 2013, 625). So, if Devitt wants to defend Kripke's anti-descriptivist argumentation, he can't count on humdrum cases to bolster his defense. Furthermore, MMNS claim that "intuitions about possible cases are likely to be needed to determine what the correct theory of reference is" (Machery et al. 2013, 623). At some point, they reckon, we will have to resort to thought experiments like the Gödel case to decide between rival theories of reference (Machery et al. 2013, 623). Actual cases are simply not divisive enough: they are consistent with too many different perspectives on how reference is determined.

But Devitt has another ace up his sleeve: an additional way in which he diminishes the relevance of MMNS' findings, is by pointing out that Kripke presents *more* arguments in N&N against descriptivism. Devitt emphasizes that these arguments do not (solely) rely on referential intuitions. Particularly the Modal argument<sup>98</sup> (which will be elaborated on in section 5) depends on metaphysical intuitions about identity and rigidity to work, not on intuitions about reference. Furthermore, laypeople are unlikely to possess such *metaphysical* intuitions, let alone reliable metaphysical intuitions. If we want to know whether some features of a person are essential to her, or if we want to know whether some designator is rigid, we have to turn to experts in metaphysics, i.e. educated, practiced philosophers. It's their metaphysical intuitions that have evidential value for the premises in Kripke's Modal argument, not the intuitions of the folk. If arguments such as Kripke's Modal argument can invalidate descriptivism, we have a different way of judging theories in semantics, next to the method of cases. So, empirical results related to that method, like those of MMNS, become less decisive in the evaluation of semantic theories.

### The triviality of intuitions

Deutsch (2009) is of the opinion that the success of arguments such as Kripke's Ignorance and Error argument do not depend on (folk) intuitions. To discredit weak descriptivism, he asserts, Kripke makes use of referential facts such as 'person *t* is the referent of /Gödel/ in the Gödel case'. The veracity of such facts is not determined by what laypeople *intuit*. Whether or not competent speakers believe Gödel to be the

<sup>98</sup> The 'modal' argument is a combination of two lines of reasoning Kripke introduces in N&N. Devitt (2010, 420) calls these 'Unwanted Necessity' argument and the 'Lost Rigidity' argument, respectively.

referent of /Gödel/ is irrelevant. Referential facts are true propositions about an expression and its referent, not about an expression and what people intuit to be its referent. For Deutsch, referential facts are “*data* for theories of reference” (Deutsch 2009, 449, emphasis original) that need to be explained, not predictions of a theory that need to be empirically verified. Kripke does not appeal to any intuitions in his Ignorance and Error argument (let alone folk intuitions), nor should he. Semanticists care about whether their views are true, not about whether they are in line with the intuitions of competent speakers.

While Deutsch recognizes that some philosophers might make use of folk intuitions to construct semantic theories, he denies that semanticists (implicitly) turn to intuitions to decide what theory of reference is the right one. MMNS’ claim that theories of reference are judged on the basis of how well their predictions overlap with intuitions is false: “Majority opinion does not determine the truth, or constitute the primary source of evidence in philosophy” (Deutsch 2009, 465). So, Deutsch rejects the method of cases as an assessment tool. What decides philosophical disputes according to him is philosophical argumentation, and such argumentation mostly relies on *a priori* knowledge. Deutsch conjectures that skepticism towards the existence of *a priori* knowledge has led experimental philosophers to the conclusion that the method of cases is the only proper approach to validating semantic theories. If *a priori* knowledge does not exist, referential facts must be *a posteriori* knowledge, or so the experimental philosopher reasons (according to Deutsch). Deutsch contests this: what competent speakers believe to be the case is not what makes referential facts true. Kripke’s argument is not weakened by the variability in intuitions MMNS found. Whether variable or not, intuitions support nor refute theories of reference (or semantic theories more generally).

#### 4. The constitutive role of enumerative intuitions and the significance of ECR

Both Devitt and Deutsch attach little evidential value to (folk) intuitions because the methods they deem important to the evaluation of theories in semantics do not rely on them. Devitt considers expert intuitions relevant to the assessment of semantic theories, and brings up that Kripke has additional arguments (next to the Ignorance and Error argument) to discredit (strong) descriptivism. Deutsch, in turn, claims that referential facts are central to the appraisal of theories of reference, and the veracity of those facts is established by *a priori* argumentation. While I agree that all these types of evidence are relevant to the evaluation of theories of meaning and reference, I will try to defend the view that in semantics any evidence in favor of one theory or another must eventually always have a basis in the enumerative intuitions of competent speakers. I believe Devitt and Deutsch underestimate the pervasiveness of enumerative intuitions in semantics because they 1) fail to recognize that enumerative intuitions are *constitutive of* semantic facts,<sup>99</sup> and 2) depreciate the role of ECR in theory evaluation, as I hope to show.

99 See Cohnitz and Haukioja (2015, 620-627) for a more elaborate defense of this position.

I will start off by discussing Deutsch' referential facts. To repeat from the previous section: referential facts are true statements about reference at the *enumerative* level, like 'Gödel/ refers to person *t* in the Gödel case.' According to Deutsch, these referential facts are about terms and their referents, by which he appears to imply that terms have referential properties in some objective sense. I believe this view to be mistaken. I am of the opinion that the reference relationship expressed by referential facts is what Searle (1998, 113-114) calls an *ontologically subjective* phenomenon. That is to say: reference, as a linguistic phenomenon, depends in its existence on the consciousness of human subjects, or animals like us. Without speakers ascribing referents to expressions, expressions don't refer. Put differently: the referring feature that some terms have belongs to the class of "[o]bserver relative features of the world" (Searle 2005, 3). This is not to say the referent — the object being referred to — is ontologically subjective.<sup>100</sup> No semanticist would argue that because /Napoleon/ refers to Napoleon, the existence of Napoleon depends on human consciousness. However, were it not for human intentionality, expressions like /Napoleon/ could not refer at all. The 'pointing out' property that expressions like names have is not something they possess in some objective sense: a word doesn't point out anything in and of itself. A word only points out something *to us*. Thus, the semantic reality that referential facts capture is not a reality that exists independently of human consciousness. It's the collective beliefs of a community that bring the semantic properties of expressions, including their referential properties, into existence. We say that these collective beliefs are *constitutive of* referential facts. If we go along with this view of reference for the time being, where do enumerative intuitions enter the picture?

Say that a subject from MMNS' experiment judges that /Gödel/ refers to person *t* in the Gödel case (for John), what does this tell us? I believe that a subject's judgement can best be seen as a *report* of her enumerative intuitions. These intuitions are the spontaneous output of a subject's linguistic competence. In this case, that competence consists of a speaker's ability to both apply and interpret expressions in accordance with the prevalent enumerative referential facts in her community.

However, what those referential facts look like is determined by a group of speakers {S1, S2, ... , Sn} themselves. That person *t* is the referent of /Gödel/ is only a referential fact if the group *collectively accepts* it to be one. So, while the enumerative intuitions of a competent speaker S1 provide *evidence for* what the prevalent referential facts of her community {S1, S2, ... , Sn} are, more importantly, those intuitions are also *constitutive of* those facts.

What I have said above about referential facts and referential enumerative intuitions, of course applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to enumerative facts and intuitions about meaning. Like reference, meaning is an ontologically subjective phenomenon, and the meaning of a term is the content that is collectively accepted as such.

Unless a semantic theory is normative (i.e. revisionist), it must be consistent with semantic facts if it is to be accurate, as ECR dictates. Since enumerative intuitions are constitutive of these facts, semantic theories have to be consistent with these intuitions as well. Note that this is a *principle* requirement for semantic theories. Because semantic theories are immediately invalidated if they fail to meet ECR (as I showed in section 2), when we evaluate a semantic theory we ought to first check that it satisfies ECR before we consider any other type of evidence. The *a priori* argumentation praised by Deutsch and Devitt only becomes relevant once we have confirmed that ECR is met: such argumentation is *secondary evidence*. One might have the most intricate *a priori* argument supporting a particular semantic theory, it wouldn't matter if that theory turned out to fail ECR.

<sup>100</sup> In other words: the referent of a term needn't be *internal* to speakers. Semantic externalism is compatible with reference being ontologically subjective.

Furthermore, because semantic phenomena are ontologically subjective, even if we do use *a priori* argumentation in the evaluation of theories, the soundness of any argument used in favor or against a theory in semantics at one point or another hinges on the make-up of the enumerative intuitions of a linguistic community. We can exemplify this by revealing the inner workings of a part of Kripke's Modal argument that according to both Deutsch (2009, 452) and Devitt (2011, 421-423) disproves strong descriptivism. One aspect of Kripke's Modal argument against descriptivism is what Devitt (2011, 420) calls the 'Unwanted Necessity' argument. It roughly goes like this: if strong descriptivism is true, a name like /Napoleon/ means something along the lines of [the first Emperor of the French]. If this is true, then according to the *substitution principle*<sup>101</sup> we ought to be able to exchange /Napoleon/ with the expression 'the first Emperor of the French' *salva veritate* — 'with preserved truth', i.e. with the truth value of the statement remaining the same — in the modal statement (m):

(m) It is necessarily true that Napoleon, if he existed, was the first Emperor of the French.

Kripke, Deutsch and Devitt would say that (m) is a false statement: it is not true that Napoleon is the first Emperor of the French in all possible worlds (in which he exists). After all, it seems reasonable to say that Napoleon might not have become the first Emperor of the French if things had taken a different course.<sup>102</sup> But, the argument continues, if we substitute /Napoleon/ with 'The first Emperor of the French' in (m), statement (m) becomes true instead of false. And so, as the substitution principle tells us, /Napoleon/ and 'The first Emperor of the French' cannot mean the same: strong descriptivism is a false theory of name meaning.

However, whether a statement like (m) is true depends (at least partly) on what the name /Napoleon/ means. This, in turn, depends on the enumerative intuitions of a linguistic community, since those are *constitutive of* the meaning of /Napoleon/ (and other names). If a community collectively accepts that /Napoleon/ means [the first Emperor of the French], then these expressions *can* be substituted *salva veritate* in (m). Thus, even Kripke's Modal argument — which supposedly only relies on modal intuitions — implicitly relies on enumerative semantic intuitions. If we want to assess a theory in semantics, we can't escape enumerative intuitions because these are constitutive of the facts about meaning and reference that such theories are ultimately about.

## 5. Closing

I believe to have sufficiently shown that the attempts by Deutsch (2009) and Devitt (2011) to downplay the evidential value of MMNS' findings for semantic theories fail to be convincing. I have argued that the supposedly *a priori* argumentation semanticists use to (in)validate theories ultimately rests on enumerative intuitions, because those intuitions are constitutive of the semantic facts employed in a priori argumentation. I conclude, pace Deutsch and Devitt, that if referential intuitions exhibit high (intercultural) variance, the ramifications for the assessment of theories like the causal-historical view are considerable.

<sup>101</sup> If two expressions A and B have the same meaning, they can be substituted for on another in a statement *salva veritate*.

<sup>102</sup> Napoleon might have died while serving as an artillery officer before becoming an emperor, for example.

What are those ramifications then? Given that we assume that /Gödel/ was originally introduced to refer to person  $t$  (in the Gödel case), we must conclude that the causal-chain theory is not consistent with enumerative facts about reference. After all, that theory posits that person  $t$  is the referent of /Gödel/, a claim that cannot be upheld if there is no consensus between two cultural groups about whom the referent of /Gödel/ is. The causal-historical view does not leave room for referential pluralism at the enumerative level. So, if we would have empirically shown that such pluralism obtains, ECR would disqualify the causal-historical view as a theory of reference for proper names. In a similar vein, weak descriptivism would be discredited, since that theory neither predicts that the referent of /Gödel/ changes depending on the cultural group surveyed.

To conclude: empirical results like those of MMNS' 2004 experiment could potentially have major implications for some prominent semantic proper name theories. If that experiment shows that referential facts differ cross-culturally, theories like the causal-historical view and weak descriptivism fail to satisfy ECR, which renders them defective. Whether MMNS' study is indeed an experiment that proves referential pluralism obtains — something which proponents of *methodological critique* dispute — is another question entirely. That issue needs to be (and has been) discussed separately. What we can say, however, is that both Deutsch and Devitt underestimate the role that folk intuitions have to play in the evaluation of semantic theories. The veracity of a semantic theory cannot be determined without an appeal to empirical results.

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## “One day I shall be Queen?”

Thinking About Rational Choices in the Face of Epistemic Transformations

Chiara Stenico

Elizabeth, daughter of King George VI, happens to find herself touring the Commonwealth when her father passes away. The king of England has died, and she is next in the line of succession. This is an event she has not consciously anticipated. When she was born, Elizabeth was only third in line and thus not even remotely close to becoming queen. Her accession to the throne is an abrupt yet very real possibility. She now faces the following decision: Should she give up the throne or become queen?

How should she decide? This is a high-stakes decision, and it better be based on solid ground. Rational choice theory—the standard decision-making framework for most economists and many social scientists and philosophers—would give Elizabeth clear advice. First, she should consider the available options: become queen or abdicate. Second, she should identify the possible outcomes for each option. She should then assign probability and utility values that reflect her beliefs and preferences. Third, she should choose the option with the highest expected value. But can we plausibly expect Elizabeth, or any other decision-maker, to reason this way about such a decision?

Rational choice theory assumes that you can always determine expected utility values and always have an idea of what the space of all the possible outcomes looks like.<sup>103</sup> And yet, Elizabeth is not facing some ordinary decision, such as whether to go groom the horses or stay inside to read books. Her decision is not merely uncertain: it is *profoundly* uncertain on the values she can compute to being queen.

Elizabeth faces an extraordinary decision that will change her “in a deep and fundamental way” (Paul 2015, 761). Whether as a princess or presumably, as queen, her future self will likely believe and desire different things. Her uncertainty is then *more* profound than uncertainty on the outcomes of her decision insofar as her future self will change—due to one decision or the other—and with it the value that she would assign to such outcomes.<sup>104</sup> This sets her decision apart from any ordinary decisions. For being queen is not just any experience, but a life transformative one, or so says L.A. Paul.

In a well-known argument, L.A. Paul (2014; 2015) claims that these kinds of decisions—“life transformative decisions”—are a *challenge* that rational choice theory cannot meet.<sup>105</sup> She argues that this profound uncertainty on the outcomes from transformative decisions cannot be solved: as a decision-maker, you cannot assign values to such outcomes. Elizabeth cannot tell whether she will enjoy leading the country, nor what she will believe once in her father’s shoes.

Rational choice theory needs outcome values to formulate advice for Elizabeth. This means that she cannot use a decision rule—such as choosing the option with the highest expected utility—to make a principled rational decision for transformative decisions.

This conclusion could not but spark debate on the matter.<sup>106</sup> Perhaps you may not be ascending the throne

103 Savage’s decision theory for decision-making *under certainty* appeals to a spatial dimension. In his model, a decision is defined for a world, described by the states (or events) of that world (i.e. the ‘states space’) and the outcomes that obtain in that world (i.e. the ‘outcome space’). According to Savage’s theory, these worlds are necessarily well-specified. One idea is that outcomes are specified for each state of the world and under each act. For example, in the event of rain, whether I decide to take or not to take an umbrella, the outcome will be specified, and the same applies in the event of no rain (Steele and Stefánsson 2020).

104 Note that rational choice theory standardly works as a framework for decisions *under uncertainty*: that is, it requires that decision-makers assess their probabilistic beliefs that one outcome will obtain from an option. In Elizabeth’s case, the uncertainty also refers to how her beliefs and desires will have changed once the outcomes have been obtained.

105 Note that Paul challenges rational modelling on much weaker bases than Expected Utility Theory would require. Even allowing for imperfect conditions, for example, approximated values or ignorance, you cannot expect individuals—such as Elizabeth—to follow a rational decision rule for her decisions (Paul 2015, 152).

106 The problem of transformative experiences and decisions has been, in fact, widely discussed. Most replies to Paul’s argument are available in the special Issue “What you can’t expect when you’re expecting” in *Res Philosophica* 92 (2): 149-170.

anytime soon. Still, you may have to take analogous life transformative decisions: for example, deciding on having a kid or deciding on your career path. In that case, you would want a decision rule to guide you on properly thinking about your choice.<sup>107</sup>

In this essay, I will consider a reply to Paul made by Jennifer Carr. This reply is interesting for it offers a promising argument to rescue rational choice theory from Paul's challenge. To do so, Carr uses epistemic utility theory and constructs a model such that rational evaluations for life transformative decisions are possible. Her idea is to look at what she calls 'conceptual resources' (hereafter: CRs). By clarifying their value to the agent's beliefs,<sup>108</sup> she uses them for a rational assessment which helps the agent decide. Even though CRs are central to Carr's model, she provides no substantial definition for them. You can think of them as *cognitive abilities*, such as drawing distinctions or inferences in the logical space of possible outcomes. One plausible and relatable example could be the following. Having and using the concept of 'honour' means having the ability to distinguish A (every outcome that requires an understanding of honour) from B (every other outcome that does not require so). Consider how A could be 'being honoured as a divine figure' in Elizabeth's case. In Carr's view, what matters is how she can draw this distinction between such an outcome and another. She seems to be satisfied with defining CRs on the basis of these distinctions only.

I will contend that CRs are not adequately defined by Carr. More specifically, using CRs to address the challenge that life transformative choices pose on the value-assignments on Elizabeth's outcomes requires to qualify CRs beyond a distinction-based definition. In other words, the solution that Carr proposes to make rational evaluations possible for transformative decisions is only workable if CRs are *qualified*. By a qualification of CRs, I mean being able to specify the CRs that Elizabeth would need to make a decision in the way Carr's epistemic model suggests, thereby solving Paul's challenge. My aim is two-fold: to (a) show how Carr's proposal has limits in the way she characterizes CRs, and (b) propose a qualified notion of CRs such that it does not have those same limits and can properly respond to the challenge and make use of her proposed epistemic model.

I will proceed as follows. In Section 2, I will shortly present Paul's argument on life transformative decisions. In Section 3, I will introduce Carr's reply. This section will outline the model Carr proposes for transformative decisions in fair detail and describe how she characterizes CRs. In Section 4, I will juxtapose her characterization with what I call a '*qualified*' notion of CRs. Building on such a qualified notion, I will show how Carr's proposal can be reconciled with Paul's challenge. Finally, in Section 5, I will conclude by returning to Queen Elizabeth II.

107 The interpretation or use of rational choice theory that I am assuming is more than just descriptive: it assumes that rational choice theory can be used to give normative prescriptions to an agent on how to act in the form of a decision rule.

108 Note that an agent's beliefs are expressed in probabilistic terms in epistemic utility models. This refers to an epistemic norm called 'probabilism' in epistemic utility theory (Pettigrew 2019).

## 2. The challenge of Laurie Paul

You and I make the most important decisions of our lives without knowing how the future will change us. I have decided to move to the Netherlands, not knowing the person I would become. Paul introduces her argument on life transformative decisions by questioning how normative decision theory could have helped me, could help Elizabeth or any of us with these decisions.<sup>109</sup> Paul goes on to claim: if you analyse these transformative decisions, you will find a problem with assigning values to your outcomes. Eventually, you will look at a challenge that cannot be solved.

As I have mentioned, applying rational choice theory requires that one assigns values to the potential outcomes of one's possible actions. However, in the face of life transformative decisions, one is unable to assign values to options that are transformative in their nature or, more precisely, to the outcomes of such options. The challenge to rational choice theory comes from the inability of an agent to apply a decision rule that can help her evaluate her options.

Now, how does Paul characterize these decisions? Were Elizabeth to choose to become queen, she would undergo what Paul calls a 'life transformative experience'. Having a kid, taking up an academic career, and becoming a vampire are all analogous experiences. What they have in common is a revelatory aspect at the moment when you enter this experience. That is, once you become a vampire, you are revealed what this experience is like: what the experience of immortality is like or what not being hungry for food feels like to you. The revelation or, if you want, epiphany<sup>110</sup> brings about a new insight that primarily refers to *beliefs* and *desires*. Paul explains (2015, 155) experiences are life transformative when, before transformation, that is before any revelation or epiphany, you cannot reason what your experience *will be like* post-transformation, that is when the epiphany is concluded. This is because you cannot know how your future self will experience and think about that same experience. You cannot know what it will be like for decisions with a transformative character, such as having a kid, choosing an academic career, becoming a vampire, a priest or a queen. You cannot know what you will feel or what you will *believe* and *desire* being a mum, a scholar, a different person, a queen. At the same time, you cannot know what it would be like if you had chosen differently.

Paul's argument distinguishes two kinds of transformations for transformative experiences: an epistemic transformation and a personal transformation. These correspond to two challenges.<sup>111</sup> In this essay, I will only address the former epistemic challenge that arises from an epistemic transformation.<sup>112</sup> The epistemic transformation refers to your newly transformed epistemic situation, that is, the kinds of beliefs you hold. The idea is that post-transformation, you obtain '*what it's like*' knowledge. This is, again, knowledge in terms of your beliefs and desires. Once you have made your decision, you obtain knowledge and hence learn about the values of being queen or not being queen. Before then, you cannot know nor significantly learn what it is like to be queen or not to be queen. In this sense, you are in a different—"impoverished"—epistemic position than prior to transformation (Paul 2015, 155). The epistemic transformation describes one kind of uncertainty that rational modelling *cannot*, according to Paul, overcome or solve: the uncertainty about Elizabeth's epistemic situation. How should Elizabeth address such uncertainty?

109 This is, as mentioned above in footnote n.2, a decision theory which has more relaxed assumptions than standard rational choice theory: Paul wants to capture norms for ordinary successful reasoning, and hence, account for approximated values or ignorance of the decision-maker.

110 This is a term Paul has sometimes used to give an idea of what she means by radical transformation without any definitional commitment.

111 Note that Paul herself does not use this terminology. She only talks about 'epistemically' and 'personally transformative experiences', which I translate as the two challenges to be met if we want to use rational modelling for these transformative experiences. Carr's argument does not tackle the personal transformation challenge. Instead, she assumes stability of preferences. In this sense, Carr's argument is not an exhaustive counterargument to Paul's transformative experience problem. It does not solve every issue that Paul raises about transformative experiences and decisions.

112 There is a second challenge which completes, in fact, the challenge that transformative decisions raise on outcome values: the personal challenge. The upshot of it is that an agent's core preferences may change post-transformation (ibid., 155). In Elizabeth's case, the preferences that she holds over her options when touring the Commonwealth do not necessarily match those she would hold post-transformation, either as a princess or as queen. Note that core preferences are higher order preferences. The idea is that such core preferences will unlikely be stable in the face of a transformative experience: this means that the agent cannot know at the time of the decision-making whether she will satisfy her preferences post-transformation (Paul 2015, 521).

### 3. Jennifer Carr and a reply to L.A. Paul: a model for Epistemic Transformations and Conceptual Resources

When rational modelling seems to be of no help with transformative decisions, J. Carr in *Epistemic Expansions* (2015) shows a way out. Her article argues that the *epistemic challenge* need not be a challenge to rational choice theory. To do so, she proposes an *epistemic utility model* for transformative decisions.

Broadly, the model rests on the idea of conceptual resources—the agent’s cognitive *abilities* to draw distinctions in the logical space of possibilities. First, CRs are centrally relevant to Carr’s model because they explain what the problem of uncertainty on the outcomes is all about. Second, Carr translates such a problem into one of conceptual resources: Elizabeth is incapable of assigning the outcome values because she does not have the CRs to do so.

In the following sections, I will clarify Elizabeth’s problem of CRs by describing the epistemic model that Carr has in mind. In Section 3.1, I will first describe the idea of partial credences and how they relate to credence functions and CRs in Carr’s model. Then, in Section 3.2, I will discuss how CRs are used in the model: these are what you *compare* to evaluate your beliefs.

#### 3.1. J. Carr’s Epistemic Utility Model

Carr starts from the premise that you do not always have an opinion, in terms of (dis)beliefs or upholding judgement, towards every proposition (Carr 2015, 219). A proposition is the object of an agent’s beliefs. Together with others, a proposition describes a possible world (Genin and Huber, 2021), for example, a world in which you are the Queen of England—in other words, Elizabeth’s outcomes. Sometimes, you are not in the right position to say something about this possible world or even see a proposition in such a world. For example, you have never been queen: you may not be able to form a belief, nor to uphold judgment about ‘waking up in the morning *as* a queen’. Maybe you do not even know there is such a thing as ‘waking up as a queen’. This means that for sets of propositions like ‘what it is like to be a queen’—a set of propositions including ‘waking up in the morning as a queen’ and ‘having lunch with Jackie Kennedy’—you may only have partial credences. Let me clarify.

Carr uses a *partial credences’ framework*,<sup>113</sup> in which a *credence* represents the strength of your beliefs in a proposition. Epistemic utility theory constructs functions for credences. Formally speaking, a credence function is defined over a set of propositions, returning values (real numbers  $[0,1]$ ) for each individual proposition (at a given time  $t$ ). Now, epistemology commonly does not account for those cases in which you do not have an opinion on a proposition (Carr 2015, 2019). But, as I have mentioned, there can be such cases, and these are cases of transformative decisions and experiences. Carr wants to open up epistemology to them. She introduces the possibility for a *partial* credence function in her model, which is an epistemic utility function that is *only partially* defined. This means that she explores an epistemic utility function for Elizabeth such that *it does* account for the fact that she may not have an opinion on some propositions.

Now, a (partial) credence function assigns an epistemic utility (dis)value to Elizabeth’s credences. Meaning that it evaluates Elizabeth’s *degree of belief* over all the propositions that make up a world in which she is queen (e.g. having lunch with Jackie Kennedy), and over all the propositions that make up a world in which she is just a princess (e.g., having lunch with her kids). Once again, these worlds’ descriptions apply only to those propositions that Elizabeth can “speak about” or even “see”.

<sup>113</sup> Epistemic utility theory is in line with theories of partial beliefs (for example, Bayesianism). For more information refer to Pettigrew (2019).

Here is where CRs, the core concept for the epistemic model, comes into play: CRs. In fact, CRs determine whether I can or cannot see some propositions, and so they determine the (partial) credence function for a world. Remember how Carr conceives of CRs, merely as the abilities “to draw logical distinctions in the space of possibilities” (ibid., 225). Plausibly, what she means by this is being able to both see and say something about the propositions of an (impoverished) prior to transformation world, and about a post-transformation one: for example, propositions of a world in which Elizabeth is just a princess and those of a world in which she has ascended the throne, and she is effectively experiencing being queen. More precisely, a CR allows to distinguish between propositions prior to transformation, and post-, for example, between a proposition (e.g., living in Buckingham Palace) and its negation (i.e., not living there). Think back to the initial example of the concept of honour. Having such a concept allows us to distinguish between the proposition ‘being honoured as a divine figure’ and ‘not being honoured as such’. In other words, having this concept makes it so that you can see both the propositions just mentioned.

### 3.2. Conceptual Resources and Comparability

Provided that the conceptual tools determine credences and the related (partial) credence functions at hand (ibid., 220), an epistemic model should be able to account for and (epistemically) assess conceptually distinct situations. These are situations in which the decision-maker does not have the CRs to assess all the propositions of a world—hence, establish the value of an outcome; and situations where she does hold all CRs to have a complete credence function. Carr’s model aims to address the issue of transformative decisions and experiences by accounting for the conceptual change that occurs via the underlying transformation: from not having what it is like knowledge—that is, not being able to say something about or even see some propositions of a world—to the opposite situation.

Carr’s model accounts for such a conceptual change as follows. The model compares partial credence functions (c), characterized by limited conceptual possibilities, with complete credence functions (c+).<sup>114</sup> These are, respectively, the partial credence function describing an epistemic state before transformation (e.g., the state in which Elizabeth is touring the Commonwealth), and the complete credence function describing the post-transformation state (e.g., the state in which Elizabeth is either queen or princess upon her decision). Consider that, traditionally, epistemic decision theory presupposes credence functions’ comparability over the *same* set of propositions. This means that it only compares situations where the decision-maker “sees” all the propositions. Carr does not want to accept this limit for epistemic decision theory, and she aims to contribute by making sure her model “accommodates that conceptual change has epistemic (dis)value” (ibid., 222).

To sum up, Carr’s model aims to address the issue of transformative decisions and experiences by accounting for the conceptual change that occurs with the transformation: from not being able to say something about or even see some propositions of a world to having what it is like knowledge. This, in formal terms, means to allow for comparability of credence functions which are defined over different sets of propositions. How these credence functions are assessed (in terms of epistemic (dis)value) depends on the properties of the credence function: I will not address this second—normative—aspect of the model. Instead, the elements of the model so far described will suffice to follow my argument for why the definition that Carr provides for CRs is problematic to answer the epistemic challenge.

<sup>114</sup> Note that a complete credence function describes a situation in which the agent has sufficient CRs to assign values to each proposition in a post-transformation world. It follows that this is a situation in which one is able to see and speak about all the propositions that describe that world.

#### 4. An alternative to CRs: *Qualified CRs*

This section will introduce why Carr's definition of CRs is unsatisfactory and why she should refer to a qualified version of CRs instead. In what follows, I will first, in Section 4.1, describe my proposal for qualified CRs. Qualified CRs will provide more information about CRs themselves, against a minimal understanding of those, and better clarify the value of CRs to an agent's credences. Second, in Section 4.2, I will illustrate what motivates my proposal and why qualified CRs are, in fact, able to meet the challenge that Paul raises.

##### 4.1. A proposal to qualify CRs

Carr does not offer a substantive definition of CRs. In her view, CRs have two characteristics: (i) they are abilities to see and say something about the logical space of possibilities; and (ii) they allow you to see and distinguish  $A$  from  $\neg A$ , infer that  $A$  or  $\neg A$ , and negate that  $A$  or not  $\neg A$ . Thus, CRs can allow you to distinguish between 'living in Buckingham Palace' and ' $\neg$  living there', inferring, and negating other propositions that you see. The problem with this definition for CRs is that it does not contain any specification on the cognitive tools to draw the mentioned distinctions.

It seems that if you consider the ability to draw logical distinctions between the various propositions that you can entertain in different worlds, you may want to know what *kind* of abilities allow you to draw distinctions. In other words, how do you distinguish between  $A$  or  $\neg A$ ? In this sense, you may want to qualify those abilities to draw distinctions. One relevant reason for this is precisely an informative one: you may want to know more about how CRs work. Recall how CRs determine a credence function, returning values for those propositions that you see or can speak about. By specifying those abilities to draw distinctions, qualifying CRs can provide information on how an agent's credences relate to the CRs she holds or not in a world or outcome.

Now, consider how Elizabeth could possibly qualify CRs in her specific case. The CRs she may have at hand—determining a credence function—may be rather varied. Among these CRs there could be the following: (1) Testimony reliance (Dougherty, Horowitz and Sliwa 2015, 308): Elizabeth could consult her uncle who, in the recent past, abdicated from the throne and whom she trusts as a testifier. (2) Inferences from relevant subjects' behaviour (ibid., 311): Elizabeth could appeal to what she observed about her late father in the past years. (3) Inferences from similar (and resembling) experiences (ibid., 312): in this case, Elizabeth may refer back to her experiences as royal, particularly when people were giving her a distinct treatment.<sup>115</sup> Note how these instances of CRs are in line with Carr's definition for CRs, each one describing an ability to see and say something about the space of possibilities. Take testimony reliance: this can be interpreted as the ability to engage with the space of possibilities, based on someone else's word. Furthermore, it seems plausible to think that these kinds of CRs, qualified CRs, would help determine epistemic value of a credence function. Elizabeth could realistically form a probabilistic belief on what it will be like to govern based on her uncle's testimony.

Consider now the following to see how there are advantages to qualifying CRs beyond 'cognitive abilities to draw distinctions'. Based on the same testimony, Elizabeth could plausibly form a probabilistic belief on what kinds of marital duties and concerns she will have once she is queen. By qualifying CRs the way I did, Elizabeth could reasonably be able to assign values to propositions other than  $A$ ;  $\neg A$ , that is a *binary* distinction between logical possibilities. Elizabeth could assign a value to an additional proposition to the set

<sup>115</sup> Here I am assuming all these resources are reliable. The probabilistic credences we form about them do not deal with reliability as such, but with the expectations on truth values.

of propositions, for example, ‘having marital infidelity concerns’. A qualified CR—in this case, testimony reliance—seems to be able to uncover other propositions than  $A$  and  $\neg A$  (e.g., ‘being respected and honoured by the British citizen’ and ‘ $\neg$  being respected and honoured’).

If what I just described is plausible, qualified CRs seem to have two positive implications: having *more credences*—probabilistic beliefs over single propositions—and, at least in some cases, uncover *additional* propositions to the overall set of propositions.<sup>116</sup> One CR such as testimony reliance will help Elizabeth develop probabilistic beliefs over ‘what it will be like to govern’ and other single propositions making up a world in which she is the sovereign—that is, the set of all propositions. What is more, Elizabeth has the chance to uncover some propositions which may be significant to her decision, for example, propositions about marriage. Generally, the idea is that qualified CRs seem to describe the space of possibilities and one’s ability to navigate this space or world in more detail.

These two positive implications from qualified CRs show how qualifying CRs clarifies the relationship between CRs and an agent’s beliefs. First, it tells you that one can form a belief on one or more propositions based on the same CR. The uncle’s testimony reliance will plausibly help Elizabeth develop beliefs over different propositions. Second, qualifying CRs tells you that more propositions can be uncovered such that you can form a belief about them. The same testimony reliance can uncover propositions other than  $A$  and  $\neg A$ : for example, ‘being respected and honoured by the British citizen’ and ‘ $\neg$  being respected and honoured’. Not qualifying CRs tells you no such things, in fact, it leaves the relationship between CRs and an agent’s beliefs rather vague.

I will now turn to how a *qualified* notion for CRs can address Paul’s epistemic challenge. That is, I will investigate why a qualified notion should be preferred: to adequately account for the epistemic challenge.

#### 4.2. *Qualified CR as Means to Truth-ends*

The reason why Carr’s definition of CRs is unsatisfactory relates to the epistemic challenge and one adequate response to it. First, remember how Paul raises the epistemic challenge on account of the incapacity of an agent to assign values to her outcomes due to a lack of the necessary ‘*what it’s like*’ knowledge. The agent can only access this knowledge post-transformation, making it impossible for her to rationally assess outcomes from transformative decisions.

Now, I want to argue that only a qualified version of CRs can adequately respond to this challenge and recover the agent’s ability to assign values to the outcomes from her decisions. To do so, I propose to examine what this challenge aims at.

A reasonable interpretation of the ends of the challenge would be an agent’s access to outcome values,<sup>117</sup> post-transformation (Paul 2015, 157). Particularly, Paul thinks of *subjective* values (ibid., 152). These are the values of being in a mental state experiencing ‘what it’s like’ (ibid., 153). For Elizabeth, this is a mental state that she can be in experiencing being queen. Note how these are ‘first-personal values’ (Paul 2014, 6), derived from how you—personally—experience a certain experience. Carr aims at a much less demanding result: *epistemic values*. Specifically, values that tend to be as accurate as possible, maintaining an objective truth as the standard of accuracy. This means that credence functions would ideally return true values, according to an objective notion of truth: “a credence has greater epistemic utility at a world if it’s closer to the truth in that world, i.e. if it has greater accuracy” (Carr 2015, 513). Thus, what is desirable is proximity

<sup>116</sup> How to sum or subtract single credences is an important matter. The different strategies to do that describe the properties or epistemic norms of an epistemic model. Refer to Carr (2015), Section 3, for a discussion on such properties.

<sup>117</sup> Note that Paul argues such an end can never be met. You must live through that specific experience to get to know ‘what it’s like’ for your values. This is a limit to human nature and you cannot get a hold on these phenomenal values but when you have experienced it.

to truth, or conversely, distance from falsity (ibid., 221).<sup>118</sup>

Now, you can find symmetry between what both the epistemic challenge and Carr's epistemic model aim at: roughly arriving at some kind of truth values. Consider the first kind of values, namely subjective values. You would want to access such values for pragmatic purposes to make the highest expected utility decision. You would want to know how you personally will live a transformative experience, to make a good assessment of your options prior-transformation and make the best decision possible. Paul's relentless demand for subjectivity reveals the relevance of subjective values.<sup>119</sup> Subjective values play a pivotal role in her argument, for any proposal that rules out a first-person perspective is not worth considering because not authentic (Paul 2015, 761). Such values should match the *truth* of your beliefs, desires, dispositions post-transformation. The values you would want to access are those that map *truthfully* onto your subjective values post-transformation. It follows that, reasonably, you can interpret these subjective values as containing a claim to truth and this is reaching the truth in a post-transformation world. Such truth is independent of your current desires and beliefs. In this sense, it is a truth *in* a post-transformation world parallel to the truth that the epistemic model aims at: a truth *in* that world, however dependent on your future beliefs and desires formed only due to your transformative experience.

You may wonder: Why expose the symmetry of ends? After all, the model already assumes that truth is what you care about when it comes to epistemic transformations. Yet, Carr is saying little about what truth means to the epistemic challenge posed by transformative experiences. Only once you have established this—that such a truth is, in fact, meaningful to the epistemic challenge—can you claim to be proposing a model for transformative decisions that adequately accounts for a fundamental aspect of transformative decisions. In fact, you can clarify the relationship between truth and CRs by showing how the notion I propose can reconcile Carr's model with Paul's challenge.

How do *qualified* CRs meet the ends of the epistemic challenge? In fact, how do *qualified* CRs help us assign values to the outcomes from a transformative decision? Assuming that CRs are the abilities that you need to approach truth values, what helps you get there—moving closer to meet such values—should reasonably be given more *emphasis*. In other words, the *ends* to the epistemic challenge demand more emphasis on the *means* to such ends. CRs should reasonably be paid more attention in Carr's attempt to have rational assessments for transformative decisions.

Consider the following. CRs allow you to be further or closer to the truth (value 1), compared to non-means, that is not using any CR at hand. A CR, conceived of as the ability to see or say something about a proposition, having an opinion on it, seems comparatively *better* than not having it. The idea is to show how having more concepts and credences precisely puts the necessary emphasis on the means to truth-ends. This is because you better explore how CRs relate to an agent's beliefs.

First, note that not having an opinion or belief *does not* in any way relate to truth or falsity. You could decide to treat this situation, which is formally called a "non-attitude", as the furthest you can be from truth or, for example, impose a rule on how to value non-attitudes.<sup>120</sup> Formally, this means that you would decide on the properties for your epistemic utility functions. Assume for now that you do not—you do not decide how to treat non-attitudes. This means that you only consider those propositions you can form an opinion about for partial credence functions—the propositions you can see and speak about. You can show that qualified CRs are the means to a desirable truth-end, no matter non-attitudes.

Consider one qualified CRs example. You can plausibly claim that Elizabeth is in a *better* epistemic position by relying on the testimony of her uncle and reminding herself how she, as a princess, was never allowed to speak her mind. She has more knowledge of the truth (and falsity) *than* if she had none of the

<sup>118</sup> Most epistemic utility models assume gradational accuracy which is the closeness of a credence function to truth.

<sup>119</sup> This is a recurrent theme in Paul's Replies (2015) to the other authors.

<sup>120</sup> This is what Carr (2015) does when discussing the properties of her model. See Section 3 of her text.

mentioned concepts. This does not seem overly contentious. Having more concepts and more credences, at least in this case, seems better than having fewer credences. Specifically, the idea of summing positive credences' utilities (however small) seems to benefit a truth-end. Because you are silent on non-attitudes, having more credences, more beliefs over propositions world—the world in which Elizabeth is queen, for example—seems better than having less of those. Having more credences is then desirable to a truth-end.

My proposal for qualified CRs shows how only by qualifying CRs can you clarify the positive relationship between credences and CRs, which is not otherwise substantially clarified with non-qualified CRs. Recall how Section 4.1 concludes on the two positive implications of my proposal: having more credences over single propositions and uncovering additional propositions in the set of all propositions. Consider the testimony from Elizabeth's uncle. Given this CR, she is in a better epistemic position because she cannot only judge a proposition 'x', but also judge an additional proposition 'y'. The same testimony of Elizabeth's uncle allows her to judge, say, other people's inauthentic behaviour, but also form a credence about the crown's interference in her marital life. Qualifying CRs this way entails having more credences, not only in virtue of specifying a higher number of CRs but also in virtue of having such specified concepts to help you with a richer array of propositions, a more detailed world of propositions. Thus, only exploring the relationship between credences and CRs, and observing the positive implications just mentioned, seriously emphasizes the truth-ends of the epistemic challenge.

To clarify why qualifying CRs adequately considers CRs as means to truth ends, suppose that you do not qualify CRs. Suppose, in fact, that you are only using CRs as Carr intended in her model. Elizabeth can now likely only distinguish between, say, 'being treated differently' from '–being treated differently', and not ever come to uncover a proposition such as 'having marital issues'. With qualified CRs she can do more than a binary propositional distinction. She is in a better epistemic position *than* with unqualified CRs because she can assign truth-values to more propositions *than* she could have foreseen. She can assign a truth value to 'having marital issues' too and better define the truth of that world or outcome: being queen, post-transformation. Failing to explore the relationship between credences and CRs, and identify such a better epistemic position, means failing to have truth-ends seriously considered within the model. If you want to do so—seriously considering truth-ends—you should explore and better clarify the relationship between CRs and credences. *Qualified* CRs precisely take this role and allow you to see how more credences better serve truth-ends.

Now, recall that I assumed non-attitudes to be undefined on truth-values. Leaving non-attitudes undefined or untreated would not do justice to an argument based on a positive relationship between credences and CRs, and the idea of having more credences. Now, you can show that even when defining non-attitudes on truth-values, that is when you say how one should value a non-attitude, one should choose to qualify CRs.

Suppose there can be non-attitudes—that is not having an opinion or a belief over a proposition—that are better than credences that are 'no better than chance' (Carr 2015, 232): for example when Elizabeth can attach a small probability (less than 0.5) to what represents her belief about having marital issues. In this case, you may think a non-attitude is better. In fact, what use could Elizabeth make of such a credence about a world? Would this mean that having more beliefs is not always better in transformative decision-making, after all? From a practical rationality perspective, it seems so. If Elizabeth could make a choice, a credence with a small probability attached would be useless to her evaluation. It would not help an assessment of the expected utility values of her decision options. How should she be helped by knowing that she most probably will not have marital issues? From an epistemic rationality perspective,<sup>121</sup> it is not as clear-cut. Consider that if a qualified CR, for example, relying on your uncle's testimony can apply to multiple propositions, at the very

<sup>121</sup> This is when a decision maker worships the epistemic features of the outcomes of a given decision, rather than their non-epistemic ones, as it would normally occur in a pragmatic rationality framework (Paul 2015, 219).

least, it increases the chances to be able to obtain a credence that is better than mere chance. In fact, it could be uncovering a proposition over which you have a credence that is better than mere chance. For example, you could have such a credence over ‘governing the country’. This is, by uncovering more propositions and exploring the space of possibilities where better credences could be. A non-attitude—conversely—can only apply to a proposition and its negation. It seems that even if you specify how to treat non-attitudes and you, in fact, reject that these can always be helpful to a rational evaluation, an emphasis on credences is still justified.

To sum up, in this section, I have explained why having qualified CRs, implying forming beliefs about more propositions, is comparatively better than not having qualified CRs and thus not forming such beliefs. Having qualified CRs better clarifies the value of CRs to an agent’s credences. This shows how these are genuine means to truth-ends, the ends of the epistemic challenge. As such they should receive emphasis. CRs have a guiding value that is purely epistemic: they can guide Elizabeth in her knowing the truth. The idea is then relying on the full capacity of the CRs at hand, and granting them to be, in fact, resources.

## 5. Conclusion

Let me go back to Elizabeth dealing with a life transformative decision on her future as queen. I have given you a rough idea of how rational choice theory would think about Elizabeth’s decision, laying out her options and making certain value calculations. Following this framework, she would have a clear, most preferred option. Now, Paul would ask: How can Elizabeth know how she will value ‘being the most powerful woman in the world’ before experiencing being queen? Paul would say that these values that you have computed are not *truthful* to your values post-transformation. I have clarified how this is, in fact, a plausible formulation of the epistemic challenge posed by transformative decisions. Carr’s model for epistemic transformations allows you to think about truth as something that you—conversely—*can* aim at. This is possible if you think of Elizabeth’s transformative decision in terms of CRs. To Carr’s mind, these are the abilities to draw logically binary distinctions of the kind: ‘being treated differently’ and ‘–being treated differently’. Carr would model Elizabeth’s decision as a comparison between two epistemic situations—abdicating or becoming queen—which are significantly defined by the CRs you hold in each one of them. CRs are what Elizabeth should consider when assessing the epistemic value of abdicating or becoming queen. The problem is, I have argued, that Carr’s definition for CRs is not satisfactory. CRs need to be qualified.

My proposal is *qualifying* Carr’s notion of CRs beyond abilities to draw logically binary distinctions. Accepting my proposal would mean for Elizabeth to consider conceptual abilities that allow her to discover new propositions by multiple conceptual means: for example, by relying on somebody’s testimony on a proposition. I have argued (in Section 4.1) how this qualifying move can expand the credences about a set of propositions and expand the set of propositions itself. This is meaningful to *truth*, which means that *qualified* CRs are relevant to truth-ends. You need *qualified* CRs to meet the epistemic challenge that transformative experiences pose. Eventually, I have shown (in Section 4.2) how qualified CRs can fulfil truth-ends on account of having more credences and having the relationship between CRs and an agent’s beliefs better clarified. In my refined version of Carr’s solution to the epistemic challenge, this is how Elizabeth should now think about her decision: she should appeal to qualified CRs to best define the epistemic value that the options hold. Should she ever decide to become queen—I conclude—rational guidance should be coming from the use of *qualified* CRs in a framework where truth is the end-goal.

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## 10 Years Later

An Interview With Daan Gijsbertse, the ESJP's first editor-in-chief

Lara-Rose Eikamp, Nathalie Kirch

**This edition marks the 10th anniversary for the Erasmus Student Journal of Philosophy (ESJP). Looking back at the very beginning, Nathalie Kirch and Lara Rose Eikamp conducted an interview with Daan Gijsbertse, the founder of the ESJP. Daan currently works as a lecturer and senior policy advisor, giving strategic advice on remodelling education at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences.**

**The Interview was conducted over Zoom and was transcribed by Kas Molenaar and Maximilian Gasser.**

*L: Did you think the journal would last this long?*

To be honest, what I am more surprised about is that it wasn't founded ten years earlier. That it lasted so long was not because we were exceptionally visionary, but more because the ESJP is quite a simple idea that is not dependent on its original founders. When we founded the journal, the conditions that make this student journal possible were already in place: the character of the philosophy students, the values and ambitions of the faculty etc.. As long as they stay in place and remain relatively unchanged, the journal will probably also remain.

*N: How many editors were you back then?*

The group of people the ESJP started with consisted of four or five editors.

*N: We do see that the ESJP has really grown then; we are now about sixteen editors.*

Wow!

*N: What do you think is the most important thing you've learned from starting the ESJP?*

The most important lesson was not in terms of skills, but in realizing that when you really see a possibility and use things that are mostly already there (students already wrote essays, teachers already graded them), it can become very successful. The biggest lesson was that if you consider cost and benefit for all parties involved, an idea can become a reality. Of course, there were some hiccups or practical details, or maybe small political considerations (for example, whether the Erasmus School of Philosophy should commit itself to a student journal that bear its name). I think the biggest challenge for the first editions was to actually get professors to send in nominations. The ESJP was not something that was established, and students and professors did not know it – it was just two sheets of paper that outlined the plan, that was all there was. But we managed to get to some action. All in all, this process showed that you can be optimistic about plans to start an initiative, and that, with the right people, this can be easy to accomplish. Overall, founding the journal was not an uphill battle in any way.

*N: Did you have specific selection criteria at that point? What did you think made a paper worth publishing?*

That is a good question. One was definitely “does it add value for the reader?” – and value could mean different things! For example, a paper should be somewhat original (though summarizing a complex philosophical work can also be valuable!), and the quality should be good, it should be readable. If it wasn’t readable enough, we would consider giving the author some feedback to rewrite it. We would also, of course, try to see if the subjects that were covered were not all the same. We didn’t want to be a journal that was only publishing works on one of the four pillars of the school at that time (cultural philosophy, history of philosophy, practical philosophy or theoretical philosophy). We wanted the topics to be as widespread as possible.

Though, we also faced one really big problem in the beginning! If you look back at those first editions, we, the editors, used to be the people that got nominated the most. I think, if you look at the all-time record of publications in the ESJP, you are definitely going to find people that are on the editorial board. That was really difficult for us to deal with. You don’t want to create the impression that you are organizing some kind of platform for yourself to stand on and to beat your chest with saying “look how great we are”. At the same time, the way we organized the selection procedures – the double blind peer reviews, etc., as well as having an independent jury for the Pierre Bayle Trophy – ensured that this would not become an issue.

*L: So you tried to circumvent publication bias by making sure there was a large spread from all the four pillars, having the double blind process instituted as well as external awards?*

Yes. For the external awards, that was very easy. That committee of the Pierre Bayle Trophy was fully organized by teaching staff, so there was nobody from the editorial board on it. But, to be honest, I think the biggest publication bias we needed to fight at the time was to make sure that all the teachers who gave courses would consider students for nomination at the ESJP, and would have a good idea of the level or the quality that we were looking for. Otherwise, good quality papers graded by one teacher might just not be nominated and go into the archive. At the same time, another teacher who likes the fact that students are promoted by the ESJP might over-nominate essays from her students. I think that was the biggest challenge with respect to publication bias.

We had one person, the secretary, who would be the only person to know all the names of the authors. One of my essays for instance was published, but another one was nominated and refused. That does show that we did not only publish the people we knew. Sometimes, I think we were even more strict in evaluating papers than the teachers who would nominate them.

*L: Do you think that people who got published already wanted to go towards academia or do great things in the world of philosophy?*

Yes. I think that many of those who were published in the first editions of the ESJP have gone on to become quite successful in terms of their academic careers. I believe that they would have definitely arrived there without the journal as well. But maybe, sometimes, a person would just get a little bit of a nudge or a boost of confidence from being able to publish in the journal. It challenges people who are a bit more ambitious

to also see that their course papers could amount to a bigger podium than just the professor reading it, if they write something that's interesting. So, the journal functions as a small steppingstone that helps people towards a more high profile academic career.

Back in the days, the idea of publishing something was far removed somewhere in the second year of a PhD-project. At that time, the Erasmus School of Philosophy was really small. Sometimes, teachers were very flexible and would say: "Okay, we are still going to do the readings around this topic, but we are also going to focus on publishing an article." I thought "well, this is quite fun, actually, this is how it should be all the time. Why not organize something to make sure this is possible on a regular basis?"

*N: The journal has several main goals. The first one is to provide students with the possibility to realize their first official publication. The second one is to provide the editors with the opportunity to gain editing experience. The third one is to bring academic writing closer to the students of our faculty.*

Very nice! That sounds great. And then, for the Erasmus School of Philosophy, to show what kind of awesome students they have – hopefully.

*N: Right, that's another one!*

On top of that, students get to see each other's work and maybe start discussions about that – not just to pass a course, but because they are genuinely interested. I truly hope that people who promote our faculty see the journal as something that shows that for the students, studying Philosophy is about more than just passing courses. You're actually trying to produce something that is of philosophical value.

*L: Your message seems to be that you don't have to be a visionary or a great person to build something that is long-lasting or that is visionary, and that the success of an initiative has a lot to do with the environment and support systems.*

I definitely agree. You do need the vision. But you don't need to see yourself as somebody who is a great visionary, or very exceptional in order to build something.

*L: I think that's a really beautiful message, actually. It's modest, but it's also really realistic.*

Yeah, and I think that some of the study associations, especially at the business school where I studied, were really resume building experiences. Obviously, if you're part of an association, you're not doing this not to put it on your resume. But I think you cannot really reduce what's happening within the journal to those kinds of personal and rather trivial benefits. It's quite understandable if you want an academic career, for example, to go the extra mile – but I think you will find that there is something to the experience in the ESJP that is more valuable than this kind of resume building.

*L: Is it okay if we ask you some personal questions?*

Yeah, sure!

*L: We heard that you were studying business as your primary study, and that you did a double degree. It would be interesting to know why you chose to study philosophy and why you think it might be a good idea for students in general to study philosophy?*

Before I studied Philosophy, I was studying business. I always did a lot of reading besides my business studies, in areas like psychology and sociology, and I tended to drift more and more towards the philosophical texts. At some point, the people who knew me from my business studies heard about the double degree program and immediately thought that I should do it. So, they advised me to check it out. I went to an introductory lecture, I think it was given by Awee Prins – I’m not sure if he still teaches – and I really liked it. When I started the courses I thought “this is much more my topic than business”.

In terms of skills, I would say there’s two things you really get from philosophy. One is conceptual clarity: you learn to spell out the structure of texts and to distinguish between different lines of thought expressed in a text, even if it is formulated in a vague way. That is a useful skill in many situations and professional contexts, because there’s always a need to get to the heart of a matter. Another skill you gain, which is way more important, is to be critical and able to problematize if necessary. When there is little variation in the way people think, and there’s something about the thoughts and assumptions which is inefficient, immoral, or might not be good in some other way, then you are really good at teasing out those kinds of things, putting them as a problem on one page. That won’t make you popular everywhere. Though, I would say learning to be critical is really valuable. There’s tons of other stuff, but I think those are the two main things that philosophers bring to the table in the world outside of philosophy.

*N: One last question: who is your favourite philosopher?*

A philosopher whose works I really value is Michel Foucault. His take on the interaction between practice and theory, or regimes of truth and social practices, which mutually influence each other is really useful to understand both how we can affect change, and how theories support perceived impossibilities.

On the one hand, people must engage in different ways on the level of theory and practice respectively. Sometimes, we must start at the level of thought. But if we have to think differently about some issues, we might rather have to start at the level of action. If some ideas are really outside of the normal flow of thought or the concepts, then, at the level of action, simply doing, for example, something new might work a lot better than just continuing to argue.

At the same time, looking at the big problems of our time, at the things we seem to be unable to solve, you can use Foucault to show that the perceived impossibility to change is usually embedded in theoretical thought. An example is economics and the climate crisis. There has long been an axiomatic conviction that businesses cannot eliminate the negative environmental effects of their operations when and where that does not maximize their profits. I think that there, you can use Foucault to show that the regime of truth has created a false perception of impossibility that can be displaced. Not by saying “the theory is wrong, here’s a new theory”. But by looking at how these assumptions are contingent upon the historical emergence of specific managerial and governmental practices that may and can very well be changed in ways that would dissolve this apparent impossibility.