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Editorial

“A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know.” - Rachel Carson in Silent Spring (1962).

In the spring of 2020, this prophecy of Carson has indeed become a stark reality; a grim specter has come over the world: COVID-19. Even though we were working and studying from home, the spring of 2020 was not necessarily a spring of silence, but surely a spring of solitude. The editorial board is really proud and excited that we can, nevertheless, present this special issue to you. We hope you will enjoy reading it as much as we liked creating it. May it be a source of inspiration, and help you—even for a moment—to forget your need for social contact by joining us in the presence of the gifted minds of our peer-students.

For this issue, three papers have been selected, written by Natalia Derossi, Joost De Raeymaecker and Jakob Schönhuber. The papers are all very different, but all show an amazing skill in expressing philosophical ideas. The authors also did a great job in improving their nominated papers with the feedback of the editorial board. In their commitment to do this, the authors all showed resilience, strength and determination. A world pandemic, a master’s thesis and the continual ‘vorhandenheit’ of Netflix didn’t hold them back from pursuing their ambition and work on their publication in this journal. We are grateful and proud that the ESJP offers these talented students a platform to present their thinking and skill to a wider audience. The editorial board wishes the authors all the best for the future. We hope their publication in our journal will be in support of their pursuits.

Next to the three papers, this edition also includes the jury verdict of the Pierre Bayle Trophy 2020. This trophy is awarded to a paper from the two previous editions of the ESJP that shows great style, originality and cogent arguments. The editorial board wants to thank Bart Leeuwenburgh, Maren Wehrle and Catherine Koekoek for partaking in the jury and selecting a winner. As the verdict shows, it is hard to make a decision based on what makes a philosophical paper excellent, or better than others. Nevertheless, the jury did a great job to support their decision, and we would like to congratulate the winner (see the jury report) for this great performance.

Also, for the first time in the history of the ESJP, this issue also includes an interview. The editorial board would like to thank Prof. dr. F.A. Muller for his contribution to this new initiative. Next to publishing papers, the ESJP will provide students with the opportunity to improve their academic skills and display their interests by doing interviews and writing book reviews. More information about this initiative can be found on our website: www.eur.nl/esphil/esjp.

The ESJP started this academic year with a lot of new editors. It is great to see that more and more students are finding their way to the editorial board of the ESJP. For this edition, Stijn Voogt and Loïs Kooij joined our editorial board. Unfortunately, we are also saying goodbye to some editors. First of all, Elisabetta Gobbo, Erica Yu and Jakob Schönhuber. These three ‘kanjers’, as we (Erica Terpstra and I) call it in Dutch, were editors for the ESJP for two years and of great help for realizing the past two editions. Elisabetta has also been our secretary this year, by which she has been of support to me personally, but

also by helping us out with the publication and distribution of the journal online. Secondly, Lior Nissim Grinman: Lior joined this year as an editor and has proven to be a really trustworthy and hardworking person. Last but not least, Toine Spoormakers and Nicolaas Zondervan. Nicolaas has been an editor for a longer time, and Toine joined this year as part of his honours programme. Thank you all for your contributions to the journal and good luck with the continuation of your studies or careers!

Lastly, the editorial board would like to thank the members of the advisory board, Thijs Heijmeskamp and Jamie van der Klaauw. Both of them have been of great support and gave us a lot of space and freedom to improve the journal and start with new initiatives to realise our ambition in becoming a bigger community and provide students in Philosophy a platform to develop their (academic) skills. We also want to thank Prof. dr. Hub Zwart, Dr. Constanze Binder and Prof. dr. Han van Ruler for being part of the supervisory board and for their support and encouragement to our mission to enrich the philosophical environment at ESPhil. The editorial board looks forward to continuing its work and contributing to the further development of the philosophical community at the Erasmus School of Philosophy and at the Humanities department of the Erasmus University College.

Sven Hogervorst
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. 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.



Jury report Pierre Bayle Trophy 2020

If, in a few years, the Jury of the Pierre Bayle Trophy 2020 is asked what it was like to judge and compare the best philosophical papers published in the 16th and 17th issue of the Erasmus Journal of Philosophy, they will probably mention the coronavirus pandemic. Phrased by the Dutch government as an ‘intelligent lockdown’, we were strongly advised to stay at home as much as possible. Our campus was declared forbidden territory for *homo sapiens*. We are not yet an endangered species; nevertheless, the COVID-19 virus did succeed in humbling us and thereby reminding us of the urgency to change our way of living. This is supposed to be the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch that started around 10.000 years BCE. But, if 99,9% of all species that ever lived are now extinct, it remains to be seen if our self-proclaimed intelligent species will be able to prevent that our Anthropocene will go into history as the shortest epoch ever.

However, on Wednesday the 6th of May 2020, the Jury was not extinct yet. On the contrary, we were still very much alive and kicking. Practicing the ‘new normal’ (a *contradictio in terminis* as something that is normal can’t be new, and something which is new is not normal yet), we held an online ‘Zoom’ video – conference. While zooming we tried to have a serious discussion about all the ins and outs of the various papers with the aim to finally reach an agreement on who should be the winner of our famous Pierre Bayle Trophy 2020. As for most of the other juries that went before us, this was indeed a difficult task, one of the few new technologies are not very helpful with. How could we make sure to compare all the contributions fairly, not only with respect to the usual solid quality of all contributions, but especially because of the great diversity, be it mono- or interdisciplinary subjects, colorful or very precise styles of writing, highly metaphysical or rigorous ‘down to earth’ approaches, lucid or brain-cracking ways of reasoning etc.?

For instance, how should we compare Sander Tuns’ *Time Regained* - a very precise metaphysical analysis of Bergson’s discovery of time as duration, which enabled him, according to Tuns, ‘to escape the inescapability of the problems of Kantianism’ - with Edwin Lokker’s *Verkeerd Verbonden - Gevolgen en kansen van de sociale theorie van Willem Schinkel*, an almost deadly critique of professor Schinkel’s social theory, richly peppered with ‘Lokkerian witticisms’? Or how to balance Julian Kiefer’s *Identifying the Other: Grotius and Erasmus on Bad Christians as Jews and Muslims* - a historical comparison of the shift of views of Grotius and Erasmus on Islam and Judaism in relation to Christianity - against Koen Schoenmakers, who convinced us in *The Discomfort in Frankfurt* that Harry Frankfurt’s normative subjectivism does not imply an unrestrained morality?

After hours of heated discussions our zooming heads were smoking, and two papers were left, fighting for first place in the minds (or what was left of them) of the jury-members: Annalisa Costella’s *Behavioural Economics – A Shaky Ground for Nudges* and Luc Middelkoop’s *A Phenomenological Defence of Radical Re-evaluation*.

In her interdisciplinary paper on behavioural economics and nudges Costella addresses a socially highly relevant question: do the findings of behavioural economics provide sufficient theoretical support for nudges? For lots of governments, NGO’s and multinationals ‘nudging’ has become an integral part

of their policy-making or product branding. To give only one example in our recent past, we only have to remind ourselves how we were nudged into the ‘new normal’ of a ‘one-and-a-half meter society’ by our beloved Dutch government. Focusing on the three categories of preferences that nudges are argued to apply to, Costella carefully dissects if the justifications standardly provided for nudges hold for all of these preference types. Through formulating and scrutinizing the conditions that should be supported by behavioural economics to justify nudging, she makes it perfectly clear that there is no reason whatsoever to believe that the findings of behavioural economics provide a justification for the theoretical assumptions of nudging. Truly, an analytical ‘tour de force’ with an alarming outcome for both those behavioural economists who were convinced they had provided sufficient justification for the theoretical assumptions in favor of nudges, and the policy makers who assumed stable ground for using nudges as policy interventions.

But could Costella’s paper stand up against Middelkoop who presented us with a new praxis theory of morality beyond the old dispute of moral subjectivism vs. moral objectivism? Middelkoop gave a new and refreshing answer to the old question, posed by Nietzsche, Sartre and Charles Taylor alike: What are we supposed to do if there is no universal moral yardstick? In bringing together normative ethics, phenomenology and ecology (Gibson), he shows that this will not lead us to accept an ‘anything goes’ morality or pure subjectivism. Therein, he succeeds not only in making Heidegger’s jargon understandable, but also to make it fruitful for ethical theory (something which cannot be said of Heidegger himself). The fact that we are finite and caring bodily human beings comes with a plurality of open-ended perspectives. In this sense, the lack of a universal perspective calls for the need of other (complementing) perspectives. At the same time, the very lack of a universal moral yardstick grounds the need for a continuous praxis of evaluation. This means not merely an evaluation of our doings, but moreover the responsibility of a *re-evaluation of these evaluations*, that is, a constant testing of norms, values and moral convictions, we take for granted. Middelkoop’s paper is a rare encounter between phenomenology and meta-ethics, spanning a wide theoretical scope without losing sight of the starting question – all the while maintaining a sparkling sense of wonder.

However, we still could not decide whether Costella or Middelkoop should win. We decided to give it some more thought. Are we more impressed by complexity of content and argumentative layers or rather by the focus, precision, and clarity of an argument? What are the criteria that make an optimal essay? We decided for accessibility of presentation, focus of argument, and innovative content.

And then, finally, one week later, on Wednesday the 13th of May in the year 2020, during our second ‘Zoom - conference’, at 15 hours, 9 minutes and 32 seconds we decided unanimously that the winner of the Pierre Bayle Trophy 2020 bears the name of Annalisa Costella!!!

C. Koekoek, B. Leeuwenburgh, M. Wehrle
Jury of the Pierre Bayle Trophy 2020

In this Issue

In “Rethinking Whitehead’s influence and rethinking scientific practices,” Natalia Derossi traces Alfred North Whitehead’s influence on the contemporary philosophies of Isabelle Stengers, Bruno Latour, and Donna Haraway and elucidates the new understanding of science that they have proposed. She first spells out Whitehead’s ontology, critique of mainstream modernist science, and arguments for the need for peace and creativity to be accommodated in a new scientific practice. She then traces the influence of Whitehead on Stengers with her cosmopolitical peace fighters, Latour with his challenge to overcome the bifurcation between nature and society, and Haraway with her relational and non-anthropocentric perspective of scientific practice. The renewed scientific practice that these philosophers advocate—inspired by Whitehead—thus (1) is against truth, (2) is in opposition to methodological individualism, (3) strives towards peace, (4) overcomes dichotomies, and (5) is done for the world.

In “The Politesse of Skepticism”, Joost De Raeymaecker aims to break with a long philosophical tradition of critique by moving beyond the crippling dialectics of skepticism. According to De Raeymaecker, in our time of emergent ecological disasters, iconoclasm has lost its emancipatory value. We need other manners to come to terms with the Anthropocene and think a more coherent way of living life. Building upon the work of Michel Serres and Isabelle Stengers, De Raeymaecker develops a philosophy of the concept. A philosophy that is mixed and mingled, instead of clear and distinct. A philosophy that discloses how we can act, when we don’t know what to do. There are three central figures in De Raeymaecker’s narrative: a welcoming servant, an examining apostle, and a betraying diplomat. The first seduces us and draws us near, but stutters while acknowledging us. The second is hesitant as well, but reposes while examining our sweet appearances. The last one is the most peaceful and caring, she brings a people to come together. It is only after encountering these three figures that we have lost sufficient ground, reason, and principles, to act on the challenges of the Anthropocene. In the last instance, De Raeymaecker brings us somewhere where we did not dare to speak before.

Suppose you are a professional football player. You have the opportunity to score and to become famous, or you can forgo your chances to earn reputation and kick the ball to your team member. She has a far better chance to score for your team. In “Sugden’s team preferences: An inquiry into the nature of team-directed reasoning”, Jakob Schönhuber encounters the explanatory challenge of cooperation problems such as this. How can cooperative behaviour be explained when it implies that people forgo their individual interests? The focus of Schönhuber’s piece lies on Robert Sugden’s explanatory account of ‘team reasoning’. For Sugden, subjects who cooperate can think from a group perspective. They can endorse ‘team-directed reasoning’ and think about what they can do together with others. Schönhuber invites the reader to a close analysis of the conditions under which Sugden’s idea of team-directed reasoning is supposed to be in place. He takes a critical stance by arguing that nothing in Sugden’s account prevents that individuals engage in team-directed reasoning and individual reasoning simultaneously. Schönhuber builds on a possible difference between thinking and acting. He discusses an alternative interpretation of Sugden’s account, in which he investigates whether an explanation might lie in the role expectations in the actions of others could play. In the end, this much can be said, the question of what are the conditions which can explain why people act according to a team goal will remain. After a critical endeavour, Schönhuber argues that Sugden’s account is not able to solve cooperation problems. For the reader, though, the reward will lie in the journey.

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Ties van Gemert en Toine Spoormakers

Rethinking Whitehead's influence and rethinking scientific practices

Natalia Derossi

1. Introduction: Rethinking scientific practices through philosophy

When the Berlin Wall crumbled down and symbolically dragged along with it the fall of socialist ideology, some declared that our civilization had reached the “end of history”, as a result of liberal democracy and positivist techno-oriented science (Fukuyama 1992, 1). Our current times disclose the unsustainability of this idea. The *zeitgeist* of the twenty-first century is impregnated with urgency, because of economic and social inequalities, the current refugee crisis and climate change, along with the many other symptoms deluging the newspapers of our “sick” planet (Parenti et al. 2016, 1).

Bruno Latour (1993, 7–8), an influential thinker of our time that addresses this new state of society, asserts that already in 1989, several conferences warned about the climatic state of our planet, pointing out our vain ambitions to dominate nature. For Latour (2013, 77) to be modern is to belong to a society that controls nature thanks to scientific rationality. The self-image of the modern relies on a clear-cut distinction between society and nature. This vision of modernity is outdated, Latour says, and the concept of the Anthropocene is the most effective alternative to it (de Vries 2016, 115). Made famous by Paul Crutzen (2000, 17), the term Anthropocene does not only designate a new geological era with humans standing as the strongest force against the Earth system, it also annihilates the break between culture and nature (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016, 42; Chakrabarty 2009, 205). ‘Anthropocene’, I argue, should not be understood as a notion that puts the human subject at the utmost center calling a whole era to himself. It places the human as the central cause of environmental destruction. Humble and guilty, as we enter the Anthropocene we acknowledge the myriads of links that connect our health to the Earth and its beings. The human-nature distinction slowly loses meaning. Such reconnection poses significant challenges to the traditional practice of science, which is essentially reductionist, isolationist and has always presupposed a distance from the scientific objects it studied (Andersen and Hepburn 2019, 1). Traditional science is still human-centered, and begins from a nature/culture divide.

Several contemporary philosophers have been concerned with the meaning of this new human-dominated era and its conceptual consequences within the dominant practice of science. Amongst them are Bruno Latour (2011), Isabelle Stengers (2002, 2011) and Donna Haraway (2008). Environmental concern, however, is not the only characteristic they have in common. They all appear to be echoing an ontological shift that was advanced by Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) some ninety years ago. With a remarkable predictive capacity, the English mathematician-philosopher had already challenged the scientific, traditional manner in which nature was understood with his *Process & Reality* (1978) and *Adventures of Ideas* (1967). For Whitehead, nature was not an entity distinct from us, and reality consisted of infinite processual relations.

The figure of Whitehead has been out of fashion in the English-speaking world for a few decades (Latour 2011, 2; Gare 2017, 120). According to both Latour (2011, 3) and Garre (2014, 309), this was the result of a turn from a more speculative philosophical practice in favour of the analytical one, which in turn subsumed philosophy to the will of the reductionist and modern scientific practice (Latour 2011, 3; Gare 2014, 309). Gilles Deleuze (1969, 18–24) began revitalizing Whitehead among the life of

Western philosophers. Stengers (2011) continues Deleuze's attempt, dedicating 576 pages to Whitehead's thought. Nonetheless, nowadays Whitehead is still rarely associated with philosophical environmental discourses concerning men's relationality to nature.

Initially born out of a fascination with the threads of influence that link together Haraway, Latour and Stengers in a conversation with Whitehead, this article intends to invoke a new understanding of science—one that was initiated by Whitehead's thoughts and revitalized through the writings of three contemporary philosophers. That is, the 'new science' is not the fruit of my own thinking. Rather, my contribution is descriptive and synthetic—concretized in the effort of piecing together the disparate reflections the three entertain on the practice of science, plus that of describing how such reflections are a continuation of Whitehead's thoughts. Ideally, this will also pay a small contribution to the endeavor of bringing Whitehead's figure back within current philosophical discourses on the human-nature relationship, such as those brought forward by David Orr (2002), Timothy Morton (2010), Ezio Mazzini (2015), Daniel Wahl (2012), Jason Moore (2016).

In the following sections, I will briefly expose the critique Whitehead moved against the science he referred to as 'modern', to then investigate the form that Whitehead's thoughts take within the work of Stengers, Latour and Haraway. Influenced by Whitehead, these thinkers suggest possible ways to go beyond the traditional concept of science. Afterwards, I will summarize and piece together all the exposed philosophical suggestions, in a creative attempt to propose a new understanding of science. How would scientific practices look if informed by the thoughts of Whitehead, Stengers, Latour, and Haraway? Overall, five main notions capture the essence of the renewed scientific practice these philosophers inspired. This article argues for a science that (1) is against truth, (2) is in opposition to methodological individualism, (3) strives towards peace, (4) overcomes dichotomies, and (5) is done for the world.

2. Whitehead against modern science

This section begins by spelling out Whitehead's ontology and its inherent critique of mainstream modernist science. His attempt to overcome scientific practices will then be explained in terms of two crucial notions: peace and creativity.

2.1 Whitehead's ontology

A solid conceptual departing point to understand Whitehead's critique of modern science goes by the name of the "bifurcation of nature" (1964, 26). Locke's distinction between reality's primary and secondary qualities initiated this bifurcation (Debaise 2017, 2), with primary ones being objective (for example, mass), and secondary ones being subjective (for example, colour). Whitehead employs the term bifurcation to describe the implication that Lockean separation has on the concept of nature (Whitehead 1948, 18). Namely, as on the one side objective nature, and on the other subjective society (Debaise 2017, 15). As a consequence, the distinction originally concerning two complementary aspects of reality, progressively results in the disposal of the latter from the natural domain. Modern science emerged out of this distinction, with its scientists no longer interested in subjective interpretations, but captivated exclusively by nature's objective qualities (Whitehead 1948, 61; Debaise 2017, 18).

Whitehead denies the separation of reality (in other words, brute facts, objective and intrinsic qualities) from appearance (in other words, subjective interpretations), and that between natural and

human entities. In an article titled “Nature Alive,” he observed, “this [traditional] sharp division between mentality and nature has no ground in our fundamental observation” (1938, 156). The ultimate particle of reality is “occasion of experience”, which is characterized by both a physical (objective) pole and a mental (subjective) pole (141). Consequentially, subjectivity is no longer restricted to the human entity. Whitehead rejects the basic assumption on which modern science relies (Debaise, 2017, 10–14).

Whitehead (1967) also demonstrates a certain opposition to the notion of scientific truth, along with the dichotomous methods established to achieve such truth. His words speak clearly: “the Certainties of Science—circumnavigated by myriads of unexplored limitations— are bound to be a delusion” (153). Any “rigid alternative” which travels on top of a true or false binary is “largely irrelevant for the pursuit of knowledge” (1978, 11). Rather, all claims to understanding are provisional and controlled by the “metaphysical concepts of the epoch to which they belong” (1967, 154). Moreover, Whitehead is doubtful with regards to another aspect of traditional scientific methodology: isolationism. This is the practice by which the traditional scientist isolates an object to understand it (for example, a cell from its organ). But for Whitehead, individual entities, being always and necessarily a modification of their environment, cannot be understood in disjunction from it (154). He proposes a cell-theory of actuality, stating that “each ultimate unit of fact is a cell-complex, not analyzable into components with equivalent completeness of actuality” (1978, 256). Facts cannot be analyzed and reduced to a sum of identifiable units. If you wish to reach “completeness of actuality” (256), you must strive to embrace, as much as it is in your power, the totality of the interactions that affect your object of study.

Completeness has to do with the notion of coherence which Whitehead introduces on the very first page of *Process and Reality* (1978, 67), and describes a situation in which “all actual entities are in the solidarity of one world”. In this sense, coherence is ecological (Shaviro 2009, 108). It is given by the way that a living organism necessarily requires a milieu to survive. Reality cannot be atomized into separate entities and then studied. Infinite connections make up reality, and static objects, or static facts are always less interesting than the processes they undergo (Whitehead 1978, 244–246). This is so because for Whitehead nothing really exists as a static object or a fact. The ontological structure of reality is processual, everything is ‘propension’. The problem of course remains: can a scientist ever really take in consideration all of reality? No methodology until now would seem to encourage her to really do so. Whitehead proposes peace.

2.2 Rethinking science: On the notion of peace and creativity

On the one hand there is mainstream science, that, while reaching for truth, leads to war. Truth is war, as John MacArthur would say (2007, 1), because people claiming it will necessarily be engaged in an exercise of exclusion against any contrasting opinion. On the other hand, Whitehead hints at creative science, one that denies truth, striving for inclusion and opportunity for peace.

Indeed, Whitehead rejects modernist science through the construction of peace-fabricating propositions, which are a constructive antidote to our fascination with the power of truth because the conceptual matrix on which they rely, claims no authority on its own (Stengers 2002, 246; 2011, 517). Peace is “the barrier against narrowness” and “broadening of feeling” (Whitehead 1967, 285–286). In other words, peace is the intention of inclusion. Taken together, his philosophy employs speculations (constructions) that are explicitly meant to take into account and to save all that exists together, avoiding

exclusion and thus fabricating the possibility of peace (246). I take Whitehead's philosophy as an attempt to propose a methodology following from his intention of saving the totality of reality.

Whitehead's contribution to the achievement of peace does not pass through concrete institutions or organizations (Welker 1987, 324). It is not oriented towards defense nor mere pacification—understood as the fixation of an achieved condition—but calls for dynamic, creative development (325). “It works through insinuation and transformative effects as an infectious lure for new creative contrasts” (Stengers 2002, 240). Whitehead's peaceful scheme manifests itself through its practical effects. Its ‘saving operation’ gives rise to a more interesting world and a more demanding thinking, inspiring surprising syntactic transformations, and finally suggesting possibilities for escaping dramatic either/or dilemmas. “It verifies itself first and foremost through confidence in reality, as if saying, ‘do not be afraid; never will reality give to anyone the power to completely deny and reduce’ ” (245).

Whitehead proposes that it is through creative advance that we can gradually approach peace. Peace is only ‘approached’, meaning it can only be reached asymptotically. To give rise to peace-fabricating propositions, creativity is required. Creativity is the introduction of novelty—the force behind novelty, which in turn is the essence of life (Whitehead 1967, 121). Novelty occurs from the discordance between the physical and mental poles (objective & subjective) (Bell 2011, 77). “When there is no reason to believe that in any important way the mental activities depart from the functionings which are strictly inherent in the objective datum of the [objective] phase, [then] no novelty is introduced” (Whitehead 1967, 211). The discrepancy between the being that perceives (the subject) and the world (the object) is what brings about change. As the subjective mental pole conforms to the objective physical poles, progress withers away (Shaviro 2011, 77). Conformity brings with itself a halt of thinking. The moment you finally believe to have found something (for example, an objective quality through a subjective mind), you stop looking for it. But for Whitehead the process of looking for something, in other words the creative force, is much more interesting than having found it (1967, 258). Moreover, processes have a metaphysical priority over any fixated term.

The ability of the mental pole to keep exploring possibilities that have not yet been defined as facts—or remaining within “the nomadic realm”—is captured in the concept of ‘Adventure of Ideas’ (1967, 258). Adventure is the ability of the mental pole to enter into the nomadic realm, one made of entities that have not yet been defined as facts (Bell 2011, 77), and it is essential to sustain civilization.

To replace a scientific progress populated by true facts regarding objects studied in isolation, Whitehead calls for a scientific creative progress that, in the constant attempt to consider “all that exist together” (Stengers, 2002, 243), strives toward peace on many levels (ontological, epistemological, ethical). A peace-proposing philosophy gives rise to one whole-encompassing ontological zone, extending inclusion rights to all entities.

3. Traces of Whitehead: Stengers, Latour, and Haraway

The section investigates the way in which contemporary philosophers Stengers, Latour, and Haraway have formed some of their ideas on Whitehead, and, at the same time, it describes the way in which these thinkers try to go beyond a traditional concept of science. Evidently, the two things seem to be related. Whitehead's philosophy infuses this intellectual trio, pushing them to reconsider the ontological stances of contemporary scientific research and hinting at new ones.

3.1 Isabelle Stengers: From Whiteheadian peace to cosmopolitical peace fighters

Stengers, a prominent philosopher of science within the European landscape, reveals that Whiteheadian philosophy has helped her in overcoming the fear of scientists—those who claim to “have reality on their side” (2002, 245). I have shown how Whitehead began to open up the scientific “knowledge-game” (250), detaching himself from any sort of scientific authority model and proposing the notion of peace as the methodology to include as much as it is possible all that exists within knowledge practices. Stengers realizes the relevance that Whitehead’s work still has in our time, and decides to bring Whitehead’s endeavor further, utilizing his peace propositions (255) as philosophical tools to actually design “a kind of experimental togetherness” (248), which wants to get rid of the logic of disqualification by requiring that competing practices and interests be taken seriously rather than merely tolerated. She calls this condition ‘cosmopolitics’.

The prefix ‘cosmo’ is important. It moves beyond the idea that the prefix ‘common’ is restricted to our fellow humans—as politics since the time of Plato has implied—and invites us to grapple with the often-problematic togetherness of the heterogeneous forms composing our reality (250). Such ‘cosmopolitical space’ is inhabited by ‘peace-fighters’, who are lined up against the war of scientific truths and facts and their disqualifying power. It stands as an alternative to both absolutism and tolerance; it reintegrates the natural and the social, the modern and the archaic, the scientific and the creative.

In the attempt of divulging and modernizing his philosophy, Stengers gives us an example of a Whiteheadian peace-proposition (253). It is an example that applies Whitehead’s thinking to a contemporary issue, striving to “Think With Whitehead” (2011) about our times. Out of her own academic experience with the world of chemistry and her work with chemist Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogine, Stengers (2011, 254) feels entitled to claim that modern, rational, Western pharmacology relies on a non-peaceful proposition. It considers itself as proof that the only way to understand the living body is through experiments, by revelation of the various molecular interactions. It follows that everything that may rationally intervene within such intercommunication must be a molecule (256). Thus, devising new molecules is the only rational, objective way to cure people. A molecule is then tested against a placebo effect, and either it succeeds and becomes a known scientific curing molecule or it cradles back to anonymity (256–257).

This scenario is non-peaceful because it does not strive to include—to save all that exists—omitting a crucial aspect. Stengers explains that the clinical test is mostly presented as if it were to verify that the cure is given by the encounter between molecule X and a sick body (2002, 254). However, those curing molecules are found against placebo and do not objectively testify to an actual encounter. They only statistically suggest that, in some way, the winning molecule has contributed more than a placebo in inducing healing (255). The efficacy of Stengers’ argument skyrockets if we acknowledge that eighty percent of the drugs currently used and sold (resulting from such current pharmacology approach) seem not to work (Shih, Zhang, and Aronov 2018, 24). Winning molecules, drugs that ‘work’ according to specifically designed laboratory tests, are sold to users’ bodies onto which they end up having no effect.

In this regard, a Whiteheadian peace-fabricating description of the whole situation would, yes, rejoice about a drug passing a relatively severe test to be called successful. However, it would also emphasize the importance of realizing that a test is trying to bridge the sterile experimental environment with the complex environment of a suffering body—and its relation with a physician (Stengers 2002, 254). Indeed, as placebo itself proves, a healing process cannot be abstracted from that environment. The placebo

effect shows us that we can feel better only from thinking we have ingested something that should supposedly make us feel so. The cure may very well result from non-molecular means—which cannot be tested according to the terms required by experimentation. The experimentation equipment excludes innumerate possibilities from the picture. Finally, Stengers (2002, 255–256) writes, a Whiteheadian and cosmopolitical fact must emphasize that what we call ‘disease’ and ‘cure’ are also social processes and do not generally satisfy the true experimental demands, which authorize the reduction of the sick body to some molecular assembly.

Importantly, a cosmopolitics insists on the fact that concepts shall be created for the world, one that extends much further than academic walls (241, 255). Aware of the impossibility of expecting ‘togetherness’ in places devastated by other priorities, Stengers’ proposition demands that at least among the educated—where scientists practice science—we do not forget to take into account precisely those places and people that are generally excluded from the equation. Referring back to Gilles Deleuze’s very own conception of thinking, Stengers writes that we are only actually thinking when we think with the excluded, with the “analphabets, or dying rats, or alcoholics” (255). If peace is, as Whitehead said, the ability to consider all that exists together, then Deleuze’s formulation of thinking is crucial to achieving such peace. Whitehead, Deleuze and Stengers together force upon us a question: who do we create concepts for? Or better yet, who do we do science for? Such matters have clear implications within the new understanding of science this essay wants to provide.

Logically, Stengers’ cosmopolitical enterprise cannot converge into a conclusion (255). It is as open-ended as the ‘adventure of thinking’ that Whitehead calls for. What needs to be created is the possibility of producing facts that are scientific, but also include what they generally deny (251). That is, facts should be propositions that respect the value scientists require we recognize in what they call ‘objectivity’, but that also demands from scientists that they enjoy scientific achievements “as selective, inventive, social events, and not as a monotonous assaulting wave of objective rationality against human opinion” (252). These will finally be cosmological grasps, and could produce the possibility of a “demanding peace”(252).

3.2 Bruno Latour: For a Science Down to Earth

Bruno Latour is chiefly known for his bold book-title statement *We have never been modern* (1993). According to the French philosopher (1993, 11), the self-image of the modern man relies precisely on the distinction between the sphere of values involving society and culture, and the sphere of brute facts concerning nature. This reminds us quite explicitly of Whitehead’s bifurcation, although the bibliography of his book does not include him. In truth, many of his concepts can be related back to Whitehead’s philosophy and his work certainly is influenced by his figure.

Most importantly, Latour starts from Whitehead’s same call to action: we shall overcome the bifurcation between nature and society, because the distinction between society and nature that characterizes the “Modern” self-image only exists artificially (1993, 11). The modern believes herself separate from nature, while in her everyday practice she is constantly creating hybrids between the two. Consider a scientist: rather than merely observing and understanding nature while remaining outside of it, she constructs technical instruments to isolate and gain access to it, bringing it from the outer world into a lab. While doing so, she is continuously creating objects that are hybrids of humans and non-humans. This Latour calls the work of translation. Take a petri dish: partly natural (for example, cell tissue), but also non-natural (for example, plastic container, growth medium, and so on). Cell tissue from a living organism

is translated into the laboratory, creating a network that brings together scientists, patients and their tissues, plastic companies, ethicists and so on.

To hide the hybrid nature of reality and to remain consistent with his self-image, the modern man engages in the work of purification, the constant attempt to bifurcate reality into two distinct ontological zones: one pertaining to humans, and one to non-humans (Latour 1993, 10–12). As soon as we become aware of the work of translation and we realize the difficulty of discerning what is social and what is natural within the chain of hybrids that surround us, our self-image no longer holds (11). The image of modernity has been constructed on an entirely artificial separation. Latour expands Whitehead's bifurcation, describing it in practice, for example, the laboratory scientist—and attributing to it a specific reason: we bifurcate to remain consistent with our self-image.

Expanding Whitehead's attempt of discrediting the subjective-human/objective-nonhuman dichotomy, Latour claims that nature is not made of beings that thrive independently of human intention (Latour 1993, 11). This is why we need to reconsider the epistemological stance derived from the modern constitution according to which research allows us to “discover the essence of nature” (Mathews 2011, 1–2). A new ontological perspective in which non-humans' existence changes through scientific proceedings, and vice-versa, shall replace the previous one (de Vries 2016, 132–133). Humans and nonhumans maintain relationships in which they collaborate to reveal themselves to each other (Latour 1988, 130–134). He advocates for a relationist ontology, emphasizing the importance that processes of translations have in the making of reality (135). Such relationist processual ontology necessarily recalls the ontology initially proposed by Whitehead, according to which every being is in propension, never static, both objective and subjective.

From his understanding of modernity, Latour moves to his critique of what he calls the “Science-done from Sirius” (2018, 118). The author's disapproval of doing science from outer space runs as a thread line throughout his last book *Down to Earth* (2018), which the title tellingly contrasts with such ‘outerness’. The metaphor of a science that studies nature from the universe hints at a wrong attitude of the modern scientist, who attempts “to tear himself away from the primordial soil and set out for the Great Outside” (2018, 124). Scientists developed a new motto: *‘to know is to know from outside’*.

This is when the notion of critical zone (CZ) becomes a useful tool. CZ is a field of research which has recently caught Latour's attention. Defined as the Earth's permeable near-surface layer, the CZ expands from the top of vegetation down to whatever depth groundwater is circulating (Brantley et al., 2017, 842). It can be interpreted as a spatial window from which to make key observations about the complex interactions that regulate the natural habitat and determine the availability of life-sustaining resources (Arènes, Latour, and Gaillardet, 2018, 123). The word critical refers to the fact that it is crucial to all types of life, considering the majority of Earth's ecosystems lives within it (Latour, 2014, 4).

At the moment, understanding this zone requires researchers drawn from many traditional disciplines (for example, geology, hydrology, soil science, etc.) to work in collaboration (Arènes et al., 2018, 125). Having a large number of disciplines involved in monitoring specific chunks of land, allows us to dismiss believing that we are engaging with a ‘unified system’ (Latour, 2014, 3). A geologist alone can understand less than he could do with an interdisciplinary team. The point is not summing together the various fields of enquiries; rather, the discussion emerging out of the creative contrast among them should elevate the exploration beyond it.

CZ science is the field in which the typically modern disinterested distant gaze on nature is finally abandoned. Instead of an agent, 'The Human', acting 'On Nature', we recover from these studies multiple tracers of various agencies mixed together in wildly different combinations, making it imperative for many different disciplines to collaborate (4–6). The critical zone becomes an exemplification of what it means to see the earth from the inside, all the while coming "down to Earth". Descending from the pedestal of Sirius, scientists are finally able to recognize that there are many other forms of movements and relations that had become harder and harder to take into account under the previous paradigm (Latour 2018, 119).

3.3 Donna Haraway: beyond humans & individuality

Donna Haraway, a biologist, a philosopher, a media and literature scholar dedicated her last book *Staying with the trouble* (2013) to the concerns brought about by environmental change. If Latour maintains that we have never been moderns, Haraway states that we have never been humans either (1). This statement converges within the recent scientific findings that revealed that the human body is made of more bacterial cells than human ones, re-defining our beings as living symbiotically with a myriad of different species that contribute to our health and functioning (Gilbert, Sapp, and Tauber 2012, 325). We are not humans; we are holobionts—assemblages of several species, and each of us forms a distinct ecological unit (Haraway 2013, 60). Separating humans and nature to different ontological zones makes even less sense now.

Reality is composed of dynamic, complex, responsive and interspecies systems (58). If we genuinely wish to understand such systems, we need to learn to forget individuality, and start using "poly-temporal, poly-spatial knottings" (60) that make up a reality of "worldings" (12). Haraway writes that the figure of Whitehead along with his ontological turn "infuses her worldings" (12), which are intertwined systems in which natures, cultures, subjects and objects co-exist. We understand why: a philosophy of co-existence owes its development to Whitehead's 'cell theory of actuality', by which he strives to reach 'completeness of actuality'. Through the concept of worlding, Haraway re-situates humans within nature and saws back the bifurcation, emphasizing relationality and the necessity to be genuinely present. As we understand this notion, we recognize ourselves as creatures embedded in myriads of configurations of places, matters and meanings in which we need to act (Parenti et al. 2016, 4; Haraway 2013, 3–4).

Expanding onto Whitehead's predicament (1967, 154) stating that knowledge always arises from a particular context, a particular environment and a particular body (for example, a scientist or an institution), Haraway speaks of situated knowledge. The practice of situating knowledge is crucial to counter what she calls the "God Trick of Modern Science" which relies on the supposition of a possibility of all-encompassing knowledge, independent from both history and context (1988, 578).

To fully understand reality as a mesh of worldings, we also require new tools for thinking. Haraway calls these tools 'SFs' (2013, 2–3). SF stands for science fiction, speculative fabulation, science fact, string figures and much more. Once again, it is Whitehead's (1967) *Adventures of Ideas* that inspires Haraway's system of SF. SFs are "full of such [Whiteheadian] adventures", she writes (12). Haraway's SF tries to extract an epistemological consequence out of Whitehead's ontology: reality is always both physical / objective and mental/subjective. Consequently, situated knowledge cannot be only factual; it must be as sensible as it is rational. Thinking is an ever-changing adventure in which various forms of "SFs need each other" (3). The philosophy of SF is a way of saying that we need each other—with the other being an "all-encompassing other and not restricted to the human other", in unexpected collaborations and

combinations, in “hot compost piles” (4)...

Throughout her writing, Haraway proposes several images that embody the weaving of fact and fiction together. Such figures are performative tools that intend to alter our thinking, pushing it towards a more relational, non-anthropocentric way of thinking and doing. The figure of the Lichens is one amongst the many. Borrowing the image from Scott Frederick Gilbert (2012, 1), a biologist who once stated that “we are all lichens”, Haraway uses it to speak of the impossibility of being individuals. The lichens are organisms hard to fit within a specific kingdom, precisely because they have properties of fungi, algae and yeast. A lichen is situated across different kingdoms and it is more than just the sum of those three organisms. It creates an ecological microcosm while reworking the boundaries between species (Haraway 2012, 30–32).

4. The science we need: What would scientific practices look like if they were informed by Whitehead's, Stengers', Latour's, and Haraway's philosophies?

Striving to piece together the thoughts of the various philosophers mentioned so far, this last section culminates with the proposition of a new understanding of science. What would scientific practices look like were they informed by Whitehead, Stengers, Latour and Haraway's thoughts? I will go through the five main notions that capture the essence of such renewed scientific practice one by one.

One of the main threads has to do with the problem of truth. I have shown how Whitehead's philosophy begins debunking the idea of an established true fact. Truth is no longer telling, and beyond this, practices concerned with certainties engage in a non-peaceful exercise of exclusion. Stengers extends Whitehead's thoughts, proposing to replace scientific facts with scientific events that disclose the social, selective, inventive and creative features of scientific achievements. Such events make up Stengers' cosmopolitics, a space within which opposing dogmas do not result in one prevailing onto another, but rather can make up an ecology of competing practices that take each other seriously. Haraway adds another element to the story, insisting on the importance of situating such scientific events. Situated knowledge necessarily opposes the ‘God Trick’ that Modern science likes to master. That is: we need a science that, instead of imposing truths, skillfully moves itself through partial situated solutions (one). Letting go of truths will also allow our new science to strive toward peace (two). Dismissing the word ‘fact’—“the thing known to be true or proved” (Oxford 2019, 1)—*tout court* may be an effective and symbolic move to sensitize the public in front of the issue behind the word itself.

The problem of truth is traced back to the initially accepted/rejected attitude science has in front of its hypotheses, which represents another difficult milestone science has to overcome. This is an issue brought up by dichotomies, binaries and bifurcations. The Lockean separation between primary and secondary qualities sparks in Whitehead the urge to overcome dualities. The bifurcation between primary—objective—intrinsic attributes and secondary—subjective—extrinsic ones slowly begins to imply a separation between objective nature and subjective society. This is the division that Latour takes as the starting point of his understanding of modernity. He shows us that the very modern practice of purification constantly traces reality back to two distinct ontological zones—one pertaining to nature, and one pertaining to society. Latour significantly adds onto Whitehead's endeavor of overcoming such a distinction, disclosing the endless continuity that links the two zones. For both thinkers, the ontological area is one, and it is relational. Stengers' cosmological grasps, or scientific events, represent the types of

knowledge capable of both understanding and creating new links connecting humans and non-humans. Haraway's SFs are yet another tool envisioned to fight the battle Whitehead initiated and begin to grasp such 'problematic togetherness'. Their thoughts compel us to envision a science that sits comfortably with such lack of dichotomous demarcation, one practiced by scientists that embrace the relational and processual ontology through which they are intrinsically linked with their environment.

The moment the distinction between the two ontological zones is broken apart, and one comprehensive reality of infinite interconnections is disclosed, it is clear that methodological individualism no longer holds. Science was defined as the practice of isolating objects to study them individually. Whitehead rejects such individualism, on the basis that it is blind in front of the actual relational character of reality. Haraway expands on Whitehead: individuality does not even make biological sense. To her, reality is a matter of knottings and worldings. Latour gives us the example of a scientific practice that requires many disciplines together and forces scientists to let go of the idea of a unified system. Science needs to overcome methodological individualism (five).

Resistance to truth, dualism and methodological individualism might be a few of the ways to ensure that knowledge is not made to exclude whatever is produced according to a different rule or concerns a different group of people. By not excluding, not looking down upon, we could succeed producing knowledge for the world. It was Whitehead's notion of peace which demonstrated the first intention to "save all that exists" within theory of knowledge. Stengers and Haraway update his philosophy, explicitly writing that we need to think, produce and create for everybody, never only for a restricted section of academics populating prestigious universities. This is an issue that is relevant nowadays. Which knowledge will be the one 'for the world', meaning concerned with the world's biggest problem—the climate crisis—and devoted to producing information that will help us in such "catastrophic times", as Stengers (2015, 1) would put it? Unwilling to find a definite answer to this question, philosophy starts by posing it. It provides us with some tools to start re-imagining the practice of science. As we engage in this thinking activity, we realize Whitehead's texts and thoughts are intrinsically tied to such discourses, both as the initial promoter and as an actual constant inspirer. Whitehead opens up a debate formulating the conceptual knots which infuse Latour, Stengers and Haraway to further reconsider the ontological stances of scientific practices and propose new ones.

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Natalia Derossi (1997) graduated in 2019 from Erasmus University College (EUC) with a double major in Life Sciences & Humanities and a minor in Environmental Sciences. She has then taught Ecology and Academic Writing at EUC, while working on several research projects striving to bring philosophy into environmental related issues. She has now moved to Paris, hoping to pursue a master in Environmental Studies at the EHESS (École des hautes études en sciences sociales). Her interests lie in environmental history, environmental anthropology, philosophy of science and ecology.

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The Politesse of Scepticism

How to act when you don't know what to do

Joost De Raeymaecker

It was a teenage wedding, and the old folks wished them well

You could see that Pierre did truly love the mademoiselle

And now the young monsieur and madame have rung the chapel bell

'C'est la vie', say the old folks, it goes to show you never can tell

—Chuck Berry

1. Introduction: The Politics of Scepticism

Bruno Latour argues in *Down to Earth* (2018) that we have all become climate sceptics. Either because we cast doubt on our involvement in the meteorological changes taking place, or because we *do* acknowledge our involvement but fail to act accordingly. Despite the harmful effects of fossil fuels, for instance, we knowingly and willingly get into our cars every morning for our daily commute. Our world leaders are no exception to this; they burn hundreds of thousands of litres of kerosine to attend a climate summit where they discuss the very problem of this burning. We may say it is important to do something about climate change. We may even stress its urgency and devise the greatest of plans to start doing something about it. Yet none of this catches us in the act itself.

As climate sceptics we sport politics of questioning and criticising that form a highly corrosive concoction capable of crippling even the strongest urges to make change. This destruction has, at times, served us well. Debunking various dogmatic religious views during the early modern period, for instance, it paved the way for the age of reason. Revaluating all values, Nietzsche—philosopher, philologist, critic and sceptic—even proudly boasted: *I am the destroyer par excellence*.¹ Considering our failure to act on the challenges of the Anthropocene, however, the question arises if we should continue these destructive ways. When we seek to part with these politics of scepticism, a particularly tacky problem presents itself: we risk becoming sceptics of scepticism and critics of criticism. As a result, we find ourselves fighting its *iconoclasm*, as Latour likes to call it, with more iconoclasm, not having changed anything. *'Whether we go from murder to entertainment, from war to gymnastics, from ritual to language, from spilled blood to philosophy, behaviour as well as passions remain constant'*, Michel Serres laments.²

It seems we can point nor wave our finger. But as the challenges of the Anthropocene urge us to act, we cannot remain silent either. Something has to give: we must find a way to escape the Wittgensteinian deadlock and learn to speak about things whereof we cannot speak. We must learn to act without knowing what to do. Any transformation of the destructive politics of scepticism will, however, be put to the test

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 145.

² Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser with William Paulson (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1997), 83.

immediately. For we cannot exclude those who appear hostile or indifferent to our undertaking. Looking at the climate sceptic specifically, this means that our construction cannot just take the form of a belief system or ground as he would reject it right away. Sceptics and believers, for that matter, cannot resolve their differences through reasoning; not in so far as this reasoning appeals to a philosophy reduced to a theory of knowledge. The believer doesn't 'know' truth in the epistemological sense—in the mind of the sceptic he doesn't even seek to know—he *believes*. Even if we say that both have their own reason, we must add that these reasons are, to a certain extent, incompatible and even mutually exclusive³. This sends us down the path of toleration, for instance. Pierre Bayle famously championed this concept, arguing in his four-part commentary of *Compel Them to Come In, That My House May Be Full* (St. Luke, XIV), against a literal understanding of 'to compel' as to involve 'Threats, Jails, Fines, Banishment, Cudgelling, (and) Torturing'⁴. Writing against the backdrop of the religious conflicts in sixteenth and seventeenth century France, he argued that these forms of (religious) coercion are incompatible with reason. Because faith is a private matter for Bayle, he can then argue that when two Christians hold opposing beliefs about truth and only one of them can be right, they must tolerate each other's beliefs nonetheless, because the one who is mistaken and acts in error, does so innocently.

Toleration, however, can be said to risk giving up on equality entirely. It is a modern concept that relates someone who has found enlightenment and knows that all is in doubt, to someone who still believes and, in the view of the sceptic, still dwells in dark ages. In other words: toleration follows after judgement and merely hides that the very destruction we seek to suspend, already took place⁵. Tolerance is something that logically but passively follows from scepticism. A volatile result rather than an active practice that does not stop the ticking clock of the Anthropocene.

Seeking to amend the destructive politics of scepticism, as we do in this essay, it no longer suffices for philosophy to be a theory of knowledge, mere critical reflection, or an endless opposition of 'on the one hand...but on the other hand...' Philosophy now must reinvent itself and show itself to act directly on matters: it must create concepts. This entails a change of perspective: instead of considering, from the sceptic's point of view that philosophy is a theory of knowledge and that all is in doubt, we must consider, from the perspective of philosophy *as it is challenged by the Anthropocene to act*, all contributions and show them to cohere⁶. We attempt to do so by meeting and consulting three sceptic figures. Each has its own reason, yet they all demonstrate the aforementioned paradox that we will investigate: how to act when you don't know what to do. The first figure is a welcoming servant who cannot be said to hold a general theory, yet his practices *can* be said to be systematic. We will attempt to make sense of this with the help of Michel Serres' model of hydraulics. This, however, raises the question if the welcoming servant cannot be said to hold a theory after all. To answer, we turn to Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrronism*, because this question runs parallel to the question of how to be a sceptic without regressing into dogmatism. Through Sextus we meet the second figure: an examining apostle who shows us, in

³ See, for instance: Tim De Mey, 'De relevantie van relevantie'. In: *Wijsgerig Perspectief*, vol. 56, nr 1, 2016. 'This is exactly why differences of opinion between sceptics and antisceptics are impossible to resolve. The sceptic can't possibly accept the restriction that only relevant alternatives can be considered, the antisceptic can't possibly consider sceptic alternatives as relevant.' [translation my own]

⁴ Bayle, *A Philosophical Commentary*, chapter 2, §4

⁵ See for this line of argumentation: Isabelle Stengers, 'The Curse of Tolerance' in: *Cosmopolitics II*.

⁶ Simondon, Gilbert. "The Genesis of the Individual," in Jonathan Crary & Sanford Kwinter (eds.), *Incorporations* (New York: Zone Books, 1992): 297–319. 300. 'Instead, we would try to grasp the entire unfolding of ontogenesis in all its variety, and to understand the individual from the perspective of the process of individuation rather than the process of individuation by means of the individual'.

addition, that to act *sans fond* doesn't involve getting further away from matters by critically debunking them, but getting closer to them by caring for them instead. The third and final figure is a betraying diplomat who shows that to commune and to act on the challenges of the Anthropocene requires ridding us of ourselves. That is, in the words of Isabelle Stengers: to care for the consequences of our actions instead of personal gains. Together, the ways of these figures amend the destructive politics of scepticism, resulting in the *politesse* of scepticism.

2. Careful Gestures: welcoming

Let us begin by looking more closely at Bayle's argument for toleration. Indeed, 'compelling to come in' is now laced with toleration. The master's den has become a place that 'houses everything', as Huub Oosterhuis would say⁷. But has Bayle not created something else in the process as well? We may discover that he has, in fact, reinvented the servant in the gospel of Luke. In Bayle's hands, the servant is no longer an aggressive dogmatist whose 'compelling' involves destruction. Rather, he is a welcoming servant. He doesn't adhere to a general theory, to a premeditated *scepticism* of sorts, nor is he keen to produce one. Yet his practices of welcoming can be said to be systematic, and they show him to be a sceptic... After all, he suspends his judgement about the truth-claims of the various believers and invites them in. Bayle's servant, therefore, is not an epistemological sceptic concerned with the knowledge of truth. Instead, his actions show him to be a sceptic figure whose thought is indistinguishable from his practice and whose words are deeds. What others consider to be clearly and distinctly ordered and separated, the servant shows to be mixed. This mix refers not just to his own assemblage of theory and practice but to his master's house as well; it is now full of strange and intermingling bodies. The servant, it seems, revokes Plato's opposition of Heraclitus and Parmenides as philosophers of change and permanence by saying yes to both of them: 'everything flows, there is a canon', as Serres put it⁸. The servant shows himself unsure of the modern European critical tradition in so far as *κρίνειν* means to order, to separate and to judge. In fact, does he not shake the foundations of western philosophy as he shows there to be no logos without mythos?

The moves of Bayle's servant remind of *Elvis-the-pelvis*; they are part aggressive and part sexual. First he approaches believers, aggressively drawing their attention, then he *swerves* to his master's house, seducing them to follow him and enter. This swerving motion is not unlike that of Lucretius' famous clinamen that make the atoms collide and create turbulence in what is otherwise a laminar flow. Studying Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (99-55 BC), Serres develops a model of hydraulics, most notably in *The Birth of Physics* (La Naissance de la physique dans le texte de Lucrèce, 1977)⁹. Not only does he start from fluids instead of solids, from heterogeneous becoming instead of homogenous being, but the vortices affect us, move us and complicate us. What is more: they cohere order with chaos.

Serres' model of hydraulics is interwoven with his appreciation for the elements and for those who live and work amidst them. For the vortices or *tourbillonnaires* that comprise this model are part of the *meteora*. The lofty things that science overlooks when it busies itself with either the fall of bodies or the

⁷ Huub Oosterhuis, *Een huis waar alles woont* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2003).

⁸ Serres, *Birth of Physics*, 69

⁹ See, Serres, *Birth of Physics*, specifically chapter 4

orbit of the stars. As it shuts itself inside laboratories, away from rain, snow and mud, science turns to abstract thought and understands the laws of nature as universal formulae to which it consecutively subjects nature. Science thereby represses the contingent and chaotic phenomena that escape its grasp. Serres' model of hydraulics, instead, brings these into relation. The meteora, for instance, are mixed phenomena that can both be said to fall and to lift, that are neither completely stable nor unstable, and that surround us in our daily lives. That is, those who do not live sedentary lives indoors or huddle in their cars, but who work out in the open. This is also why Serres opposes scepticism as a philosophy for the lazy, and why he advocates that thinking is not merely for the elite.

Criticism and scepticism are part of what Serres calls *philosophies of suspicion*. The problem, for him, is twofold. First, philosophies of suspicion give rise to the philosophical detective. They create a kind of police state where a detective looks over our shoulder, suspicious of everything we do. The best detective is a criminal; his goal is to convince us that he has no shoulder to look over as to make himself invulnerable to the kind of criticism he is practising himself¹⁰. Reason becomes self-sufficient. The second problem Serres mentions, is that criticism is a practice for the lazy. The critic can just call things into question and put them between parentheses, without going down the workplace, getting his hands dirty and doing any of the hard work of the creator himself¹¹.

Order and separation in the name of clarity and distinction, obscure and confuse precisely, in so far as they are clear and distinct, that there exists what Serres refers to with *Le Tiers-Instruit* (1991).¹² An excluded third part(y) that mixes and precedes the dominant two, often exemplified by the natural and human sciences—*principium tertii exclusi*. This third party has many guises in the work of Serres. Sometimes embodied by the messenger god Hermès, sometimes by the hermaphrodite, the troubadour or his often quoted northwest passage. Each is a middle between opposites—a meddling middle, a middle becoming a *milieu* where life thrives and entropy declines. In this sense Serres is Nietzschean; he, too, is *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. But whereas Nietzsche proclaims to be 'dynamite' and the 'destroyer par excellence', like a prodigious son of Mars would, Serres' irenic philosophy shows him to be a son of Venus instead. While the former tries to achieve this 'going beyond' by polemicising with the priests that promote the organisational scheme of good and evil, the latter aims at confabulating a passage between these opposites instead. A northwest passage entails no longer skirting the coastline of islands but developing a logic of sense that allows one to traverse the seas between them.

What Serres' model explicates is that we are dealing with a form of rationality that is not of the modern, epistemological kind. *'The kind that implies that rationality only exists in the sciences and nowhere else'*, Serres remarks in his conversations with Latour¹³. Serres objects fiercely to this 'hijacking of rationality' and elaborates that one can also find reason and excellence outside canonical science and, inversely, one can find many myths in the latter as well. The best contemporary myth, he says, is the idea of a science purged of all myths. *'In a certain way reason is, of all things in the world, the most equally distributed. No domain*

¹⁰ Serres & Latour. *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time*. p133

¹¹ Ibid. 135.

¹² Translated as *The Troubadour of Knowledge* in English.

¹³ Serres & Latour. *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time*, 128

can have a monopoly on reason, except via abuse. In this regard each region is a mixed body¹⁴. Again we may detect Serres' fondness for our communality and the artists, craftsmen, scientists and athletes that contribute to it. Bayle's servant is one of them as well. He doesn't adhere to a sound theory yet his welcoming shows him to have reason. He acts, yet he doesn't know exactly what to do; he merely *welcomes*. In doing so, he not only shows himself to be a mixed body—a true bastard—but the creator of mixed bodies as well: a Serresian troubadour. His mime appeals to λεκτά or *expressibles*, reaching beyond the physical world of bodies, causes and effects. These are not concepts from a time long gone; Serres suggests that *De Rerum Natura* 'is not behind us, it is ahead of us'.¹⁵

3. Careful Gestures: examining

The welcoming servant shows great potential for our amendment of the destructive politics of scepticism. We do, however, need to answer a few more questions. So far, we have said that the servant doesn't hold a general, premeditated theory and that his practices show him to be a sceptic. We have related his welcoming to Serres' theory of turbulence, but does this not paradoxically show him to hold a theory after all? This question is crucial. Not only will it shed light on what kind of sceptic he is but on his system as well. The question of how to amend the politics of scepticism without repeating its destruction, as it turns out, runs parallel to the question of how to be a sceptic without regressing into dogmatism.

The latter is the prime concern of Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrronism*. Bayle's servant, as we will see, comes close to the Pyrrhonian sceptic. Sextus distinguishes between Dogmatists, Academics and Sceptics. The sceptic way is *zetetic*; an activity of questioning without end. In contrast to the Dogmatist and the Academic, who either think they have found their truth or consider it to be unattainable, the Sceptic keeps searching. What is more, the sceptic way is a disposition to oppose phenomena and noumena to one another. This equipollence of arguments, or *isostheneia*, is central, since 'the chief constitutive principle of scepticism is the claim that to every account an equal account is opposed; for it is from this, we think, that we come to hold no beliefs'¹⁶. All is in doubt, precisely because each argument (or, in case of the servant, each believer) is opposed with another of equal weight. Unlike what one would expect, the goal of this sceptic way is not a *crise Pyrrhonnienne*. Rather, it is to reach first *epoché* and second *ataraxia*. The former is a kind of state of the intellect on account of which we neither confirm nor deny anything and we suspend our judgement, while the latter is an untroubled and tranquil condition of the soul. 'No tranquilliser or sedative works better...than scepticism, the soft, sweet, soothing poppy flower of scepticism.', Nietzsche says.¹⁷ This opiate-laced parallel is quite telling. Immediately we see how scepticism is not only related to good health, but to intoxication as well. It is a *pharmakon*, a concoction that cures and poisons alike. It shouldn't come as a surprise, then, that Pyrrhonism, too, is a mixed bag. Instead of a theoretical program or a philosophical school, it is an *agōgē*, a way of life.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Michel Serres, *The Birth of Physics*, Trans. David Webb and William Ross (London: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd., 2018), 90

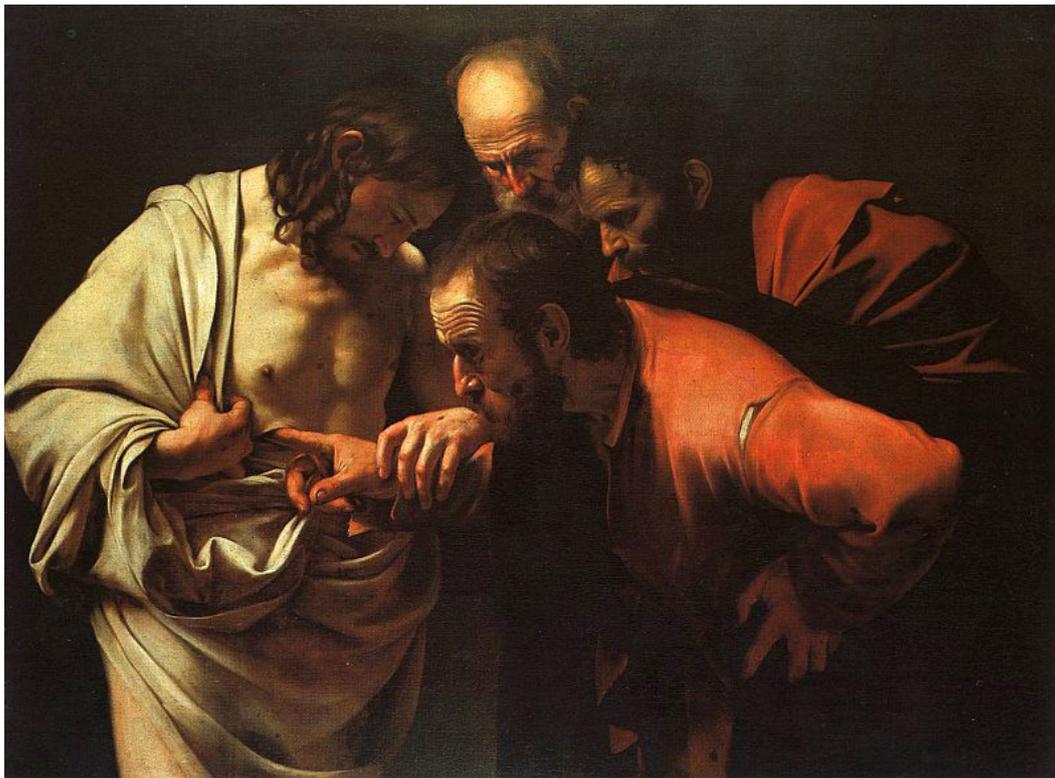
¹⁶ Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 100.

¹⁸ Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 7.

Pyrrhonian skepticism (...) emerges from a practice that is not itself theoretically motivated; it is not grounded upon first principles to begin with (...). Moreover, its practice is integrated into rather than insulated from the Skeptic's ordinary activities; it is woven into the fabric of a human life characterised by well-being. Its aims, then, reach beyond the narrow confines of epistemology-as-conceptual analysis.¹⁹

Jessica Berry's words, lifted from *Nietzsche and the Ancient Sceptical Tradition* (2011), bring together several things we have seen with Bayle's servant. The Pyrrhonist is, like Nietzsche, uninterested in a philosophy reduced to a theory of knowledge.²⁰ His scepticism emerges instead from practices that are an integral part of his daily activities. Sextus exemplifies this when he shows that Pyrrhonism is akin to the tradition of medical empiricism. Holding no beliefs, the Pyrrhonist acts on appearances. For example, he grants that honey is sweet because he senses the sweetness, contributing to a common sense. Whether it is sweet in so far as this has to do with a philosophical theory, however, is questioned. The methodic physician acts likewise, undogmatically examining his patients and acknowledging what he encounters. While the Pyrrhonist is led, in accord with the compulsion of his *pathé*, to quench his thirst and to still his hunger, the physician is led to 'loosen up what is tight' and to 'seek refuge in heat from a cold-induced attack of cramping'²¹. The untroubled state of the soul or ataraxia, therefore serves as a goal for both.



Caravaggio (1571-1610) - *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas* (1601-1602)

¹⁹ Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Sceptical Tradition*, p17

²⁰ *A philosophy reduced to "epistemology," which is really no more than a timid epochism and doctrine of abstinence; a philosophy that does not even get over the threshold and scrupulously denies itself the right of entry—that is a philosophy in its last gasps, an end, an agony, something to be pitied.* Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 2002. p95

²¹ Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, §34 Whether Medical Empiricism Is the Same as Scepticism

We may find a particular example of this examining in Caravaggio's famous *The Incredulity of St. Thomas* (1601-1602). Here we encounter the apostle Thomas, who does not believe the man standing before him really to be the returned Jesus Christ. 'Because you have seen me, Thomas, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen and have believed', Christ says (John 20:29). Whether belief refers to the word of Christ or a philosophical theory doesn't matter. It is Thomas' questioning and subsequent examining we are looking for. While the other disciples tell him they have seen the Lord, Thomas replies: 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.' (John 20:25). We have reversed the chronological order of the quotes to show what Caravaggio does. Other paintings of the same scene usually portray Thomas merely pointing at the wound, but Caravaggio's incredulous Thomas *penetrates* Christ. Much like the welcoming of the servant, his examining is an event that creates mixed bodies and that we cannot understand through a mere opposition of believing and disbelieving alone. Contrary to what Christ says, Caravaggio's incredulous Thomas sees, but—reversing the dialogue—does not believe.

Before the theme of the mixed bodies culminates quite literally in the assembly of Christ and Thomas, Caravaggio develops it in several other ways elsewhere in the painting. For instance, we see Christ grasping Thomas' hand, expressing the interplay of forces. This gesturing of hands is a theme in itself, one that often returns in Caravaggio's mannerist paintings and one that would have suited a visual impression of Bayle's welcoming servant as well. The gestured expression of forces becomes even more apparent when we look at the three apostles. Because of Caravaggio's use of *chiaroscuro*—a technique or style that intensifies the contrast between light and dark, modulating the ideals of classical beauty—we can distinguish their heads while their bodies dissolve in a cloud of red robes. In contrast to Sextus Empiricus' Pyrrhonism, Caravaggio's *The Incredulity of St. Thomas* does not have an outline. We cannot clearly separate the bodies; there is no decalcomania in Caravaggio. Rather, the apostles appear as a three-headed examining machine. They make a map, a cartography of a mere *examining*.

First and foremost, Thomas' finger is the pointing finger of identification nor the raised finger of critique. Beyond dogmatic belief and suspicious disbelief, his examining is a communion. Touching Christ, he nullifies the distance between them. Exchanging, as Latour says, matters of fact for matters of concern²². While the former refer to highly politicised and polemical interpretations by a subject opposite an object, the latter refer to a careful consideration of fuzzy, noisy things embedded in a milieu. Facts, we could say, are part of the epistemological vocabulary while concerns are part of the figurative vocabulary. This doesn't mean, of course, that Caravaggio's seventeenth century apostle is 'post truth'. Instead he shows there is no truth; there are only interpretations. Thomas' multisensoric 'seeing' is a seeing with several eyes. A perspectivism of which Nietzsche remarks: *the more affects we allow to speak about a matter, the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our 'concept' of this matter, our 'objectivity' be*²³.

²² Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern'. In: *Critical Inquiry*, winter 2004, p246

²³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 2006. p87

The mistake the critics make, Latour explains, is that they accept much too uncritically that facts are there to begin with and that they move away from them by debunking them.²⁴ As Caravaggio's incredulous Thomas makes explicit, the move beyond iconoclasm involves getting closer to things instead.

Now that we have seen how the sceptic figure relates to the Pyrrhonist tradition, we ask: do the event and the Serresian model of hydraulics not make him a dogmatist? Does the sceptic have a system? Sextus gives the following answer:

If one defines a system as an attachment to a number of dogmas that agree with one another and with appearances, and defines a dogma as an assent to something non-evident, we shall say that the Sceptic does not have a system. But if one says that a system is a way of life that, in accordance with appearances, follows a certain rationale, where that rationale shows how it is possible to seem to live rightly and tends to produce the disposition to suspend judgement, then we say that he does have a system.²⁵

The conditions of this system hinge upon a rationale that shows the *right* way to live while suspending this very judgement simultaneously. We have seen this twice already: both Bayle's servant and Caravaggio's apostle act without knowing what to do. Perhaps this rationale of the excluded third is best understood, therefore, as an *unhinging*. One that reminds, for instance, of Herman Melville's Bartleby, who continuously repeats '*I would prefer not to*', refusing to say yes or no, unhinging the speech-act. Systematically welcoming and examining without dogma, both figures repeat differences. Their actions are best understood as a habit, continually engendered from its own manner; a *manerie*, neither generic nor particular²⁶. This resonates directly with Serres model of hydraulics whose theory of flows and paths that '*is general, but forever in deviation from the general*' as Serres puts it.²⁷

4. Careful Gestures: betraying

In closing, we meet the third and final figure: a betraying diplomat. She first appears at the end of Isabelle Stengers' seven part *Cosmopolitics*, that refer to what she envisages as an 'ecology of practices'. These involve encounters between the sceptic and the believer and place a constraint: they require the possibility of peace. Peace as possibility, not as necessity. Or, to bring it closer to our own vocabulary, as dogma. A local peace, therefore, that must risk its own deterritorialization. It cannot be a norm—however normless—to which everyone must comply. '*No one can introduce themselves by establishing conditions from which the possibility or impossibility of agreement would follow*'.²⁸ There is nothing more dangerous than to demand of others to express themselves like everyone else—even if this means to express themselves like everyone else *in the way only they can*, as Deleuze and Guattari say.²⁹ Stengers thus places a constraint on the Nietzschean warfare of her mentor as well. Not even the repetition of differences of the nomad

²⁴ Bruno Latour, 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern'. In: *Critical Inquiry*, winter 2004, p248

²⁵ Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, 8

²⁶ See: Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2007), 27-31.

²⁷ Serres, *The Birth of Physics*, 119

²⁸ Stengers, *Cosmopolitics*, 347

²⁹ Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis (University of Minnesota Press) 1987. p200

may become a norm to which those leading an apolitical and sedentary life are held. Stengers shows herself to be a child of both Mars and Venus, then. Amending the ways of the former with that of the latter. This feedback loop indicates what is at stake: the move from critique to care, beyond iconoclasm, entails we no longer fixate on establishing grounds or conditions but, instead, care for the outcome. This care is to be understood as Christian *caritas* nor as life management but as grace, as courteous civility that contributes to a common sense.³⁰ Stengers' ecology of practices entails an art of consequences; a pragmatic philosophy that accepts as a constraint the exclusion of every idea that implies, among its consequences, a transmutation of reason into Reason.³¹ In this sense, to care does not mean to become wholly uncritical or to abandon all sceptis. Rather it shows these grounds alone are not sufficient, something more is required.

And so Stengers comes to speak of the diplomat. This figure faces an intriguing paradox for she cannot be one with those she represents; she would be a mere extension and her profession would be empty. Rather, she must truthfully betray the country or group of people that sent her, and show herself to be a reliable partner for the other diplomats she interacts with. Her ways house an irreducible tension in the ways of the diplomat. In the end, she must return and offer a proposal to the ones who commissioned her. This proposal is a betrayal of the mandate she was sent out with and it will determine the success of her work; if it is not accepted, the diplomat will be rendered a traitor. Like the servant and the apostle, the diplomat is serviceable and contributes to a common sense. She does this, not by merely playing *by* the rules, but by playing *with* them as she goes along. The point of this is precisely not to cut anyone off and to 'get what she wants', but to reconceptualise the playing field and render everyone a participating player *on the same team*. The common sense she contributes to, is therefore vulgar knowledge nor *bon sens* but something cultivated instead. The diplomat is an artist's artist who doesn't say what everybody wants to hear but who creates a new audience: she speaks to a people that is missing, a 'people to come'³². Indeed, she will speak with sceptics and believers alike. And indeed, she will show them to have something in common. Better still: she will show them to *commune* (whether they like it or not). We stress that we mustn't imagine the diplomat—or ourselves for that matter—as a designer-God coming down on a cloud creating life, as a subject granting a voice to objects, as messenger of love and peace, of coherence and climate activism. When we speak of invention, creation and reconceptualisation, these actions are to be understood as habitual. The diplomat has no preconceived masterplan; instead her plan(e) of consistency emerges from her practices. This is why she cannot show sceptics and believers that they have something in common but why she can precisely only show them to commune. They do not 'have' anything in common in the same way as they do not 'have' themselves. Showing yourself to commune means communing; it entails 'getting rid of yourself', to various uncomfortable degrees³³. For these reasons, diplomacy and communality have nothing to do with being politically correct or incorrect. They do not merely seek to harmonise and solidify or to disrupt and to liquify but to contest and thereby to cultivate heterogeneity. Its horizontality is brutal and requires immense faith and devotion.

³⁰ See: Joke Brouwer en Sjoerd van Tuinen, *To Mind is to Care*. Rotterdam (V2_Institute for Unstable Media/NAi Publishers) 2019. pp. 124-57.

³¹ Isabelle Stengers, 'William James, An ethics of thought?' In: *Radical Philosophy*. Vol. 157 September/October 2009. p19

³² Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 126.

³³ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement Image* (London: The Athlone Press, 2002), 66.

After consulting three sceptic figures and investigating how to act, not knowing what to do, we conclude in sum (and in style of Marcus Aurelius): from a welcoming servant we have learned how to act when we don't know what to do. That this paradoxical reason is not exclusively of the modern scientific kind. It is a mixed bag, so to speak, that sees philosophy mingle with science, art and religion. With the help of Serres we learned that while fluidity precedes solidity, heterogeneity takes the place of homogeneity. From an examining apostle we have learned that this model or system can be coherent without being undogmatic. It is closely tied to our daily practices as Sextus Empiricus showed, and best understood as a habit engendered from its own manner, as a repetition of differences. From a betraying diplomat, finally, we have learned that showing ourselves to commune and to act on the challenges of the Anthropocene—as opposed to merely planning to do so—requires ridding us of ourselves, of our grounds, of our beliefs and of our principles. To care for the consequences of your actions means to live a life of faith and devotion. In that sense the ways of these figures amount not to destructive politics of scepticism but to the *politesse* of scepticism. Keeping our hearts warm and our heads cool, the figures follow Ambrosius' sceptic slogan 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do'.

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Joost De Raeymaecker (Rotterdam, 1980) is an architect and philosopher. After obtaining a master degree in architecture at Delft University of Technology (2007), he has worked with smaller and larger offices in the Antwerp region on various (inter)national projects and competitions. In 2018, he obtained a bachelor degree in philosophy at the Erasmus School of Philosophy, where he has also served as editor-in-chief of fellow faculty magazine Twijfel. Currently he serves as a tutor in the bachelor and he is finishing the master in philosophy with a thesis on the philosophy of the event in the Anthropocene. The outside is already inside; you can catch Joost immersing himself in aesthetics at exhibitions and concerts, or spot him experimenting with ecophilosophy in gardens and windowsills.

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Sugden's team preferences

An inquiry into the nature of team-directed reasoning

Jakob Schönhuber

1. Introduction

What is the relation between the *I* and the *we* in social interactions? As a famous saying goes, 'there is no *I* in team'. Successful football players, for instance, are those that know how to cooperate and to act in a way that is beneficial to their team. Similarly, in everyday life, we often coordinate our behaviour without any problems. For example, when we enter a bus while someone else must leave, we usually manage the space smoothly.

Cases of coordination and cooperation, like the ones mentioned above, pose explanatory challenges. Given that it is always individuals who make the decisions in these cases, how can the abovementioned examples be explained? Cooperation problems demand that one forgoes individual incentives to defect in order for a group goal to materialise. We can imagine the football player mentioned above to be in a situation where he can try to score or to pass the ball on to another player who then might score. He knows that chances for his team to score are much higher if he cooperates. Yet, individually, the player has an incentive to deviate. For him, individually, the expected outcome is much higher if he tries to score. This is because if he makes the goal, he will get all the recognition. In case of failure, however, the player might still be able to blame bad luck. In situations like this, how can we explain cooperative behaviour, which we arguably still observe (Sugden, 2000)?

Similarly, coordination problems invoke some explanatory challenges. Even if there are no individual incentives to deviate from coordination, different ways to reach the same outcome might still exist. Imagine, for instance, when you have to enter a bus while another person needs to leave. Which side of the door should you occupy? Should you wait or just enter? For a smooth entrance, it is crucial that both of you react in the same way. For example, you take the right-hand side of the door, while the other person takes the left-hand side. But it is equally permissible that you choose the left-hand side and the other person the right-hand side. Note that there is nothing inherent in the decision situation which tells an individual what to do (Grüne-Yanoff and Lehtinen, 2010). Yet, our everyday experience shows that we manage to solve these problems without particular difficulties and without talking to one another.

In this paper, I shall address one specific account which tries to offer a solution to these types of problems: Sugden's (2000) theory of 'team reasoning'. Sugden proposes to think of coordination and cooperation problems as challenges that a group of people must solve *together*. Therefore, a person does not think about what she should do *individually*, constrained by how the other agents might act. But a person considers what she can do *together* with others, as a group. For a group to exist, all agents must acknowledge is that they must solve a problem together with others and they have to believe that the other agents engage in this perspective too. If this is in place, Sugden's team reasoning straightforwardly solves cooperation and coordination problems because agents can act on a group perspective.

Sugden (2000) calls thinking in terms of the group perspective 'team-directed reasoning'. The term 'directed' in team-directed reasoning hints at the special perspective Sugden takes. For Sugden, it is always individuals who engage in reasoning. Team-directed reasoning identifies what is best for the group, all things considered. This can also be called the group- or team goal. Team-directed reasoning

thus suggests the strategy that achieves the team goal. For example, in a football game, the goal is to win the match. So, everyone acting in line with the group goal should choose the strategy that maximises the team's chances to win. To achieve this, Sugden maintains that team-directed reasoning is a psychological process that individuals engage in for themselves. Furthermore, it can be maintained that team-directed reasoning is a methodologically individualistic account because it is reducible to individuals engaging in that perspective. Hence, an agent's decision to take the group perspective does not depend on what the other agents do. This allows to represent team-directed reasoning by rational choice language³⁴. Team preferences are the preferences an agent identifies by engaging in team-directed reasoning.

I shall argue that (a), Sugden's (2000) theory of team reasoning does not sufficiently account for individual, self-interested temptations that potentially undermine an agent's ability to act on team preferences. I will give an example of cooperation where all of Sugden's conditions are fulfilled. That is, agents engage in team-directed reasoning and take themselves to be members of a team. I will show that in such a situation it is still perfectly legitimate for an agent to act on their self-interest. (b) based on (a), I propose that Sugden's theory of team-directed reasoning should be interpreted as an agent recognising what, all things considered, would be best for the group. However, I will also point out that this mode of thinking is not exclusive. I will show that it is legitimate to assume that an agent has access to both their individual- and their group preferences in a decision situation. Based on this characterisation, I will argue that Sugden's theory does not solve cooperation- and coordination problems. This is because if it is acceptable that agents engage in both team-directed reasoning and individual reasoning, and that the presence of a team in itself does not give reason to act according to the team goal, it is not clear why following team preferences should solve coordination- and cooperation problems. The point that I will exploit is that there is a difference between engaging in team-directed reasoning and acting accordingly. To act in line with the team goal, I will argue, it is necessary that every member can trust in the other agents acting according to team-directed reasoning. But since that is not given, I conclude that team-directed reasoning does not offer a solution to coordination and cooperation problems.

I shall proceed as follows: In Section (1) I present a problem of coordination and how Sugden's theory of team-directed reasoning would address it. I continue by arguing in favour of claim (a) in Section 2. That is, I will argue that Sugden does not sufficiently address the conflict between individual and group interests. Section 3 defends claim (b) and argues that team-directed reasoning does not solve coordination- and cooperation problems. Section 4 concludes.

³⁴ The tools of rational choice theory are preferences. Preferences are tuples comparisons of alternative states of the world. If these tuples fulfil the conditions of transitivity and completeness (that is, they include everything that matters for an agent in a particular state of the world), they can be represented numerically as a function. This function is called utility function (Savage, 1971; Bradley, 2014). In the following I will also use the word payoff function to describe the same concept. A second, important point is that rational choice theory can be seen as an idealisation of reasoning (Risjord, 2014, 106–107). Therefore, whenever I use the terms preferences, or reasoning/ thinking interchangeably, I refer to the concept of idealisation. This holds for both team-directed reasoning and team preferences as well as individual reasoning and individual preferences.

2. Coordination and Sugden's theory of team-directed reasoning

In this section, I present Sugden's (2000) theory of team reasoning. I begin with a coordination problem and then explain how Sugden's theory would solve the problem by employing team-directed reasoning.

At my university, every morning, many students need to go to class. The best way to reach the classrooms is via an escalator which directly goes to the third floor. Some of the students are in a hurry to arrive on time and need to move fast. I denote them as players of type- f (). Other students have more time and walk slowly. These students are identified as players of type- s (). Students of both types need to coordinate the space on the escalators. Unfortunately, talking to one another is not an option since all students are listening to music on their headphones³⁵. Therefore, the challenge that the students face is to interact with one another and to respond in the best possible way to players of the other type. Consider now Figure 1³⁶. For simplicity, all players are summarised under their types, that is, (p_f) and (p_s).

		P_s	
		Right	Left
P_f	Left	11, 11	0, 0
	Right	0, 0	10, 10

Figure 1: Coordination on escalators under strategic reasoning

If both and do not coordinate, that is, use the same or both sides of the escalator at the same time, they end up with utility 0. Note that the exact number of utilities an agent gets if coordination fails does not matter here. What is important is that both players are considerably worse off compared to both coordinative equilibria. In the case of those students who are in a hurry, it is straightforward why they have a low utility if coordination fails: they will miss their class. But those students who have more time will be worse off as well. It arguably bothers one if other people constantly want to pass by and complain. Therefore, it would be best for both to coordinate. Hence, players of type- s would need to pick one side of the escalator and players of type- f the other side. In principle, which side is used by which players does not matter. However, we can imagine that the agents are used to walk on the right-hand side and to surpass someone on their left-hand side. Assuming that agents have a preference to coordinate according to this convention rather than the opposite way, it can be stated that if use the left-hand side and if use the right-hand side of the escalator, they achieve the best possible outcome to this problem.

³⁵ Unlike this case, in many coordination games it is not possible for players to communicate, but they still have to coordinate. Therefore, referring to language is not a general solution.

³⁶ Standard games can be represented in this form: The rows represent the strategies of while the columns represent the strategies of . Moreover, the first number in the matrix represents the payoff of the first player, while the second number the payoff of the second player (Grüne-Yanoff and Lehtinen, 2010).

However, analysing the above situation from a game-theoretic perspective, this game has no unique solution. As Sugden (2000) points out, payoff dominance – that is, choosing the strategy that leads to the overall best outcome in terms of payoffs – gives strategic players no apparent reason to choose a particular strategy. This is because rational players choose their strategy taking into consideration their expected outcome³⁷ conditional on what they think the other player will choose. Thus, both will choose [left] when they expect the other player to choose [right] and vice versa. Since no player knows what the other player will choose, their thinking will be a regress. Thus, there is no unique solution to this coordination problem.

This particular result seems counterintuitive. In fact, at my university I can observe students that coordinate on the optimal equilibrium. Similarly, our experience of everyday life tells us that we can solve these problems without any particular difficulties. Sugden's (2000, 183) account of team-directed reasoning builds on this tension between our experience and what strategic game theory would suggest and proposes a solution. Sugden suggests changing the perspective. He argues that instead of asking 'What should *I* do?', the question 'What should *we* do?' offers a way out. In other words, Sugden suggests conceiving of these problems differently. Agents should not be seen as acting in accordance with their individual utility functions, but rather as being able to take the group perspective into account. That way, rational agents can overcome coordination failures and choose what is best for the team.

From a conceptual perspective, it works exactly the same way, whether agents engage in team-directed reasoning or in individual self-interested reasoning³⁸. The difference is what the players choose to care about. In team-directed reasoning, it is the team's utility function, and in individual reasoning, it is their individual utility function. Thus, team-directed reasoning can formally be characterised as a preference order that is in line with the group goal. Hence, team-directed reasoning with respect to some game of form G generates team preferences which can be represented by a utility function $t(\cdot)$ (Sugden, 2000).

It is important to see that Sugden (2000) characterises team-directed reasoning as not being conditional on what other members of the team think. Team-directed reasoning is an individual account of reasoning directed towards the goal of the group. And the goal of the group is simply taken from the problem setup. To see how team-directed reasoning is able to solve coordination problems, consider Figure 2. Let me assume for a moment that this is a situation where team-directed reasoning applies. In the following, I will explain why this example can be represented as such.

³⁷ The outcome as characterized by preferences, conditional on what the other player chooses.

³⁸ To clarify, individual preferences might be other regarding as well. It is perfectly fine for an individual, in their 'self-interested' preferences to care about other people. The difference between individual and group preferences is that the group preferences are identified by thinking about specific coordination and cooperation problems which a 'purely' individualistic perspective is not able to overcome (Sugden, 2000).

		P_s	
		Right	Left
P_f	Left	11	0
	Right	0	10

Figure 2: Coordination on escalators under team directed reasoning

Figure 2 represents coordination on an escalator according to Sugden's (2000) account of team-directed reasoning. The difference compared to Figure 1 is that an agent who applies team-directed reasoning considers the group outcomes rather than their individual preferences. Thus, the strategic element of game theory, where all agents choose their strategy under consideration of how the other agents might act, is not present anymore: An agent who employs team-directed reasoning can straightforwardly choose according to team preferences $t(\cdot)$. Hence, all players employing team-directed reasoning and belonging to type- f will take the left-hand side of the escalator, players belonging to type- s will act respectively. Consequently, team-directed reasoning induces coordination on [left, right].

To guarantee that agents employ this type of thinking, they have to take themselves as members of a team. Sugden (2000, 195) argues that for this to be in place, team confidence is needed. Team confidence is the confidence of an individual agent in a system of first and higher-order beliefs. That is beliefs that the other members engage in team-directed reasoning too. Further, beliefs that the other members believe, that the individual themselves follows team-directed reasoning. In the following, my argument will employ that there might be a difference between team-directed reasoning and Sugden's conditions being in place and acting upon it. I will highlight that Sugden never rules out individual interests and temptations completely and that this poses a challenge to his account.

Confidence in these beliefs is an empirical concept (Sugden, 2000, 196). This means confidence is based on an agent's observations about how other agents behave. If one sees that other agents coordinate in accordance with team-directed reasoning, this suffices to induce confidence in the team's existence. But this does not rule out stronger forms of confidence. Mutual agreement, for instance, would be such a stronger form of team confidence.

Finally, for a team to exist, all members of the team (with) have to engage in team-directed reasoning and have to take themselves to be members of a team as well. If these two conditions are fulfilled, team agency is in place (Sugden, 2000).

Concerning the escalator example, these points clarify why team reasoning applies. Sugden (2000) never states that a group identity is necessary, that agents need to know one another, or that someone ought to act according to team preferences. For team agency to be in place, it suffices that everyone, individually, observes coordination in line with team-directed reasoning. Moreover, every agent is aware of the coordination problem and knows how to solve it: by engaging in team-directed reasoning.

To conclude this section, it is worth to pause for a moment and appreciate what Sugden (2000) has achieved. Sugden suggested to think of coordination problems, like the one on the escalator, as challenges that a group of people has to overcome together. This reframing of decision problems solves a challenge to game theory. Game theory is not able to explain how we, in our everyday lives, manage to coordinate. Because, by simply maximising one's own utility function under consideration of what other agents might do, many interactions do not have straightforward solutions. By assuming team-directed reasoning, however, a theoretical answer is given to these problems³⁹.

In the next section, I will point out that Sugden (2000) might be too confident in his account. In fact, I will show that there are legitimate cases where self-interest overrides team preferences even though Sugden's conditions of team agency are in place.

3. The challenge from self-interest

Let me now continue with an example which fulfils all of Sugden's (2000) conditions of team agency where, however, behaviour in accordance with the team's goal is not given. Based on this example I will then move on to argue in favour of claim (a), namely that team reasoning as it is understood by Sugden is not able to accommodate the conflict between individual and group interests.

Consider again the case where students must coordinate on escalators. Given Sugden's (2000) conditions it can easily be explained why this is a case where team agency is in place. As highlighted above, all agents face a coordination problem about the space on the escalator and this coordination problem cannot be solved by strategic thinking. But there is a solution which is easily visible for everyone. Namely, for all players $\{$, if you are a player of type- f , choose [left] and if you are a player of type- s , your strategy is [right]. Confidence in this type of coordination is given because every agent observes that the other players are acting accordingly. Thus, team agency is in place. To make this step clearer, consider that every agent faces a choice between [left] and [right]. Note that this is a situation where the agent must interact with other players. By observing others, the system of first and higher-order beliefs emerges. Every player believes that the other players engage in team-directed reasoning too. Thus, coordination should take place in accordance with team preferences.

This is the general setup. But now consider one of the students, Ann, in detail. Let me assume that Ann is aware of the common goal of all $\{$, on the escalator to facilitate movement. Furthermore, by engaging in team-directed reasoning, Ann identifies [left, right] as a solution to the coordination problem. Also, Ann knows that she must coordinate. Therefore, she takes herself to be a member of $\{$. That is, she confidently believes that all other players engage in team-directed reasoning and that they expect her to do so too. Therefore, Ann behaves according to team-directed reasoning, at least most of the time. Sometimes Ann uses the escalator while chatting with John. In such cases, Ann, even though a player of type- s , prefers to stand next to John on the left-hand side of the escalator. Note, Ann is aware of the team goal in that case too. But that does not stop her from standing next to John. This is because Ann values her self-interest at that moment more than acting on team preferences. Note that regarding

³⁹ With regards to cooperation problems, Sugden (2000) claims that his account works analogously. Team-directed reasoning not only identifies solutions for coordination problems, but also for cooperation problems.

Sugden's conditions of team agency nothing changes: Ann still engages in team-directed reasoning and is confident that she is part of the group $\{, .$ Nevertheless, Ann chooses to stand on the left-hand side of the escalator. That is, Ann chooses to put her individual self-interest above the group preferences.

In other words, there is a difference between engaging in team-directed reasoning and acting according to it. This example highlights that Ann recognises both, the team's preferences and her individual interests. To clarify, the case where Ann talks to John is not the same as standard coordination on the escalator. This example transformed the payoffs of individual agents so that it became a cooperation problem. But, as emphasised, Sugden (2000) claims that his account is able to solve both types of problems. Therefore, in terms of intuitive plausibility, nothing should be objected. Ann engages in a situation which fulfils all of Sugden's conditions, but acts on her self-interest. The challenge with team agency lies in the fact that it does not necessarily give an agent reasons to act in accordance with it.

Sugden (2000) might respond to this critique by arguing that it genuinely misconceives the nature of team-directed reasoning. Sugden (2000, 182– 183) writes:

The idea is that, in relation to a specific decision problem, an individual may conceive of herself as a member of a group or team, and conceive of the decision problem, not as a problem for her but as a problem for the team [...] For someone who has framed a decision problem in this way, relevant advice about what to do has to be addressed, not to the individual alone, or even to each member of the team independently, but to each member of the team as a member of the team.

In other words, Sugden's (2000) theory builds on the idea that team-directed reasoning is about solving problems *together*. Therefore, is the idea that individual self-interest can play a role simply incommensurable. Consequently, individual preferences or strategic considerations do not play a role in team-directed reasoning, they are something different.

From the methodological perspective, this interpretation of Sugden's (2000) account implies that if an agent engages in team-directed reasoning and takes herself to be a member of a team, that agent only considers the team's utility function $t(\cdot)$ and not individual preferences. Thus, an agent will act according to $t(\cdot)$ in virtue of being a member of a team.

I consider this interpretation of team agency to be implausible. Being able to identify what *we* should do as a group, as distinct from what *I* should do individually, does not mean that the latter is ignored. An important reason for this is that group confidence is an empirical concept. Simply observing that other agents act in accordance with a group goal is unlikely to induce confidence in team agency which is strong enough to ignore self-interest (Hindriks, 2012). But in some cases, team agency might be stronger than being based on empirical observation. Soldiers, for instance, are trained to commit to their orders and their company even under risk of their life. But soldiers are trained to do so and know that they can trust their companions. Yet, even the military knows soldiers who desert. Arguably, many of them are afraid for their lives when they decide to disregard orders and not to act on the team goal.

My point here is not to argue that it is impossible that agents will act on team preferences rather than their individual ones. What I aim to show here is that it is plausible to assume that even if team agency is in place, individual interests might come first, which means that agents act on their individual preferences, rather than on the team preferences.

This point can be stated more strongly. It is not clear why someone who chooses to engage in team-directed reasoning should ignore their self-interest completely. Being able to identify what *we* should do

as a group, as distinct from what *I* should do individually, and choosing that the *we* perspectives matters does not mean that individual considerations will be ignored. Since Sugden (2000) takes his theory to be broadly applicable, I contend that it is legitimate to maintain that agents might sometimes act on team preferences and sometimes not. Note that I am not making any claims about how an agent chooses between individual or group interests. I believe that this is a crucial question too because it is not clear from a rational choice perspective which goal should be taken as prior. My argument is that Sugden simply ignores the possibility of self-interested motivations in cases of team-directed reasoning. And this, I argue, poses a challenge for his account to solve coordination and cooperation problems.

Let me restate my argument so far. Sugden's (2000) theory of team reasoning fails to account for Ann's decision not to coordinate in line with the group goal. The problem is that Sugden does not sufficiently accommodate for challenges between individual and group interests. In the next section, I will defend claim (b). Claim (b) states that it is important to account for this conflict between individual and group interests in situations where team-directed reasoning applies. But if this conflict is accounted for, Sugden's theory of team reasoning fails to offer a solution to coordination problems.

4. An alternative interpretation of team-directed reasoning

As emphasised above, agents acting in situations which are characterised as cooperation problems can face a decision between their self-interest and the interest of their group. In this section, I will do two things. First, I will show that it is acceptable to interpret Sugden's (2000) account in a way which accommodates this tension. I propose to think of an agent in decision situations where team-directed reasoning applies, as having access to both the group as well as their individual preferences. Second, accepting this interpretation of Sugden's theory of team reasoning, I will point out that team-directed reasoning does not offer a solution to coordination and cooperation problems anymore.

Team-directed reasoning can be understood as an individual recognising what, all things considered, would be best for the group, distinct from the question of what would be best for oneself. With this, I mean that both individual- and team-directed reasoning can exist in the same coordination problem and that it is legitimate to assume that an individual is aware of both. Thus, the question an agent must face is upon which preferences they should act.

Sugden characterises team-directed reasoning as a mode of thinking which recognises what, all things considered, one should do when acting as a member of a team. Sugden (2000, 195) writes:

My analysis prescribes what he [an agent] should rationally choose if he takes himself to be acting as a member of the team - that is, if he engages in team-directed reasoning.

But note that Sugden (2000) never rules out that an agent cannot consider their self-interest too. In fact, by characterising team-directed reasoning as a mode of reasoning and team agency by a series of conditions – which boils down to understanding what the group goal is as well as observing other agents engage in behaviour in accordance with the group preferences – Sugden does not rule out that individuals can also think what they, individually, prefer and what is best for themselves.

Maintaining that individuals can engage in both team-directed reasoning as well as self-interested considerations does not rule out that coordination can happen in line with the group goals. Though, what follows from this claim is that every agent must choose whether they want to act on their team preferences or their individual ones. Consider, for example, what it means to live together in a household.

Be it as a family or a shared flat, keeping the common spaces clean is a collective endeavour which, arguably, everyone agrees upon. But this does not rule out that, when it comes to one individual to clean, a person has a series of incentives to clean only superficially or even not at all. I think this example nicely points at the inherent tension between individual and group interests. This tension does not have to be based on a conscious reasoning process. What I take it to be is a primitive notion of an agent recognising what is best for oneself, as opposed to what is best for the team. Now, how an agent chooses in an actual situation is a different question and to answer it would require detailed accounts of cognitive decision making. But for me, to make my point, this is not necessary. I simply maintain that agents are, generally speaking, aware of this tension between individual and group interests. Agents are aware of this tension not only for themselves, but they also know that other agents face similar conflicts.

Interpreting team-directed reasoning as a mode of thinking that exists alongside self-interested considerations seems the plausible working hypothesis for rational agents. However, I will show that this interpretation ultimately undermines what team-directed reasoning tries to establish in the first place: A solution to coordination problems.

To see why, consider once again coordination at the escalator. This time we need to look at Carol who approaches the escalator in a hurry. Carol sees Ann and John in front of her approaching the escalator too. By engaging in team-directed reasoning Carol knows that for all $\{$, the following strategy-set applies: If you are a $\}$, choose [left], if you are a $\}$, choose [right]. This would be the optimal solution, which is also followed by other players, as Carol observes. All $\{$, on the escalator act in line with team preferences. Carol is also confident that Ann and John individually coordinate in line with team-directed reasoning. So far, Carol saw them every week taking the same escalator. However, in these cases, Carol observed Ann and John only individually, instead of walking together. Thus, based on Sugden's condition, Carol can assume that team agency is in place. But should Carol act on the team preferences? Carol knows based on team-directed reasoning what she should do, but she is also aware that individuals can act on their self-interest. Thus, observing Ann chatting with John in front of her causes Carol to seriously doubt whether Ann and John will follow the team preferences. Therefore, Carol identifies two possible strategies: She can either try to coordinate on team-preferences. In that case, Carol would take the left-hand side of the escalator and hope that the space in front of her is empty so that she can easily walk on the escalator. Or, Carol could also try to push forward on the right-hand side of the line to get to the escalator before Ann and John arrive. Carol must choose her strategy depending on what she thinks that Ann will do. If Ann acts on her self-interest and stands next to John on the escalator, Carol should defect too to be on time for class. However, if Ann would coordinate on team preferences, for Carol that would be the best choice as well.

Clearly, this is a case of strategic interaction as game theory models it. Team-directed reasoning interpreted as a mode of reasoning which exists alongside individual, self-interested reasoning does not offer a solution anymore. Note that what this example establishes is not that Ann's choice between individual or group interests in itself undermines the possibility of coordination and cooperation. It is the possibility that Ann can act on either mode which challenges Sugden's theory of team reasoning. Carol, who simply wants to coordinate, must take this point into consideration and her confidence in the team is undermined. Generally speaking, the problem is that confidence in other agents engaging in team-directed reasoning does by no means imply confidence that other agents act accordingly. But to trust in team-preferences, confidence that other agents act according to team-directed reasoning is necessary.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I presented Sugden's theory of team reasoning. I argued that (A), Sugden's theory is not able to sufficiently account for challenges between individual self-interest and team goals. The point I made is that there is a difference between saying that individuals engage in team-directed reasoning and have to solve a coordination or cooperation problem together, and claiming that, because of engaging in team-directed reasoning, self-interest will be ignored. (B) Exploiting this argument, I proposed to think of team-directed reasoning as an agent being aware of the group goal, but that this way of thinking does not lead one to ignore their self-interest. However, I showed that on this account, team-directed reasoning does not solve coordination problems anymore. Hence, I conclude that team-directed reasoning does not offer a solution to coordination and cooperation problems.

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Jakob Schönhuber obtained a B.Sc. in Economics from the Vienna University of Business and Economics. Currently is Jakob doing the Research Master's in Philosophy and Economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam. He is also working as a Research Assistant at the faculty of Philosophy for Dr. Conrad Heilmann. Jakob's research interests concern questions of rationality and cooperation in the context of game theory.

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“Wij filosofen doen iets anders”: Een interview met Prof. Dr. F.A. Muller.

door Ties van Gemert en Toine Spoormakers

F.A. Muller is geboren in 1962 te Amsterdam. Nadat zijn passie voor dierkunde werd getemperd door een aantal saaie biologielessen, besloot hij een graad voor het geven van wiskunde en natuurkunde op de middelbare school te behalen. Hierna volgde hij een interdisciplinaire studie van zes jaar aan de Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam met als hoofdonderwerp theoretische natuurkunde. In 1998 verdedigde Muller zijn multidisciplinaire thesis *Structures for Everyone. Contemplations and proofs in the foundations and philosophy of physics and mathematics* (1998). De afgelopen vijftientig jaar publiceerde hij tientallen artikelen over diverse onderwerpen, waaronder de Model Revolution, Harry Mulisch en de paradox van Banach en Tarski, in toonaangevende tijdschriften zoals *Synthese*, *Mind* en *Philosophy of Science*. Naast werken over filosofie, literatuur en de natuurwetenschappen publiceert F.A. Muller ook korte verhalen met lugubere namen als *De Muur* en *Het Bloedbad*. Muller gelooft dat het leven absurd en verschrikkelijk is, maar wel goed voor een lach en een traan. Na de dood is er volgens hem niets.

Hieronder volgt een weerslag van een interview met F.A. Muller dat plaatsvond op 26 februari om 13:00 in zijn kantoor in het Bayle gebouw. De audio-opname van het interview is vervolgens getranscribeerd door computersoftware en geredigeerd door Toine Spoormakers, Ties van Gemert, Sven Hogervorst en Stijn Voogt. Aangezien het gesprek meer dan twee uur duurde, is ervoor gekozen om bepaalde gedeeltes in te korten.

Toine Spoormakers (TS)⁴⁰: *De afgelopen eeuwen hebben we het werkveld van de filosoof steeds kleiner zien worden. Veel van haar kinderen, waaronder de natuurkunde en de psychologie, zijn opgegroeid en hebben hun eigen zetels gevestigd. Deze ontwikkelingen hebben zowel op institutioneel als cultureel niveau invloed gehad op de identiteit en status van de filosofie. Onze vraag is simpel en klassiek. Welke rol kunnen we de filosofie toebedelen en hoe verhoudt deze zich tot de rol van de natuurvorser, de psycholoog en de wetenschapper in het algemeen?*

F.A. Muller (FAM): Ja, ja, ja, dit vroeg Kant zich ook al af. Die zei van: nou goed, we gaan nu wetenschap bedrijven en wat moeten we dan nog met de filosofie? Is dat dan voorbij? Kant stelde de vraag: *hoe* is het mogelijk dat wij al die kennis kunnen verwerven? Dat was een nieuw project voor de filosofie. Tegenwoordig denken wij van: nou ja, hoe wij kennis verwerven, dat kunnen we het beste overlaten aan de cognitieve psychologie en de neurowetenschappen. Dus dat hoeft dan ook niet meer! Een tweede idee is natuurlijk dat van Wittgenstein. De bescheiden opvatting van: filosofie moet de begrippen analyseren die door de wetenschap worden gebruikt en wat door de wetenschap zelf niet wordt gedaan, of nauwelijks gebeurt, of met mate gebeurt. Een andere taak is, en dat is niet zozeer Wittgensteiniaans, maar laten we zeggen: modern metafysisch. Dat is het achterhalen welke metafysische veronderstellingen noodzakelijk zijn om wetenschap te bedrijven, en dat lijkt dan toch weer een beetje op Kant. De noodzakelijke mogelijkheidsvoorwaarden voor de verwerving van kennis zocht Kant voornamelijk in onze geest. Wij moeten op een bepaalde manier in elkaar zitten om kennis te kunnen verwerven. Maar de moderne

⁴⁰ Toine Spoormakers is in 1999 geboren te Nijmegen. In 2018 startte hij met de Bachelor Filosofie aan de Erasmus Universiteit, waar hij ook deelneemt aan het facultaire Honours programma. Vanaf het begin van dit academische jaar is Toine redacteur van ESJP.

metafysicus zal zeggen: er zijn ook veronderstellingen die gemaakt worden die niet zozeer in ons hoofd zitten, maar die gewoon nodig zijn om deze gehele onderneming van de grond te krijgen. Dan is er nog een derde taak die te maken heeft met wetenschap en dat is dat er theorieën zijn in de wetenschap, die op meerdere manieren te interpreteren zijn. Het klinkt een beetje gek dat ze juist te vinden zijn in de natuurkunde, want de natuurkunde is de koningin van de wetenschappen. Grotere nauwkeurigheid, betere empirische bevestiging en strengere experimentele toetsing dan in de natuurkunde vind je gewoon helemaal nergens. Dat juist daar de problemen enorm zijn! Wat zegt de quantummechanica over de werkelijkheid? Nou, mijn cursus is net weer van start gegaan: “Quantum mechanics for philosophers”, waarin we het daar uitgebreid over hebben. Meestal vallen toch de schellen van de ogen van de studenten om te zien dat deze theorie, die zo verschrikkelijk goed getoetst is, zo veel vragen onbeantwoord laat en andere vragen oproept, en dat zijn echt allemaal filosofische vragen. Sommige zijn fonkelnieuw, die hebben alleen maar te maken met de quantumfysica. Andere vragen zijn zo oud als die van Aristoteles, en die doen zich in een soort verhevigde vorm voor. Dus als je wilt begrijpen wat onze kennis nou eigenlijk zegt over de werkelijkheid, dan is deze tak van filosofie gewoon onontbeerlijk! Punt. Goed, dus dat zijn allemaal taken die te maken hebben met de wetenschap.

TS: *In een artikel in een bundel geschreven voor de dan zojuist overleden wetenschapsfilosoof Patrick Suppes (1922-2014) beargumenteert u hoe we het interpreteren van quantummechanica moeten denken, namelijk als interpretatie immanent aan de theorie zelf. Het interpreteren van quantummechanica is geen kwestie van vanuit buitenaf betekenis geven aan de theorieën van quantummechanica, maar juist gegrond in en samen met de wetenschap de theorie verder ontwikkelen, uitbreiden en doordenken. Hoe moeten we ons dit precies voorstellen? En hoe verschilt deze vorm van interpreteren van het interpreteren van een roman?*

FAM: Ja, dus Patrick Suppes is enkele jaren geleden overleden. Dat was wel één van de leidende geesten in mijn proefschrift, omdat hij natuurlijk als eerste een andere kijk heeft geboden op wat een *theorie* is. Eigenlijk is door Aristoteles min of meer voor het eerst opgesteld wat een theorie is en dat onze kennis opgeslagen is in theorieën. En dat heeft standgehouden, kun je zeggen, tot ongeveer na de Tweede Wereldoorlog. En toen kwam Suppes - die geïnspireerd door ontwikkelingen in de logica liet zien dat je ook op een totaal andere manier over theorieën kunt nadenken. Grofweg als klassen van modellen. Modellen zijn dan wiskundige structuren. Dat is één ding.

Dan is er de volgende vraag: wat is nou precies een interpretatie van de quantummechanica? Is dat hetzelfde als de interpretatie van een roman? Wat is de interpretatie van een roman? Ja, dan ga je dus meer tekst produceren over die roman, die op de één of andere manier die roman begrijpelijker moet maken, want kennelijk is het nog niet allemaal duidelijk. Dus je wilt er meer over zeggen en is dat nou hetzelfde in de quantummechanica? Dus het debat interpretatie van de quantummechanica, al die mensen die daarover schrijven: doen die iets soortgelijks? En mijn antwoord op die vraag is ontkennend. Het antwoord luidt nee.

Ten eerste, ze doen deels aan begripsanalyse, maar het is toch voornamelijk een *metafysisch* debat. Het is voornamelijk een debat van: hoe moet de wereld eruitzien opdat de quantummechanica van die wereld een correcte beschrijving geeft? Dat is de vraag. En wat al die interpretaties van de quantummechanica doen, is dat ze eigenlijk met een nieuwe theorie komen, en dus een interpretatie van de quantummechanica geven. Dat betekent het volgende. Je isoleert eerst een kern van de theorie, die voldoende is om alles uit te rekenen wat gemeten kan worden. Oké, en dan heb je misschien al een theorie, maar die geeft op heel veel vragen geen antwoord, en die roept ook allemaal vragen op. Dus om die vragen te beantwoorden of

mogelijke paradoxen weg te nemen, moet je eigenlijk meer aan die theorie toevoegen, aan die kern. En wat je toevoegt? Dat zijn extra postulaten. Verschillende interpretaties voegen gewoon andere postulaten toe. Je hebt dus eigenlijk allemaal verschillende theorieën, die een aantal postulaten gemeen hebben. Dus dat was mijn idee.

Kijk, of alle interpretatie debatten over theorieën op die manier behandeld kunnen worden, ja, dat kan ik zo niet zeggen. Er is ook debat over de evolutietheorie. Wat is de evolutietheorie precies? Is het een *partial-equilibrium* of zo? Maar daar kun je ook van zeggen: nou, dat zijn andere postulaten, waarvan verschillende mensen denken dat ze onderdeel uitmaken van de theorie. Ik zie eigenlijk niet goed hoe het anders kan. De begrippen waarmee de theorie werkt, de woorden die gebruikt worden, daar kun je allemaal verschillende betekenissen aan toekennen, maar niet zoals je dat bij de interpretatie van een roman kan doen. Je kunt *Het Proces* van Kafka interpreteren als een liefdesroman. Je kunt het interpreteren zoals Max Brod deed: als de speurtocht van het Israëliëse volk. Je kunt het interpreteren als een voorafschaduwning van de totalitaire staat. Je hebt totaal verschillende interpretaties van één en dezelfde roman en tot op zekere hoogte heb je dat van de quantummechanica ook wel hoor, maar dan natuurlijk nog niet zo uiteenlopend als bij een roman. Want het moet wel over dezelfde fysische werkelijkheid gaan.

Ties van Gemert (TvG)⁴¹: *En waar zou u zeggen dat dat door komt? Komt dat door de ambiguïteit die de woorden en zinnen in Kafka's werk hebben en die de quantummechanica mist?*

FAM: Nee, dat is natuurlijk het onderwerp. Kijk, romans die gaan over het leven zelf en dat is zo omvangrijk en nauwelijks afgebakend, maar de quantummechanica gaat over, ja, toch tamelijk nauwkeurig omschreven verschijnselen in experimenten. Het gaat niet over de komende Amerikaanse verkiezingen. Het gaat niet over de schilderijen van Rembrandt, enzovoort, enzovoort. Weet je, over de meeste dingen daar gaat het niet over. Maar als je het over romans hebt, ja, die kunnen echt overal over gaan. Dus het is meer het onderwerp, de één is gewoon alomvattend en het andere is toch zeer speciaal.

TvG: *Dus hoe omvangrijker het onderwerp, hoe meer interpretaties mogelijk zijn?*

FAM: Ja, omdat hoe omvangrijker het onderwerp, hoe onoverzichtelijker het allemaal wordt. Hoe meer parameters je hebt, waarvan je de meerderheid niet in de hand hebt, hoe onoverzichtelijk het allemaal wordt. Dus is het geen wonder dat wanneer die mensen het daarover gaan hebben, dat ze in alle talen allemaal verschillende dingen naar elkaar kraaien en dat de hoop op overeenstemming vervliegt. Het is eigenlijk gewoon utopisch, oké.

TS: *U heeft theoretische natuurkunde gestudeerd aan de Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam, daarna schreef u een proefschrift over de grondslagen van de wiskunde en natuurkunde en nu bent u op de Erasmus Universiteit hoogleraar filosofie van de exacte wetenschappen. U schrijft vooral artikelen, waarin de filosofie en de exacte wetenschappen samen besproken worden of samenkomen. In hoeverre acht u wetenschappelijke kennis noodzakelijk voor de wetenschapsfilosoof? Moet hij of zij, om de wetenschappen te interpreteren en misschien zelfs wel om te kunnen filosoferen, een uitmuntend begrip van de wetenschap hebben? Of is wetenschapsfilosofie mogelijk zonder een dergelijk inzicht?*

FAM: Nou ja kijk, algemene wetenschapsfilosofie, dat bestaat nog steeds. Ja, en wat kennis van de wetenschap is daarbij wel onontbeerlijk. Als je verder wilt specialiseren, dus als je denkt: ik wil meedoen

⁴¹ Ties van Gemert studeerde filosofie en psychologie aan de Erasmus Universiteit en Tilburg University. Zijn onderzoek richt zich op de relatie tussen filosofie en psychologie in de negentiende eeuw. Vanaf het begin van het academisch jaar is Ties lid van de redactie van ESJP.

aan die interpretatie debatten over de quantummechanica, dan is een Bachelor Natuurkunde toch wel het minste om daaraan mee te kunnen doen. Maar ik denk ook dat, als je een beetje mee wilt doen met filosofie van de psychologie en het *mind-body problem*, dan moet je toch ook wel wat psychologie en een cursus neurowetenschap gevolgd hebben om te weten waar het allemaal over gaat. Je moet wel enigszins geïnformeerd mee kunnen doen, maar als je dus niks van natuurwetenschap weet, of geen enkele andere wetenschap... Ja, dan moet je het vergelijken met iemand die niet van kunst houdt, die nooit naar een museum gaat, nooit naar een film kijkt, nooit een roman leest. En die vraagt zich af, wat kan ik bijdragen aan de esthetica? Ja, weet je, ga jij maar wat anders doen, jongen!

Als ik naar taalfilosofie kijk, hè. Dat is zoiets curieus! Dus enerzijds denk je, nou hebben we toch iets te pakken, ja, want we spreken allemaal taal, dus we zitten vol met ervaringskennis hiervan en wat moet je eigenlijk meer weten? Zoals de taalfilosofie zich heeft ontwikkeld; het is een vrij jonge tak aan de boom der wijsbegeerte. Dat je een taal spreekt en een taalgebruiker bent, dat lijkt voldoende te zijn. Moet je iets weten van computationele linguïstiek? Moet je iets weten van taalkunde? Moet je veel kennis hebben van de grammatica, bijvoorbeeld? Dat speelt eigenlijk nergens. Je kunt beter iets van logica weten. Daar kom je verder mee in de taalfilosofie. Ja, en helemaal, kijk vragen als “Wat is betekenis?” en “Wat is een taal nou precies voor iets?”. Dat zijn in wezen de grote vragen. Dat zijn geen onderzoeksterreinen in de linguïstiek en in de taalkunde. Daar kijkt men hoe taal gebruikt wordt en verzamelt men gigantische corpora taalgebruik. Men laat computers speuren naar regelmatigheden in deze corpora en richt zich bijvoorbeeld op uitspraken. Dat is voor de taalfilosofie volslagen oninteressant. Of dat ik gebrekkig Nederlands spreek qua uitspraak. Dat is niet relevant voor de inhoud van wat ik zeg. En om die inhoud is het bij de taalfilosofie toch eigenlijk vooral te doen, hè. Wat bedoelt iemand? Wat is betekenis? Hoe hangt betekenis en waarheid met elkaar samen? Nou, daar houdt de taalkunde zich niet mee bezig.

TvG: *Maar hoe moeten we dan wel dit onderwerp benaderen? Welke methode zouden we moeten toepassen voor het beantwoorden van zulke overkoepelende vragen?*

FAM: Ja, veel meer dan een methode van begripsanalyse is er eigenlijk niet, hè. Dus voorzichtig redeneren en begrippen analyseren. Ja, en voor de rest is er natuurlijk geen methode om te denken.

TvG: *Kan er zoiets zijn als een methode om te denken?*

FAM: Je kent toch wel die anekdote dat Alexander de Grote op bezoek kwam bij Archimedes, de grootste denker van zijn tijd, in Syracuse. Alexander zei: ik heb één dag, leer mij alles wat u weet. Toen zei Archimedes: er is geen keizerlijke weg naar de kennis. Weet je, als die er was... Die is er gewoon niet! Dus, hoe verwerf je kennis? Daar is weinig over te zeggen, maar methode van toetsing, dat is iets anders. Die zijn wel goed vastgelegd! En daar hebben alle takken van wetenschap zo hun eigen protocollen voor. Wat je moet doen, hoe je statistische gegevens moet behandelen, enzovoort. Daar zijn wel methoden voor en dat wordt aan studenten onderwezen, want er is geen cursus: hoe verzin ik een nieuwe theorie? Hoe zou die cursus eruit moeten zien? Bestudeer de geschiedenis van je vakgebied, daar kan je inspiratie uit opdoen. Nou ja, Tim de Mey, die probeert wel dit gebied van “hoe kom je tot iets?” te onderzoeken. Er zijn wel filosofen, die daar ook in geïnteresseerd zijn en die proberen daar iets over te zeggen... Ja, hoe schrijf je een geweldige roman? Hier is een handleiding, weet je, die is er niet! Hoe maak je een geweldig schilderij? Hoe componeer je een lied waardoor je de halve mensheid in vervoering brengt? Ja, dat zijn allemaal vragen waar we volstrekt geen antwoord op weten, hoor. Het zijn allemaal raadsels.

TvG: *Maar wel zinnige raadsels?*

FAM: Nou, het lijkt me wel, ja. Het zijn toch zeer interessante vragen. En zo kun je er wel iets over zeggen. In een bepaalde situatie kun je natuurlijk afraden om dingen te doen en aanraden om dingen te doen. Als je promovendi begeleidt, moet je dat ook doen: nou dat zal ik maar niet uit gaan zoeken, nee, die weg moet je niet opgaan. Soms weet ik het ook niet eens, maar het *lijkt* mij dan niks weet je, maar dat ga ik niet tegen die promovendus zeggen, wanneer hij dan vraagt: ja waarom niet? Dan verzin ik gewoon iets, weet je. Soms pakt dat goed uit, soms ook niet, hè. Maar wat dat betreft is het gewoon tasten in het duister.

TvG: *Begin deze maand (03-02-2020) stierf literatuurwetenschapper en zelfbenoemd cultuurpessimist George Steiner op 91-jarige leeftijd. Hij liet een immens oeuvre achter dat bestaat uit meer dan veertig boeken die handelen over diverse onderwerpen, waaronder Treblinka, de toekomst van waarheid en Leo Tolstoj. In 2003 schreef u een Ziektegeschiedenis van Steiner en beschreef zijn ziekte als een geval van transcendentis. Zou u aan ons kunnen uitleggen wat deze ziekte precies is, hoe het zich voordoet en met welke symptomen het meestal gepaard gaat. Ook vroegen we ons af of u een idee heeft waar deze ziekte vandaan komt, hoe deze ziekte zich verspreidt, en waar deze ziekte zich momenteel vooral manifesteert.*

FAM: Ja, het is uiteindelijk een manifestatie van de wereld om je heen willen begrijpen, en wat de transcendentis kenmerkt, is dat je naar verklaringen zoekt die boven de natuurlijke wereld uitstijgen. Kijk, het geval van Steiner. Steiner's vader was een bankier, maar ook een humanist, en die moest niks hebben van die Joodse religie, dat had hij gewoon helemaal afgezworen. Dat vond hij allemaal achterhaald, wilde hij niks mee, en zo heeft hij zijn kinderen opgevoed. En zo is Steiner dus ook eigenlijk begonnen als een overtuigd humanist. Maar zo langzaam maar zeker begon ie toch weer een beetje met dat hogere contact te zoeken, of zo. Wat hij eigenlijk wilde verklaren en begrijpen, is: hoe kan er zulke geweldige literatuur zijn en zulke geweldige muziek die me zo in vervoering brengt? Hoe kan dat? En dan komt als het ware die transcendentis-impuls naar boven van: "er moet iets zijn! Er moet iets hogers zijn, anders kan ik dit niet verklaren!" – en daar heeft-ie dus steeds meer aan toegegeven.

En dit is aardig. Ik heb hem dus, omdat hij veel talen sprak, en hij kende zelfs wat Nederlands, het artikel toegestuurd met een korte samenvatting in het Engels. Toen heeft hij me een briefje teruggeschreven, en hij vond vooral in dat opstel het idee interessant, dat ik hem een beetje gepsychoanalyseerd had en dat dit eigenlijk een *vadermoord* was. Dat-ie dus zijn vader de humanist eigenlijk aan het omleggen is met zijn toespelingen op het hogere. Dat vond ie een interessante suggestie, en daar zou hij nog over nadenken. Maar zoals gewoonlijk heeft hij over dat hogere nooit maar enige zinrijke mededeling gedaan. Het is alleen maar dat wat hier wel eens genoemd wordt in het Nederlands, het "ietsisme", van: er moet iets zijn! Ja, wat dan? Ik weet het niet hoor, maar er moet iets zijn, en dat iets is dan altijd ver verwijderd van... Het moet er altijd buiten zijn, omdat mensen denken: ja, anders kunnen we het niet verklaren of begrijpen. Dus zeer anti-wetenschappelijk, maar ja, mensen lezen nog steeds horoscopen en zo. En dus, hoe kom je ervan af? Ik weet het ook niet...

TvG: *In hetzelfde artikel over Steiner geeft u een aantal handvatten voor het bestrijden van deze ziekte en het voorkomen van een epidemie. U lijkt hierbij gebruik te maken van een onderscheid tussen zinvolle en niet-zinvolle uitspraken, dat eerder ook is uitgewerkt door logisch positivisten als Rudolf Carnap en Carl Gustav Hempel. Tegelijk noemt u ook Willard van Orman Quine's reductie van betekenis theorieën tot vertaaltheorieën, dat vaak begrepen wordt als een kritiek op de betekenis theorie van de logisch positivisten. Welke rol speelt een (strikte) scheiding tussen zinvolle en niet-zinvolle uitspraken bij transcendentis? Hoe moeten we deze scheiding begrijpen na Quine's kritiek?*

FAM: Ja goed, die positivisten, die hadden een bepaalde betekenistheorie voor ogen, maar er zijn zoveel betekenistheorieën en al die betekenistheorieën, die maken natuurlijk een onderscheid tussen uitdrukkingen die betekenis hebben en die geen betekenis hebben. Dat doet Quine ook hoor. Het moet allemaal op één of andere manier terug te voeren zijn op “*scratchings at nerve endings*”, dus hij heeft het ook. Dat heeft iedereen, en er is ook iets heel alledaags aan, hè. Er is dat bekende voorbeeld van Chomsky: “*green ideas sleep furiously*.” Dat vindt iedereen onzinnig, dus natuurlijk kun je onzinnige dingen zeggen met de woorden die er zijn. Dat is niet zo moeilijk. En als je op zoek bent naar een scherpe onderscheiding, dan gaat dat heel erg afhangen van je betekenistheorie. Als je denkt: betekenis is gebruik, en het daardoor vastlegt á la Wittgenstein II. Ja, dan hoeft je allerlei uitdrukkingen maar te gaan gebruiken en zodra die gebruikt worden in één of andere taalgemeenschap... Nou, gebruiken is dan de betekenis van die begrippen. Dus alles wat gebruikt wordt om met elkaar te communiceren, om dingen van elkaar gedaan te krijgen, zijn betekenisrijke uitdrukkingen, punt. Meer dan dat is er dan niet. Dus het onderscheid tussen betekenisloze en betekenisrijke uitdrukkingen is dan: betekenisloze uitdrukkingen die gebruikt niemand. En daar kun je eigenlijk door empirisch onderzoek achter komen. Dat is dan wel weer fijn.

TvG: *Maar dan blijft praten over God, dus onder bepaalde omstandigheden wel betekenisvol?*

FAM: Ja, dat is precies een voorbeeld dat Wittgenstein niet omarmde, en in ieder geval niet zomaar terzijde schoof. Zoals je zegt, wanneer een bewering alleen betekenis heeft als er een methode bestaat om deze te kunnen verifiëren, zoals bij Carnap, dan wordt praten over God zinloos. Maar voor Wittgenstein was dat niet zo, want mensen gebruiken het woord God op een bepaalde manier. En dat heeft te maken met hun gedrag van naar de kerk of moskee gaan om, weet ik veel wat te gaan doen, en om allerlei dingen tegen elkaar te zeggen. Nou, dus, zo krijgen die begrippen betekenis. Het is niet anders dan hoe andere begrippen betekenis krijgen. Kijk, als je zo’n gebruik-semantiek hebt, dan is het zo dat als je een taalgemeenschap hebt van mensen die over *transcenditis* spreken, dan heeft *dat* betekenis. Als je dat wilt bekritisieren, dan moet je dat doen met een betekenistheorie die anders is dan gebruik, dat kan natuurlijk. Of je moet het niet bekritisieren op basis van een betekenistheorie, maar bijvoorbeeld op wetenschappelijke basis. Het is natuurlijk wel een geniale inval van de positivisten om dat te doen en juist daar aandacht aan te besteden.

Ik vertel wel eens het verhaal aan studenten: “met zevenmijlslarzen door de geschiedenis van de filosofie heen”. De oude Grieken hebben het over de werkelijkheid en de eerste grote wending, die komt eigenlijk met Descartes en Kant. Zij gaan het hebben over: maar wat *weet* ik eigenlijk over de werkelijkheid? Wat is nou kennis? Kan ik kennis krijgen? Je haalt het dan iets dichterbij jezelf. De volgende stap is dan Wittgenstein. Dat is: maar die kennis is uitgedrukt in *taal*. Maar wat betekent dat eigenlijk, wat is betekenis? En dan komt het steeds dichterbij. Dit zijn twee scharniermomenten in de geschiedenis van de filosofie. Je kunt het *nóg* dichterbij krijgen, door te spreken over: maar wat is dan bewustzijn? Wij gebruiken taal, wij zijn ons bewust van de betekenissen van de woorden die we gebruiken. Dichterbij kan niet! Dat is het eindpunt: wat is bewustzijn? Dat is na de vraag: “wat is taal en wat is betekenis eigenlijk?”, de grote vraag.

TS: *Het lijkt dus af te hangen van de methode en de betekenistheorie die je hanteert of er betekenisvol over God gepraat kan worden. Geldt dit voor alle existentiële vraagstukken? De dood is bijvoorbeeld een terugkerend existentieel thema in de filosofie. Hoe zouden we vragen omtrent de dood moeten behandelen? Kunnen dergelijke vragen alleen benaderd worden vanuit een wetenschappelijk perspectief, of is er bij sommige existentiële vraagstukken ruimte voor vormen van niet-wetenschappelijk denken?*

FAM: Kijk waar je het ook over gaat hebben, het is een gegeven of niet of er wetenschappelijke kennis over beschikbaar is. Dus dat is het eerste wat je kunt doen. Als je je bijvoorbeeld afvraagt: wat is de zin van het bestaan? Nou, dan is er niet evident een tak van de wetenschap die je daarbij gaat helpen, dus daar kan je geen beroep op doen. Wittgenstein zegt in *Tractatus*, dat zelfs wanneer al onze wetenschappelijke problemen opgelost zijn, laat dat zien dat er eigenlijk nog niets is opgelost, want de levensproblemen zijn nog niet opgelost. En dan denk ik van: ja, ja, ja, dat klinkt allemaal wel fijn en mysterieus, maar het is toch niet helemaal waar. Moet je nou eens voorstellen: twee mensen worden verliefd op elkaar en de vrouw wil dolgraag kinderen, blijkt dat het niet kan. Nou heeft de wetenschap iets ontdekt: in haar geval kunnen ze haar kunstmatig bevruchten en kan ze toch een kind krijgen. Dit was toch echt een levensprobleem voor deze twee mensen, waar de wetenschap in dit geval iets te bieden had, zie je? Het is niet *altijd* zo dat de wetenschap nooit iets te bieden heeft voor de oplossingen van levensproblemen. Dus kijk, als je zegt er zijn terreinen waar je bewust onwetenschappelijk tekeer moet gaan, dan denk ik: ja god wat bedoel je daarmee? Bedoel je dan dat we ophouden met denken? Of dat we niet meer om ons heen kijken of de dingen die we denken bevestigt of juist ontkracht worden door wat we zien? Ik wens je veel succes, ben benieuwd waar je uitkomt! Ik denk dat het een heilloze weg is, maar als je over dingen wilt nadenken waar geen enkele tak van wetenschap relevant voor is...

Zo'n vraag als: wat is er na de dood? Ja, daar heeft de wetenschap natuurlijk weinig over te melden, weet je. Zij denkt dat als je sterft en je lichaam ermee op houdt, dat het licht dan uit gaat. Dat is dan het einde van de vraag over leven na de dood. Maar als jij denkt dat je dat wel kan, als jij denkt dat je daar zinvolle dingen over kan zeggen. Mijn zegen heb je. Als je iets interessants vindt, kom het vooral melden, maar denk na! Je moet je vergewissen van wanneer je die vraag stelt: waar vraag ik nou eigenlijk naar? Wanneer je de vraag stelt: wat is de zin van het leven - zo in het algemeen? Waar vraag je nou naar, wat is een mogelijk antwoord op deze vraag, waardoor je bevredigd zou zijn dat je denkt: oh ja, gelukkig!

Stel je raakt overtuigd van het bestaan van God. Oké, laten we even aannemen, God bestaat, we zijn erachter, hij bestaat, hij heeft dit alles op één of andere manier gecreëerd. Hij heeft de oerknal in werking gezet: de natuurwetten verordonneert, dat geloof ik nu. Wat is nou de zin van mijn leven? Wat is nou het antwoord? Ik weet het dan nog steeds niet hoor! Dus, dit is geen antwoord op de vraag. Dan kun je wel zeggen: ja, maar de almachtige schepper die heeft een bepaalde bedoeling met mijn leven en die bedoeling, die ken ik niet, maar ervan overtuigd zijn dat die bedoeling er is, is voor mij voldoende. Nou heb ik rust, God heeft een plan, een blauwdruk, en ik vervul daar een rol in. Ik weet niet wat, want Gods wegen zijn ondoorgrondelijk. Ik vraag me niet langer af wat de zin van het leven is, want die bestaat, die zin. Alleen, ik ken hem niet, dat is alleen voor de almachtige weggelegd. Ik denk dat dit het antwoord van de meeste religieuze mensen is. Ik kan daarvan niet overtuigd raken

Maar zodra zo iemand zegt: ik heb kennis, dan komt de epistemoloog binnen. Dan denk ik van: hoe weet je dat? Wat is de grond van jouw rechtvaardiging? En ik denk dat als we dan lang genoeg doorpraten, dat dat behoorlijk begint te wankelen en dat iemand dan op een gegeven moment zegt van: ja, dat weet ik ook niet, maar dat geloof ik gewoon. Ik ben er gewoon van overtuigd. Je kunt niet tot overeenstemming geraken en dan zegt iemand: ja, oké, ik weet het ook allemaal niet. Hoe kan ik alles weten? Ik ben de almachtige niet, dit geloof ik gewoon. Punt. Ja, en dan stapt de epistemoloog natuurlijk de kamer uit, want die denkt: als je het alleen maar gelooft en je doet verder afstand van een weet-claim, dan heb ik hier niks meer te zoeken. Dan is ons gesprek voorbij. Als iemand gewoon zegt: ja, ik geloof dit en dit en hij heeft niet de behoefte om dit te rechtvaardigen. Wat moet ik daar dan mee? Klep dicht.

TvG: *Ja, zoiets zegt Wittgenstein natuurlijk ook. Als het om ethica gaat en dat er op een bepaald moment een punt komt waarop het gesprek ophoudt. Of zou u dat anders lezen?*

FAM: Ja, en dan zie je toch ja, dat het gesprek ophoudt. Ja, ja, ja, dat zie je in *Tractatus* ook al. Kijk op een gegeven moment, als er volstrekte duidelijkheid is verkregen over het taalgebruik, dan denkt Wittgenstein: als er dan toch nog conflict blijft bestaan of gebrek aan overeenstemming, dan kan dat alleen maar komen doordat we aan dezelfde woorden verschillende betekenissen toekennen. En als we dan weigeren om dit verder aan te passen, dan houdt het gewoon op. Dat heb je vaak in gesprekken met religieuze mensen. Je hebt op een gegeven moment zoiets van: oh, dát bedoel jij met God! Ik denk er heel anders over. Voor mij is God kenbaar en dit en dat, en jij lijkt te veronderstellen dat het een soort van Transcendente Ti Ta Toveraar is. Maar, nee, nee, dat denk ik helemaal niet hoor. Ja, maar hoe denk jij er dan over? Op een gegeven moment stopt dat, en dan weet ik het ook niet meer hoor, wat jij ermee bedoelt. Als ik dat niet meer kan bevatten, dan houdt het gesprek op.

TvG: *Ja, ik denk dat veel filosofische gesprekken ook op die manier werken dat er een bepaald punt komt, dat je veronderstelt wat de positie is van degene waarmee je in gesprek bent en dat je daar te veel assumpties maakt of een bepaald beeld schetst van de filosofie die deze persoon niet wil ophouden, en dat voordat dat echt opgehelderd wordt, dat het ophoudt. Dat zie je ook bij veel gesprekken tussen filosofen die een heel ander taalgebruik hanteren.*

FAM: Ja, daarom hebben die openbare debatten en al die fora, dat zijn nou, dat is eigenlijk, het is tijdverspilling. Dat zijn zinloze exercities. Voordat je werkelijk met een ander individu op een niveau komt dat je elkaar een beetje begint te begrijpen, dan moet je echt dagenlang met die persoon gesproken hebben. Hier eens een uur, daar nog eens een uur, dan weer eens twee uur. En dan langzaam begint het te convergeren, dat je denkt: o kijk, hij denkt er zo over. Oh ja, hij bedoelt dat met dit woord en ik eigenlijk niet. Nee, daar heb ik nooit zo over nagedacht, weet je, en zo komen twee mensen op den duur nader tot elkaar. Het idee dat je in een zaal vol mensen met een forum dit kan bereiken in twee uur, dat is een idee voor imbecielen. Echt waar! Je kraait wat als je daar zit, mensen kraaien iets terug en gaan naar huis.

TS: *Het afgelopen decennium heeft de filosofie in Rotterdam het zwaar te verduren gehad en eind 2014 leek het zelfs dat het doek zou gaan vallen voor de filosofie faculteit. Afgelopen jaar waren er wederom geluiden over een einde van een zelfstandige faculteit filosofie aan de Erasmus Universiteit. Zelf schreef u een kritisch artikel over deze fusieplannen tussen Erasmus School of Philosophy (ESP), Erasmus School of Behavioral and Social Sciences (ESSB) en Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication (ESHCC). Waar denkt u je dat de filosofie zich over een decennia bevindt op de Erasmus Universiteit? Zal zij nog steeds onder vuur liggen of denkt u dat ze haar plek langzaam maar zeker gaat vinden?*

FAM: Ja, ik denk dat de vraag wat we met filosofie moeten, altijd weer terugkomt.

TS: *Ja, want in dat artikel was u tegen een fusie omdat filosofie geen wetenschap is, maar u zei eerder dat filosofie een mooi complementair vak is. Bijna een noodzakelijk complementair vak voor de wetenschappen...*

FAM: Ja, ik denk dat je een betere wetenschapsbeoefenaar wordt als je filosofie erbij gedaan hebt.

TS: *Maar waarom ziet u daar dan geen fusie in, aangezien het toch wel een complementair vak is?*

FAM: Ja, maar kijk, je zegt ook niet ga maar fuseren met de letterenfaculteit, want goed taalgebruik is ook nuttig voor je, weet je. Het is echt iets anders. Ik heb met de vorige decaan, de vorige rector magnificus Huib Pols, een keer zaten we bij zo'n debat hier in het Erasmus Paviljoen, en hij dacht dat de filosofie een tak van wetenschap was, en ik dus pertinent niet. Dus heb ik hem uitgelegd dat wij andere dingen doen. Wij verzamelen geen gegevens, wij doen geen experimenten, wij beheren geen gegevens.

Wij toetsen niet empirisch. Dus dit zijn allemaal dingen die wij *niet* doen en die in de wetenschap *wel* gebeuren. Wij doen dus echt iets anders en er is wel zo'n takje met experimentele filosofie, maar die doen ook niet veel meer dan wat enquête-lijsten rondsturen. Dus, wie *daarvan* onder de indruk is..