

## Introduction

Krisis

While super-hurricane climate and super-offensive politicians are tying up news headlines, the new issue of *Krisis* brings together philosophical perspectives on urgent political issues. Our first article explores the interrelation between philosophy and activism head-on, when Joost Leuven analyses the role of theory in contemporary animal rights advocacy. Against the backdrop of social research suggesting that animal rights advocates are often weary of taking clear philosophical positions, Leuven argues as to why the articulation of philosophical theory should be an intrinsic aspect of the practice of advocacy. With similar exigency, Michiel Bot's work focuses on the case of Dutch politician Geert Wilders's employment of 'giving and taking offense'. Bot examines one of the architects of modern political rhetoric and demonstrates the enduring salience of Adorno and Marcuse for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The article by Pieter Lemmens and Yuk Hui focusses on two philosophers that have recently waded into the discussion of the Anthropocene, Stiegler and Sloterdijk, and explores their Heideggerian inheritance. This exploration prompts serious questions as to whether Stiegler and Sloterdijk have convincing answers to the Anthropocene's moral and political challenges.

In addition, Rob Ritzen interviews philosopher Chiara Bottici, author of *A Philosophy of Political Myth* and *Imaginal Politics*. As the imaginal's power – be it fake-

news, digital propaganda or conservative utopias – becomes more and more visible, Bottici's work attempts to build a philosophical framework for investigating the role of images and narratives in politics.

As part of our review section, Sudeep Dasgupta considers Gloria Wekker's book *White Innocence* against the backdrop of current politics of race, Matthijs Kouw presents the Dutch geophilosophical work *Water* by René ten Bos, and Temi Ogunye reviews Alejandra Mancilla's cosmopolitan exploration of *The Right of Necessity*. Finally, Marc Tuters discusses Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle's *Cartographies of the Absolute* in relation to Fredric Jameson's legacy.

## The Theory and Practice of Contemporary Animal Rights Activism

Joost Leuven

In the last few decades both public and academic interest in the human-animal relationship has grown. Academically this new interest has resulted not only in a large body of literature in the fields of animal ethics and political theory, but also in the birth of the new interdisciplinary field of human-animal studies. Outside of academia the interest in the human-animal relationship and wellbeing of animals has also grown. While this has resulted in growing support for animal welfare and rights organisations, there is much doubt among both activists and philosophers as to how successful the animal rights movement has been. Has the movement actually succeeded in bringing ‘animal liberation’ any closer to fruition?

Of course, whether one views the movement as successful would largely depend on what one sees as the end goal of the animal rights movement, and that is far from clear. There is still much uncertainty and disagreement about what a world ‘post animal liberation’, a world in which all animals have been emancipated, would actually look like. Some philosophers argue in favour of strict veganism, and their vision of an ideal world would have animals and human beings live almost completely separate lives. Our main obligation towards animals, they argue, is to simply leave them alone, and in such a world all animal use would be abolished, with many domesticated animal species slowly going extinct (Dunayer 2004, 117). Others take

a different position, arguing that in some cases animal use is not problematic and wouldn’t have to be abolished (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011). Furthermore, some argue that animals deserve to be part of our communities and try to further conceptualise what a ‘post-animal liberation’ society would actually look like, asking questions relating to a range of subjects from animal citizenship to human-animal communication (Meijer 2016).

Still, while there is much disagreement concerning what animal liberation really ought to mean, most authors seem to agree that we aren’t there yet. While there have been some improvements in the way domesticated animals are being treated, there hasn’t been a fundamental shift in how people relate to these animals. While the numbers of vegetarians might slowly be increasing in western countries, worldwide meat consumption still continues to rise (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011, 2) and the number of animals whose habitat is being threatened by the continued expansion of human settlements is still growing (Wadiwel 2009, 283-285). These figures contribute to the growing awareness within academic and activist circles that the contemporary animal rights movement might be winning some battles, but overall it seems to be losing the war.

The aim of this article is not to answer the question of why the animal rights movement, since its inception in the 1970s, hasn’t been more successful, nor will it try to define exactly what the end goal of the movement is or ought to be. Instead, it will leave these two questions mostly unanswered and use the debate on the strategy of the animal rights movement as a backdrop for exploring the role of philosophical theory in animal advocacy. Many scholars, in attempting to explain the movement’s lack of success, have turned towards the animal rights activists and animal rights organisations themselves, arguing that they are to blame for the movement’s failure because they adhere to, and promote, flawed ethical theories. While much of the debate about the animal rights movement’s strategy is focussed on discussing the merits and flaws of different ethical theories, relatively little has been written on what the relationship between those theories and the practice of animal advocacy is or ought to be.

In the first half, this article takes a closer look at how philosophers debating the strategy of the animal rights movement view the role of the theory in advocacy and will compare those views with results of different social studies on the role of theory in advocacy. In the second half the article will reflect on the work of Michel Foucault and other authors to take an in-depth look at human domination over animals and at what value theory can have within advocacy aimed at ending that dominance.

### Debates on the strategy of the animal rights movement

One of the most prominent authors in the debate on the strategy of the animal rights movement is Gary Francione, a proponent of animal rights theory, who, in *A Rain Without Thunder* (1996), claimed that the animal rights movement has been a failure due to the ideological and strategic choices made by animal rights organizations and activists. In his book, he showed that many campaigns of animal rights organisations are not focused on promoting animal rights, but are instead primarily aimed at advocating small welfare reforms within animal husbandry (such as larger cages or more humane types of slaughter). Francione argued these campaigns were counter-productive, as they only served to legitimize rather than challenge the property status of animals. They soothe the conscience of consumers by attacking only the most gratuitous acts of violence within animal husbandry, while accepting the use of animals as a given. Furthermore, he argued that what underlies these strategic choices is a fundamental rejection of one philosophical theory in favour of another. According to Francione, activists have explicitly rejected the philosophical doctrine of animal rights in favour of a theory of utilitarian welfarism (Francione 1996, 3). What he sees as the solution to the political ineffectiveness of the animal rights movement are campaigns that more clearly and consistently advocate a theory of animal rights, focussing on promoting veganism as a moral baseline and the complete abolition of animal exploitation. In short, he proposed an 'abolitionist approach' to advocacy by fostering animal rights philosophy. Similar views are shared and voiced by many of the prominent proponents of animal rights

theory, such as Tom Regan (Francione and Regan 1992), Joan Dunayer (2004) and Gary Steiner (2008).

While the abolitionist rejection of welfare reforms and the claim that these reforms are counterproductive is somewhat controversial, authors who oppose such a position also seem to view this strategic dilemma as fundamentally a question of ideology and philosophical theory. For example, Robert Garner, who disagrees with the animal rights position and is more in favour of a type of welfarism, writes the following in a book which he co-authored with Gary Francione:

"The theoretical debate between the abolitionist approach and protectionist approach – the latter of which Francione calls 'new welfarism' – is not merely an academic one. The practical strategy of animal advocates must necessarily be informed by theory, and their political, legal, and social campaigns will be determined by whether they seek ultimately to abolish exploitation or regulate it and whether they believe that regulation will lead to abolition." (Francione & Garner 2010, xi – xii).

In common with Francione, he argues that the failure of the movement can be attributed to activists from grassroots organisations and larger NGOs, fostering the wrong philosophical theories. In his view though, a choice for rights theory, not welfarism, has been detrimental to the movement's effectiveness (Francione and Garner 2010). Ingrid Newkirk, whilst debating Francione and Regan, similarly argued that the political problems of the animal rights movement lie with the strict rights philosophy that many activists adhere to, and that such a philosophy would be too absolutist and divisive (Newkirk 1992, 44). The problems, according to her, do not lie primarily with outside forces, but can primarily be traced back to activists adhering to and promoting the wrong philosophical theory. Likewise, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka have argued in their book *Zoopolis* that the impasse that the animal rights movement finds itself in can at least partly be attributed to the way animal rights theory has been articulated, and they present their own political theory of animal rights in an attempt to help the movement overcome its problems (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011).

Overall it seems that in trying to explain (and solve) the strategic failure of the animal rights movement, many authors in this debate turn to the philosophical theory that activists supposedly adhere to and promote. This raises important questions about the relationship between animal ethical theory and the practice of animal rights activism. Does theory play a large role in animal advocacy? Do activists generally foster one (or maybe several) of the main philosophical theories on animal ethics, such as rights theory or utilitarianism? Do they, in their campaigns, clearly articulate philosophical positions, and how does the choice of philosophical theory influence the practical strategy of animal advocates? Regrettably, relatively little social research has been done on the relationship between theory and practice within the context of animal advocacy. However, the next section will delve into the few studies that have been conducted that do shed some light on the issue.

### Social movement culture and activist philosophy

One author, who has written a lot on social movements and activism, including animal rights activism, is sociologist James Jasper. In his book *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (1997), Jasper argues that most social movement scholars have ignored the aspect of culture as one of the important dimensions of protest. According to him, scholars in the past have too often assumed protesters to be 'rational actors', who weigh costs and benefits and logically follow a strict doctrine or theory. Frequently, Jasper argues, there exists within social movements a certain 'social movement culture', one that actually opposes making a clear choice between different philosophical theories and which instead favours vagueness and 'decision making by consensus'. Rather than 'one position being proven against all others', activists in social movements would try to incorporate 'all perspectives into one position, however unwieldy and inelegant.' If this wasn't possible, they took no position. This rarely led to clear, concise positions, which would have risked alienating those who disagreed with them (Jasper 1997, 191). This is possibly why activists generally focus on conveying basic emotions such as moral shock and disgust, by showing evocative imagery, rather

than attempting to sway the public's opinion with clearly formulated arguments (Jasper 1997, 176).

One recent study looking at the relationship between theory and practice in animal advocacy was done by Carrie Freeman (Freeman 2014). Her research looked at how animal rights organisations frame their campaigns, and consisted of interviews and an empirical study of flyers and other campaign materials from several animal rights organizations. As in Jasper's work, the results of her study show how limited the role of philosophical theories, such as rights theory or utilitarian welfarism, actually is in animal advocacy. Her study revealed that many organizations avoid choosing one philosophical doctrine in particular, not wanting to pick sides, as that would risk alienating possible supporters. So, organisations such as PETA or Compassion Over Killing try to stay out of the more 'academic' debate. Instead, they choose to focus on influencing individual consumer choices and promote a more vague idea of compassionate consumption. The priority of these organisations, as they describe it, is not to convince people and change *beliefs* that are harmful towards animals, rather, it is primarily to make people eat less meat and change the *behaviour* that is harmful towards animals (Freeman 2014, 193-194). That convincing people of the necessity of the emancipation of animals is no longer the main objective of these organisations also explains why in some instances campaigns by animal rights organisations do not address animal interests at all, but instead argue against meat production or consumption as being harmful to human health or the environment (Freeman 2014, 126).

Sociologist Corey Lee Wrenn (2013) further analyses the focus of animal rights campaigns and compares the tactics of the contemporary animal rights movement with the tactics of the anti-slavery movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She argues that both movements have a lot in common, as they show a large variety of similar tactics, ranging from violent direct action to legislative efforts. One of the tactics she discusses in more detail is consumer-based resistance. One way activists tried to protest against slavery in those days was through boycotts of slave-produced products, such as rum or sugar. These campaigns, Wrenn explains, were one of the first to frame issues of social justice in terms of consumer

responsibility, and the activists hoped that through such economic pressures they would be able to help bring about the abolition of slavery sooner. It is not surprising that the animal rights movement has adopted similar tactics. However, Wrenn argues that in the case of the animal rights movement, the focus on consumer responsibility and a compassionate lifestyle should not be seen as merely a chosen tactic, but as something deeply ingrained within the philosophy of the activists, as such consumer-based resistance has become, as she described it, 'the linchpin' of their advocacy (Wrenn 2013, 191).

Philosopher Elisa Aaltola further explores the relationship between theory and practice within the animal rights movement in her article *The Philosophy behind the Movement: Animal Studies versus Animal Rights* (2011), and she arrives at similar conclusions to Freeman. She argues that many animal rights activists shun overly theory-based approaches and reject strict adherence to one philosophical doctrine, be it rights theory, utilitarian welfarism or some other theory. The focus of activists, Aaltola argues, does not lie on winning philosophical arguments, but instead on conveying certain basic emotions and experiences of shock and disgust, similar to those that initially motivated the animal rights activists themselves. To support the claims made in her article Aaltola conducted a small research survey among British animal rights activists, many of whom expressed such sentiments and were weary of theory. Discussing their responses, Aaltola writes the following:

"It seems that many within the grassroots movement are critical of theory. In the responses, few referred to philosophical works as their main inspiration. A common animal rights metaphor talks of a burning building full of animals, which is witnessed by an activist and a theorist. The theorist discussed the moral status of animals and embarks on metaphysical pondering, while the activist runs in and saved the animals. This sentiment is epitomized in the rather popular slogan: 'You are a terrorist? Thank God. I though you said you were a theorist!' Thus, there is a sense of elemental practicality to grassroots activism, which adds to the uniqueness of its philosophical ramifications." (Aaltola 2011, 404).

Activists, according to Aaltola, are not cold rational and calculative agents, who focus on winning a philosophical debate through rational argument, but instead are more often interested in conveying basic emotions, and she describes this as a distinct 'activist philosophy'.

Looking at these different social studies, the overall impression one gets is that in contemporary animal advocacy the role of the main philosophical theories of animal ethics (such as rights theory and utilitarian welfarism) is quite small. There is sometimes a culture within social movements, and which also seems to be the case in the animal rights movement, of activists actively avoiding philosophical theorizing and of taking clear positions in philosophical matters. It's not hard to understand that activists are sceptical about the value of philosophical theory though, when the objective of many organisations does not seem to be to convince people of the necessity of animal liberation (whatever that means exactly). Instead their main aim is often simply to convert as many people as possible to vegetarianism, for which challenging and changing fundamental beliefs about the human-animal relationship is often not a requirement. Because of this, activists choose to partake in campaigns that do not clearly express controversial philosophical positions about the human-animal relationship, preferring instead to opt for campaigns that advocate more basic messages of compassion, conveying emotions of moral shock, or messages that focus on non-animal related issues, such as human health or the environment.

Given these findings, another important question is bound to arise: is it advantageous or disadvantageous to the movement for activists to avoid fostering clear philosophical theories and to show little interest in changing the way people think about animals? Is it necessary for activists to clearly articulate philosophical positions on some issues or is it enough to just cause moral shock, for example by showing the public gruesome images of the treatment of animals, or to convince people to become vegetarian for environmental or health reasons?

## Animals and disciplinary power

While the French philosopher Michel Foucault did not write extensively about animals or animality as such, and did not write about animal advocacy at all, his work on disciplinary and regulatory power practices, and the ways power relationships are maintained or disrupted, can be of great use in answering some of these questions, especially since Foucault also wrote about what role theory ought to play in social activism. Numerous authors have in recent years indeed started using his theories on power to describe and analyse the human-animal relationship (Taylor 2013, 539). Some notable examples are Dinesh Wadiwel (2009), Timothy Pachirat (2011) and Clare Palmer (2001). The following paragraphs will use the work of some of these authors and of Foucault himself to take a closer look at the way humans dominate over animals, identify the human-animal symbolic boundary as the root cause of animal exploitation, and argue that theory can play an important role in dismantling that symbolic boundary.

Foucault famously argued that since antiquity, power had always been defined as the sovereign's right of the sword: the power to take life or let live. In modern times, Foucault claimed, power has taken on the form of two distinctive types of power, namely disciplinary power and regulatory power (Foucault 1990, 135-136). The sovereign's right of the sword was replaced by the power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death, through the careful 'administration of bodies and the calculated management of life' (Foucault 1990, 140). These different power practices are applied to human bodies in institutions such as prisons, schools, hospitals and factories. But can one insert nonhuman animals in Foucault's model of power relations? Although it has been argued, quite successfully, that animals should be considered to be 'persons' in a moral sense (Francione 2008, 61), this doesn't automatically make it appropriate to treat them as 'persons' within the context of Foucault's model of power relations.

Both Thierman (2010) and Palmer (2001) spend some time discussing this issue. Thierman argues that we can think of other animals as 'subjects' whose existence

is shaped and constituted by power, not unlike how human beings are affected by power:

"Neither human beings, nor other animals, are Hobbesian fungi; that is, neither we, nor they 'suddenly (like mushroom) come to full maturity.' We, and they, are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted in different contexts by a variety of different forces. Animals in the wild will be very different from their laboratory (or zoo) raised counterparts. A dog confined to a cage at a shelter is a very different creature as compared to a well-loved family companion. In this sense, other animals are subjects that are shaped by a variety of forces, and who respond to that shaping in many different, and idiosyncratic, ways. They are not inert objects without the ability to react or respond." (Thierman 2010, 97-98).

Palmer further notes that Foucault himself emphasized the irrelevance of consciousness and why this means one can most likely extend Foucauldian power relations to include other animals:

"The principle reason why this extension of Foucault's analysis of power to animals is relatively unproblematic is because of his insistence that, while the actions of the party exercising power must be in some sense internalized by the other, and result in altered behaviour, this process need not be conscious. [...] What is crucial is not consciousness, but that the effects of power are unpredictable because those over whom power is exercised must be free." (Palmer 2001, 348-449).

It is because animals are 'free', in the sense that they respond in a variety of different and idiosyncratic ways to the powers being exercised upon them, in ways that micro-organisms, plants or inanimate objects can't, that makes it appropriate to think of them as being in a relation of power to human beings. Of course, not all animals can be viewed this way, as Palmer (2001) also notes, since animals such as sponges might not be capable of internalizing disciplinary power and might not be considered 'free' in this sense, but these form an exception. Most animals are 'free': we use words like 'training' and 'obedience' when discussing companion animals like dogs or cats, for example, precisely because they internalize the powers that are exercised

upon them and, as they are free, their response to disciplinary power is unpredictable (Palmer 2001, Thierman 2010).

Looking at the human-animal relationship from a Foucauldian framework of power relationships reveals the large number of ways in which animals are subjected to disciplinary and regulatory power practices by human beings. Wild animal populations are regulated through the use of fences and 'wildlife management'. The breeding and killing of farm animals is carefully rationalized, and for generations they have been subjected to selective breeding for shaping their bodies in such a way so as to optimize them for human use. Furthermore, as Clare Palmer explained in her analysis of the life of Yuri the cat, companion animals too are subjected to a plethora of human power practices, both aimed at controlling their bodies as well as their basic life functions: they are trained to sit, stay, lie down or move. They are taught to use the litter box and can only eat when we give them food. They can only go outside when we allow them to. We also control whether they can reproduce (Palmer 2001, 356-358).

When one looks at the biopolitics of the human-animal relationship, the different power practices and the scale and intensity at which these practices are taking place, it might seem that the human-animal relationship is in a situation of almost total domination of humans over animals. However, it should be noted that these relationships are not always solely one-sided. There are ways in which animals co-shape the human-animal relationship in meaningful ways. For example, Eva Meijer (2014) describes how the leash is not simply a repressive institution that disciplines and aims to internalize human power over companion animals, but can also function as a platform that enables a dialogue, in her case between herself and her companion animal Olli. In our relationships with animals, animals often show agency and, in minor or major ways, can influence power hierarchies and renegotiate the terms of their relationship with us (Irvine 2004). Often, it is the animal's choice to relate to human beings in a certain way. Furthermore, there are many instances in which they can resist human power practices if they so desire. Resistance is found, for example, in wild deer that jump over fences, leaving the small patches of wilderness behind that humans allotted to them, or in a household cat

which refuses to be disciplined and use the litter box. Other examples of resistance can be seen when a cow refuses to follow the herd when entering a slaughterhouse, or even in the case of a laboratory animal, when it turns away its head in distress. While these instances of resistance exist, it is clear that in many situations the human-animal relationship is very much unbalanced and animals are subjected to repressive power practices which they cannot meaningfully resist. Many of these repressive power practices are those that the animal rights movement would want to reform or end completely. Therefore, it is important to understand what upholds them and what made them possible in the first place.

### **The human-animal boundary as the root cause of repression**

Foucault believed that the 'power over life' that the state exercised over its citizens was made possible by developments in the social sciences and by the birth of a racist state. The social sciences had a large role in the spread of disciplinary power, as the rise of new technological developments in sciences such as medicine, psychiatry and sociology, centred on the human body and how to discipline it. Disciplining and punishing the 'deviant' only became possible once these sciences had both developed new technologies for controlling the body and had identified deviants by creating labels and distinguishing between different categories such as 'normal', 'insane', 'criminal' or 'mentally ill' (Foucault 2003, 255). Once these distinctions were made, racism justified the destruction of the 'inferior' races (the 'ill', the 'abnormal' etc.) by the state, as their destruction would purify the species and make life and the population as a whole healthier and more prosperous. This 'destruction' of the inferior races by the state needn't be blatant or direct. It didn't have to take the form of murder or genocide, but could be enacted, for example, through a biased welfare policy (Foucault 2003, 256).

The historical processes of intensification and rationalisation that took control of the lives of humans at the same time took control of the lives of animals, and the underlying processes that enabled these mutual developments, in the sciences and

racism, are also similar. Throughout history, through scientific advancement, humans have developed new and more efficient technologies for using animal bodies and their products to satisfy human desires (Swabe 1997, 169). Many of these practices rest on the establishment and continued existence of a clear boundary between humans and animals. This symbolic boundary plays a major role in human lives, both socially and philosophically, as people often define who they are by contrasting themselves with other animals, thereby denying nonhuman animals certain properties that they view as essential. For example, Aristotle argued that although human beings were also animals, they were fundamentally unlike the animals because of their ability to reason. He argued that because animals lack certain abilities, they exist to be used for human purposes (Aristotle 2012; Cliteur 2010, 31). Later philosophical schools also established a clear distinction between humans and animals by attributing to animals a lack of certain positive or essential characteristics such as 'reason', 'consciousness', 'sentience', 'intelligence', 'compassion' or 'refinement' (Franklin 1999, 9). The establishment of a clear boundary between humans and nonhumans, a biological break with the larger population should, from a Foucauldian perspective, be seen as a form of racism, as it divides the unified biological domain of life into different categories and allows for the establishment of a hierarchy between the established groups and species. It is this hierarchy between species, this 'symbolic boundary', that is used as a basis for the different power practices that attempt to discipline and regulate animals, and it is this same hierarchy which the animal rights movement needs to deconstruct if it wants to change the moral status of animals.

Both Stephen Thierman (2010) and Timothy Pachirat (2011) analyse the power practices and politics involved with upholding this human-animal symbolic boundary, through case studies of modern-day slaughterhouses. Their work gives insight into how this hierarchy between humans and animals is being upheld. In *Apparatuses of Animality: Foucault Goes to a Slaughterhouse* Thierman uses Foucault's concepts of disciplinary and regulatory power to argue that in modern-day slaughterhouses systems of surveillance are used to prevent authentic interaction between human and nonhuman individuals, as well as to transform their bodies into docile bodies (and in the case of animals, Thierman notes, further transform docile bodies

into dead bodies) (Thierman 2010, 103). The architectural design of the slaughterhouse enforces these hierarchies, as spatial separation limits the possible ways of interaction between different groups. Furthermore, a Panopticon-like situation is created by positioning the managers' offices on scaffolding above the factory floor, looking out over what all the workers are doing below.

In *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*, political philosopher Timothy Pachirat further develops such a Foucauldian perspective as he discusses his experiences of five months' undercover work in a slaughterhouse, which mimic many of the things Thierman described. Pachirat argues that the slaughterhouse is a place of 'politics of sight', in which power relations are enforced through making certain things hidden and invisible, while at the same time making other things transparent and visible. Repugnant activities, such as the killing of animals, are masked and hidden to make them more tolerable. In the slaughterhouse, there is a fixed division of labour between the workers. Only a few have actual contact with living animals and even fewer are assigned the job of killing them. Pachirat describes the uneasiness and traumatic experiences of those few workers whose job it is to kill the animals, many of them requiring psychological counselling. At the same time this status quo is upheld through strict surveillance, in which all the workers participated, which Pachirat linked to what Foucault calls an 'apparatus of total and circulating mistrust'.

This politics of sight is not limited to slaughterhouses though, as it is a characteristic of many of the relationships we have with other animals. Pachirat ends his book on a positive note, saying that this politics of sight might also be used against these systems of exploitation: through breaching 'the zones of confinement and rendering the repugnant visible again' social movements might be able to effectively work towards social transformation (Pachirat 2011, 145). The only thing that would be necessary to change the way we treat animals, he argues, might be to 'turn the walls of slaughterhouses into glass', breaking through the zone of concealment. Returning to our original question on the ideal relationship between theory and practice in animal advocacy, one might argue, based on these arguments, that what Pachirat describes is exactly what animal rights activists are doing now,



when they choose to focus not on conveying difficult philosophical arguments, but instead on spreading horrific images. If Pachirat is right in this regard, activists would rightfully be weary of overly theory-based approaches, because merely showing people what was previously hidden will be enough to shock them out of their apathy, motivate them and disrupt the current power relationship between humans and animals.

### **The necessity of theory in dismantling the human-animal boundary**

However, it seems unlikely that it is that straightforward. Simply ‘showing’ people the truth would not be enough, as many people already know deep down what is going on in slaughterhouses and actively collude, for example through the use of deceptive euphemisms, in this politics of sight. The practices of factory-farming and animal-testing are well known and are not well-guarded secrets. It is not uncommon for people to experience mental discomfort, also known as cognitive dissonance, when confronted with their contradictory views towards animal suffering and their own consumption practices (Joy 2010). To deal with the uncomfortable tensions caused by this cognitive dissonance, people have adopted different coping strategies, ranging from attempts to trivialize the issue to shifting the responsibility to others (Nijland 2016, 288–289).

The only way to make social transformation possible, according to Foucault, is through the clear articulation of critical ideas. Foucault believed that theory plays an essential role in changing beliefs and making social transformation possible. In *So is it important to think?* (2000) he discusses the importance of critique for any kind of social transformation to happen, and he defends the work of intellectuals in this regard. According to him ‘ideal’ criticism is too often put in opposition to ‘real’ transformation, with the argument that the efforts of intellectuals don’t lead to anything substantial. This is a similar type of sentiment as Aaltola (2011, 404) mentioned in the paragraph that was cited above, where the activist and theorist stand in front of a burning building. Foucault argued that such a perspective on the work of intellectuals is simply mistaken, as social reforms do not come about

in a vacuum. It is precisely because of theoretical work that certain problems can now be aired effectively that couldn’t be raised before. It would have been impossible, Foucault explains, to successfully challenge social practices regarding imprisonment, mental illnesses or the hierarchy of the sexes, to name a few examples, without the theoretical work that was done in those areas. In the case of the animal rights movement this might be even more obvious, since philosophical work on animals played an important role in the 1970s in bringing about the contemporary animal rights movement, which proves that philosophical theories can initiate trends rather than simply follow them (Jasper & Nelkin 1992).

However, Foucault didn’t just argue that philosophical theorizing plays an important role in instigating social change. He also argued that articulating theory is an important aspect of advocacy itself, one that is generally undervalued. One reason philosophical theorizing is undervalued by activists is that ‘thought’ is, as Foucault argues, often regarded as something that is irrelevant or even non-existing. He believes this to be wrong, as thought is everywhere, and carefully articulated critique is necessary for revealing those thoughts:

“We need to free ourselves of the sacralization of the social as the only instance of the real and stop regarding the essential element in human life and human relations – I mean thought – as so much wind. Thought does exist, both beyond and before systems and edifices of discourse. It is something that is often hidden but always drives everyday behaviours. There is always a little thought occurring even in the most stupid institutions; there is always thought even in silent habits. Criticism consists in uncovering that thought and trying to change it: showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy.” (Foucault 2000, 456).

As it is thought that drives the behaviour that activists try to change, advocacy should be aimed at changing those thoughts. It is through the articulation of critique that one can show alternative ways of thinking and make previous and effortless ways of thinking more difficult, if not impossible.

In that sense, theory shouldn't be seen as something separate from the practice of political advocacy at all, but as being at the heart of activist practice. The formation of a counter-discourse should be seen as an important and indispensable part of any kind of social transformation:

“For a transformation that would remain within the same mode of thought, a transformation that would only be a certain way of better adjusting the same thought to the reality of things, would only be a superficial transformation.” (Foucault 2000, 457).

Within the context of the animal rights movement, this means that campaigns which fail to criticize the underlying issue of the human-animal boundary and an anthropocentric worldview (be it from a utilitarian, rights or other philosophical perspective), could be considered strategic failures. Even if they succeed in making more people convert to a vegetarian diet (for example by appealing to health or environmental reasons), they don't actually succeed in making people 'have trouble thinking the way they have always thought' about human superiority over animals.

Both James Jasper (1997) and Carrie Freeman (2014) refer in their work briefly to Foucault's arguments. Jasper believes that protest movements benefit both individuals and society as a whole, precisely because of their ability to articulate critique and put forward alternative visions:

“For many, the creativity of protest provides the experience of sheer joy, the play of a utopian vision. Protest has potential value for modern society beyond the satisfaction of protestors themselves. Results include practical information about current problems and techniques for doing things better. At a deeper level, protest can inspire us all, even nonparticipants, to probe our intuitions and question our actions. This in turn is a key component of democracy, which depends on a conversation between competing moral positions but also on the fullest elaboration of each of them.” (Jasper 1997, 367).

Activists are, in Jasper's opinion, together with artists and intellectuals, key articulators of alternative worldviews and contribute to a conversation between alternative moral positions that is necessary for a democratic society to flourish. Activists create controversy, which is of great value as it 'leads to the weighing and testing of perspectives and values' (Jasper 1997, 368). It is therefore important that protesters try to foster understanding, embrace the discursive moment of protest and try to actually persuade people, instead of simply tricking or manipulating or nudging them into doing what the protesters want them to do (for example, switching to a vegetarian diet). It also means that protesters should be open to participate in actual debates and not be afraid to have to admit they do not have all the (philosophical) answers yet either. There are indeed still shortcomings to any of the major philosophical doctrines. The beauty of protest, as Jasper says, is to play with different utopian visions, and it is through such conversation that visions change, crystallise and, hopefully, improve. An instrumentalist and absolutist attitude, in which protesters do not take this democratic task seriously and only care about the end result, at the expense of the process, is what threatens the heart of moral protest and its virtues (Jasper 1997, 369).

It is such an instrumentalist attitude, as Jasper describes it, that we have observed in the above-discussed studies on contemporary animal advocacy: the tendency of activists to avoid expressing controversial messages regarding the human-animal dualism, the tendency to avoid taking positions in the philosophical debate entirely and avoid using terms such as 'rights' or even 'welfare' and, finally, the tendency to use anthropocentric consumerist arguments to 'trick' people into becoming vegetarian, as that is easier to do than to actually convince them of the immorality of the human-animal symbolic boundary.

Referring to the arguments made by Foucault, Freeman (2010, 2014) criticizes the lack of 'ideological authenticity' in most animal advocacy campaigns, arguing that social movements should strive towards more transparency about their own philosophy and utopian worldviews. It is through participation in a conversation, articulating their non-conformist ideas in social discourse, that social movements challenge the way people think. Freeman argues that it is necessary for activists to

adopt messages and frameworks that are more informed and supportive of philosophical theory, 'so that they are logically aligned to pose a needed philosophical challenge to the root cause of exploitation, the human/animal dualism'. They shouldn't shy away from framing the issue as being a moral issue about social justice (Freeman 2014, 264).

### **The future of the movement and the future of the debate**

This article explored the role of philosophical theory in animal advocacy. Referring to the results of different social studies, it was argued that, while much of the debate on the strategy of the animal rights movement focuses on arguing about the merits and flaws of different philosophical theories of animal ethics, activists generally not only pay too little attention to these theories, they actively avoid taking clear philosophical positions out of fear of causing controversy and alienating potential allies. These findings suggest that the focus of this philosophical debate on the strategy of the animal rights movement should change, from trying to explain and solve the failures of the movement by identifying flaws in different philosophical doctrines, to critically reflecting upon both the attitudes of activists towards theory and upon the question of whether the main objective of animal advocacy should be to change fundamental beliefs about the human-animal relationship or to change consumption behaviour.

This article also attempted to find an answer to that last question, by reflecting on the writings of authors such as Pachirat, Foucault, Jasper and Freeman. Based on the discussion of their work, one might argue that the objective of animal rights campaigns shouldn't be to simply change people's behaviour, but to change people's thinking. Doing so requires activists to take philosophical theory seriously. As Freeman (2014, 264) also importantly notes, taking philosophical theory more seriously certainly doesn't mean that activists should try to use academic terminology and references in their protests. It does however most likely mean that through their messages they should always aim to clearly and unequivocally challenge the current thinking about the human-animal relationship. This however also means

that advocates can't continue to shy away from participating and taking positions in important conversations about what a future animal utopia might look like, or the need to move towards such a utopia, out of fear of causing controversy or seeming divided. Instead, activists should embrace those moments where different moral visions can compete, as an important aspect of their advocacy.

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## Biography

### Joost Leuven

Joost Leuven (1990) studied philosophy and cultural sociology at the University of Amsterdam. His main interests are animal ethics, political theory and social movement studies.

**Elements of Anti-Islam Populism: Critiquing Geert Wilders' Politics of Offense with Marcuse and Adorno**

Michiel Bot

The political performances of Dutch anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders revolve around a combination of giving and taking offense.<sup>1</sup> Wilders thrives on qualifying Islam as a “sick,” “fascist,” and “totalitarian ideology”; proposing to ban “the Qur’an, the Islamic *Mein Kampf*”; advocating a “head rag tax” [*kopvoddentaks*] on wearing a hijab in public; arguing that “Moroccan hooligans should be shot in the knees,” and calling government ministers “traitors”; “cowards”; or “completely insane” [*knettergek*] during parliamentary debates.<sup>2</sup> Wilders grounds his offensive rhetoric in indignation, *taking* offense both to Muslims and to “the politically correct elite” of “multiculturalist” “traitors” and “cowards” who seek to suppress his courageous resistance to the “Muslim colonizers,” a term by which he refers to the unskilled labor immigrants who were recruited as “guest workers” from rural regions of Turkey and Morocco in the 1960s and 1970s, together with refugee families from Arab countries.

In this article, I develop a critique of Wilders’ politics of offense by revisiting two classic texts of Frankfurt School critical theory that combine social theory with psychoanalysis: Herbert Marcuse’s 1965 essay, “Repressive Tolerance” (Marcuse 1969) and Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno’s chapter, “Elements of Anti-

Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment” from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944; the arguments I focus on are generally considered to have been written primarily by Adorno) (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002). Both texts seek to understand reactionary mobilizations of political affect in relation to dominant forms of liberalism that do not live up to their promise of realizing what critical theorists insist on calling true freedom. I will demonstrate how this comprehensive approach makes revisiting these texts useful for critiquing reactionary mobilizations of political affect in the present.

Rereading “Repressive Tolerance” and “Elements of Anti-Semitism” at a time when electoral politics in various countries seem to have been reduced to a choice between neoliberalism and anti-Islam/anti-immigrant populism—Hillary Clinton versus Donald Trump, Emmanuel Macron versus Marine Le Pen, Austrian president Alexander Van der Bellen versus FPÖ-chairperson Heinz-Christian Strache, Dutch prime-minister Mark Rutte versus Geert Wilders—suggests good reasons for analyzing such given alternatives not in isolation, but in relation to each other. Thus, I analyze the various ways in which Wilders’ politics of offense relates to discourses of tolerance that neutralize critique and political opposition; discourses of secularism that define themselves in opposition to the religion of others and proscribe the public expression of religious difference; discourses of color blindness that disavow the racial and ethnic positioning of the white majority and deny the existence of racism; and discourses of individual freedom that only promote the needs of capital. I also hope to demonstrate the use of analyzing Wilders’ mobilizations of political affect, through giving and taking offense, in psychoanalytic terms, as instances of what Marcuse called “repressive desublimation”: the removal of some societal barriers to instinctual gratification, not for the sake of liberation, but in the interest of a different kind of domination.

Of course, the point of revisiting “Repressive Tolerance” and “Elements of Anti-Semitism” in order to critique Wilders’ anti-Islam populism is not simply to extract a series of insights from these texts and “apply” those insights to Wilders’ politics of offense. “Repressive Tolerance” and “Elements of Anti-Semitism” are analyses of, and interventions in, specific historical constellations—the United States in the

mid-1960s and Nazi Germany, respectively—and a return to earlier works of critical theory in order to illuminate the present is only useful if it includes historical comparison. I will begin with a brief overview of Wilders' political career; readers familiar with this history may skip the next three paragraphs.

### Critiquing Tolerance: Political Incorrectness as Repressive Desublimation

In September 2004, Geert Wilders left the right-wing People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), after party leader Jozias van Aartsen demanded that he adopt a more "moderate" tone in his critique of Islam. As a Member of Parliament for the VVD, Wilders had co-authored an op-ed with anti-Islam ideologue Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who was then also an MP for the VVD, titled, "The Time has Come for a Liberal Jihad," which advocated the suspension of the constitutional rights of Dutch Muslims in order to "[c]ounter the monopoly of the extremist imams on the minds of the young" (Hirsi Ali and Wilders 2003). Wilders had also co-authored a manifesto proposing that "radical Muslims" be expelled from the Netherlands "without mercy" [*zonder pardon*], and that Turkey never be allowed to join the European Union because of its majority Muslim population (Wilders and Oplaat 2004). Finally, Wilders had proposed a prohibition on wearing headscarves, and said in an interview: "Let the headscarves wave on the Malieveld [a large field in The Hague that is used for political protests]. I eat them for breakfast [*Ik lust ze rauw*]" (Wilders 2004).

After leaving the VVD, Wilders founded his own political movement that he would later call the Freedom Party [*Partij voor de Vrijheid*], outlining its program in a "Declaration of Independence." Evoking the 1581 Act of Abjuration with which the Dutch Low Countries declared independence from the Spanish king who, as Wilders put it, "[b]elieved that the people [*volk*] were there for him, not the other way around," Wilders argued the necessity of a new Declaration of Independence, because "the people" were once again "held hostage" by a "complacent" "political elite" of "cowardly and fearful people" who "remained deaf to the problems that

ordinary people struggle with every day" (Wilders 2005). "Freeing ourselves" from this elite, Wilders proclaimed, "we can shape history, take our fate as a people in our own hands"; inaugurate "a new Golden Age" (a reference to the seventeenth century, when the Dutch Republic was a major imperialist power);<sup>3</sup> and fight for "a Netherlands that maintains its own identity and is proud of it; that does not let itself be taken over by cultures that are foreign to its essence [*wezensvreemd*], or lets [*sic*] its identity be diluted by losing itself in supranational institutions" (Wilders 2005). In his 2006 election program, *Klare wijn* ("Straight Talk"), Wilders proposed abolishing the first article of the Dutch Constitution, which prohibits discrimination, and inserting a proclamation that "the Judeo-Christian and humanistic tradition" is "the dominant culture" (Wilders 2006b).

In the 2006 national elections, Wilders won nine of the hundred-and-fifty seats in parliament; in the 2010 elections he obtained an additional fifteen, and from October 2010 to November 2012, Wilders supported the minority coalition of Christian Democrats and the VVD through a so-called "Tolerance Pact" [*Gedoogakkoord*]: Wilders' Freedom Party tolerated (i.e. voted with) the minority government in exchange for a number of political deals. These deals included drastic cuts of the culture budget, which, according to Wilders, only benefited "the leftist elite" (museums that were considered to conserve "the Dutch heritage" were spared, with the notable exception of the National Institute for the Study of Dutch Slavery). The deals also included Dutch vetoes of European Union resolutions condemning Israel's settlement policies in the West Bank (the Freedom Party's foreign policy focuses almost exclusively on supporting the Israeli far-right, because Wilders considers Israel "the West's first line of defense" against Islam, the "buffer [*stootkussen*] of the jihad") (Liphshiz 2009). During the 2014 municipal election night, Wilders asked his audience: "Do you want more or fewer Moroccans in this city and in the Netherlands," provoking them to chant, "Fewer, fewer, fewer!" and promising that he would "take care of that."<sup>4</sup> The Freedom Party's 2017 election program, "The Netherlands Ours Again," proposes closing the borders to all refugees, as well as to all immigrants from "Islamic countries"; closing all mosques and all Islamic schools; banning the Qur'an; and putting "radical Muslims" in "preventive detention." Wilders obtained twenty seats in the 2017 national elections.

Curiously, Wilders' critique of the "politically correct elite" bears some resemblance to Herbert Marcuse's critique of tolerance in "Repressive Tolerance." In that essay, Marcuse argued that tolerance was originally, at the beginning of the modern period, "a partisan goal, a subversive liberating notion and practice" with which "authentic liberals" sought to confront arbitrary domination by feudal powers (Marcuse 1969, 81). However, Marcuse submitted, tolerance had degenerated into an anti-political ideology that sought to neutralize any critique of the status quo, which Marcuse, writing in the United States in the middle of the Vietnam War and after the murders of several Civil Rights Movement activists, saw as a "state of violence and suppression on a global scale" (Marcuse 1969, 82). Under repressive tolerance, Marcuse argued, "[i]t is the people who tolerate the government, which in turn tolerates opposition within the framework determined by the constituted authorities" (Marcuse 1969, 82-3).<sup>5</sup> According to Marcuse, repressive tolerance operated through indoctrination by the media, which prevented radical critique by neutralizing dissent: "Under the rule of monopolistic media—themselves the mere instruments of economic and political power—a mentality is created for which right and wrong, true and false are predefined wherever they affect the vital interests of the society" (Marcuse 1969, 95). The "public language" "administered" by the mass media, Marcuse submitted, immediately subsumed the negativity of dissent under the positivity of "the normal course of events" (Marcuse 1969, 93). Therefore, Marcuse argued, it was necessary to "break through" "the existing positive" established by the public language, to open up space for negative critique in the interest of liberation and a freedom that is "still to be created" (Marcuse 1969, 87).

A contemporary example of what Marcuse criticized as repressive tolerance is the 2010 congress of the Dutch Christian-Democratic Party that decided on the collaboration with Wilders that I described above: Wilders' support for a minority government coalition of Christian Democrats and the VVD in exchange for the realization of some parts of Wilders' political program. Overjoyed with the outcome, which enabled him to become the Deputy Prime Minister, Christian Democratic party leader Maxime Verhagen notoriously described the congress as "a feast for democracy" (Stokmans 2010). After all, proper procedure had been followed:

party members who opposed the collaboration had been allowed to voice their dissent, and the decision had been put to a vote. A Marcusean analysis of this party congress might be that the party leadership had successfully managed to administer the congress via a public language that normalized Wilders' blatant racism as political disagreement. Indeed, at the press conference where the new minority government presented the "Tolerance Pact" with Wilders, Prime Minister Mark Rutte announced that the three parties had decided to "respect" each other in their differing positions on Islam (Persconferentie 2010).

However, repressive tolerance takes different forms today as well, such as the abuse of anti-discrimination law to smother political opposition. For instance, on October 20, 2015, the French Court of Cassation upheld a 2013 conviction of fourteen activists to pay 1000 euro fines each and 28,000 euros in civil damages for entering a supermarket while wearing T-shirts with the slogan, "Palestine shall live, boycott Israel," and handing out flyers with the text, "Boycott products imported from Israel, to buy products imported from Israel is to legitimize the crimes in Gaza, to approve of the politics of the Israeli government" (Médard 2015).<sup>6</sup> The activists had been convicted under the Law on Freedom of the Press, which prohibits "incitement to discrimination, hatred, or violence towards a group of persons because of their origin or belonging to an ethnicity, race, religion, or specific nation"<sup>7</sup>; prosecution had been mandated by the central government.<sup>8</sup> According to the courts, the activists had incited [*provocation*] discrimination against Israeli producers and suppliers. A Marcusean critique of this conviction would be that the activists were convicted for their supposed intolerance towards Israeli producers and suppliers—a far-fetched charge, given that the boycott was targeting products, not persons, and that it had a political aim: to pressure the Israeli government to comply with international law—while the French government tolerates, condones, and even facilitates the ongoing structural violence that the Israeli state inflicts on Palestinians.

A related example of repressive tolerance in the present is the 2012 criminal conviction of four members of the feminist punk rock group Pussy Riot who had performed a "punk prayer" in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow, as a

protest against Vladimir Putin and the Orthodox Patriarch's endorsement of Putin. Among other things, the women were convicted of "offending the feelings of believers" (Lipman 2012a and 2012b). Disturbingly, this phrase originates in a 1994 landmark judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, *Otto Preminger Institut v. Austria*, which did not find for a violation of an Austrian movie theater's freedom of expression when local government authorities prevented a screening of Werner Schroeter's film adaptation of Oskar Panizza's 1895 anti-Catholic play, *The Council of Love*. The European Court had argued: "The Court cannot disregard the fact that the Roman Catholic religion is the religion of the overwhelming majority of Tyroleans. In seizing the film, the Austrian authorities acted to ensure religious peace in that region and to prevent that some people should feel the object of attacks on their religious beliefs in an unwarranted and offensive manner."<sup>9</sup> Ignoring the critical thrust of the protest performance and of the film, and reframing the challenges they pose to the political role of powerful religious institutions as "attacks on feelings," these judgments enforce a model of repressive tolerance that mandates the avoidance of offense and respect for "feelings" in the name of ensuring (religious) peace.

Instances of repressive tolerance abound, and there is plenty of reason to oppose contemporary imperatives to avoid offense that neutralize critiques of the status quo.<sup>10</sup> However, Wilders' "critique" of contemporary discourses of tolerance is a very different one: what Wilders attacks is the supposed permissiveness of a regime that allows Muslims to exercise their freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly, and that thus permits the expression of cultural and religious difference in public, while censoring "critics" as racists. Thus, Marcuse's argument is turned around completely. It is crucial to observe, however, that the upshot of Wilders' supposed radical critique is generally an affirmation of, rather than a challenge to the status quo, if it is not simply destructive of the fundamental rights of others and of institutions of the rule of law, such as the courts where he has had to stand trial for some of his rhetoric. For although Wilders occasionally claims that multicultural tolerance is the ideological prop for the elite's selling-out the nation and promotion of "mass immigration" in order to destroy the accomplishments of the welfare state for "ordinary Dutch people," his party in fact often votes

for the neoliberal resolutions put forward by his former party, the VVD (Pelgrim and Steenbergen 2017).

Indeed, although Wilders consistently presents his offensive rhetoric as an attempt to break through a repressive regime of multicultural tolerance, his rhetoric itself is a textbook example of the affective mechanism of repressive tolerance, which Marcuse called "repressive desublimation": taking away some societal barriers to instinctual gratification in the interest of domination. Marcuse based his analyses of repressive desublimation on Freud's concept of sublimation: the process by which an individual's impulses are diverted from their sexual aims and directed towards socially-valued objects (Laplanche and Pontalis 2004, 465-467). Freud saw civilization as the result of continuous sublimation by individuals, who are initially pressured by their parents and by society, and who later pressure themselves to renounce the sexual aims of their impulses and redirect these impulses towards work, affection, friendship, artistic creation, intellectual inquiry, etc. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud saw civilization's sublimation of people's impulses as inevitably causing a considerable amount of unhappiness, which would periodically erupt into orgies of violence against perceived "outsiders" (Freud 2010, 72-3). By contrast, Marcuse argued in *Eros and Civilization* that unhappiness was not the inevitable result of the sublimation demanded by civilization as such, but of the sublimation imposed by a repressive civilization in the interest of domination (Marcuse 1962, 71-95). For Marcuse, sublimation was by no means intrinsically repressive: he argued that a civilization in which people liberated themselves from domination would allow for a *nonrepressive* sublimation of their impulses, which could be directed towards all kinds of free activities, relationships, and objects that could have an erotic charge that would not be limited to sex, and that, unlike repressive desublimation, would provide true gratification.

Crucially, then, for Marcuse, the purpose of critique—liberation—is not *desublimation*: removing the societal sublimation of the impulses of its members altogether. Instead, the purpose of critique is to substitute a *nonrepressive* for a repressive sublimation, that is, to reorganize the ways in which society sublimates the impulses of its members, to get rid of structures of domination and instead create



a free society in which people are able to determine their own lives together with others. By contrast, repressive *desublimation* allows individuals to indulge their impulses in ways that give a certain kind of pleasure, but that serve the forces of domination.

Although Wilders grounds his offense in an opposition against a permissiveness that he claims to be repressive, his rhetoric of offense, far from being oriented towards a nonrepressive sublimation, in fact allows for the repressive desublimation of his audience's impulses, directing them against Muslims. This repressive desublimation often operates through laughter. Consider Wilders' notorious proposal for a *kopvoddentaks*, a "head rag tax,"<sup>11</sup> during the parliamentary debate on the 2010 budget, which I will quote at some length in order to give a sample of his rhetoric: (...) This government, this elite, does not have the slightest will to resist (...) Islamization. It sees it as a beautiful enrichment of the Dutch landscape. All those cozy mosques, all those nice headscarves, all those snug burqas: they really make the Netherlands a lot prettier. Here and there someone drops dead, occasionally someone gets raped, and the country is going bankrupt at some point, but that cannot spoil the fun. That is mere detail. Just be patient for a little longer, and then the Islamic utopia awaits us.

A better environment begins with you. A great many Dutch people are annoyed [*ergeren zich*] at the pollution of public space by Islam. In other words, in certain places our street scene more and more resembles the street scene in Mecca or Tehran: headscarves, *haardbaarden*,<sup>12</sup> burqas, and men in weird long white dresses. Let us do something about that for once. Let us reconquer our streets. Let us ensure that the Netherlands is finally going to resemble the Netherlands again. Those headscarves really are a symbol of female oppression, a sign of subjection, a sign of conquest. They form a symbol of an ideology that intends to colonize us. Therefore, the time has come for a great cleaning of our streets. If our *nieuwe Nederlanders*<sup>13</sup> like to show their love for this seventh-century desert ideology, they should do so in an Islamic country, but not here. Not in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands has excise taxes. We have excises on gas and diesel. We have excises on parking. We have excises on dogs. We used to have excises on flying. We still have excises on packaging materials. My first proposal: why not the introduction of a headscarf tax? I would like to call it a *kopvoddentaks*. Just get a permit once a year and pay right away. A thousand Euros a year seems like a nice amount to me. Then we will finally earn back a little of what has already cost us so much. I would say: the polluter pays (Algemene beschouwingen miljoenennota 2010, 2009).

With its rhetoric of nationalism, pollution, and cleaning, and a supposed conquest or colonization of "our" space by something that does not resemble "the Netherlands," this speech uses an imagery of ethnic cleansing and contains an urgent call to action ("Let us reconquer our streets"). However, this hyperbolic, sarcastic proposal is also intended humorously. Wilders' parodic appropriation of a government slogan from the 1990s promoting environmental awareness ("A better environment begins with you") and of a principle of environmental law ("The polluter pays") are intended to provoke laughter, because Wilders generally dismisses any environmental policy as a "leftist hobby." The concrete proposal that Wilders launches—to impose a tax on wearing headscarves—is not only impossible to realize because it would violate the Dutch Constitution and human rights law: it is also diametrically opposed to Wilders' frequent insistence on smaller government, less bureaucracy, and lower taxes, not to mention the word "freedom" in the name of his party. And the highly offensive word *kopvoddentaks*—an onomatopoeia of Wilders' disgust of head scarves, with its sequence of consonants that almost need to be spat out in order to pronounce them—is a farcical neologism that underscores the preposterous nature of the proposal. The pleasure that this rhetoric can give to some of Wilders' supporters might be considered a typical example of what Marcuse called repressive desublimation.

To further elaborate my critique of Wilders' politics of offense, I turn, in the next section, to an earlier work of critical theory: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's "Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment" from *Dialectic of*

*Enlightenment*.<sup>14</sup> Although Horkheimer and Adorno do not use the term “repressive desublimation,” their analysis of anti-Semitism as a “counterrevolutionary” instrumentalization of “the rebellion of oppressed nature against domination,” which also builds on the later work of Freud, has many similarities with Marcuse’s writings.<sup>15</sup> Returning to “Elements of Anti-Semitism” is useful for analyzing Wilders’ rhetoric of offense, because whereas Marcuse focuses on the commodified gratification of sexual desires, the satisfaction of material pseudo-needs, and the depoliticized release of privatized frustration,<sup>16</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno concentrate on Freud’s primary example of repressive desublimation in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, namely anti-Semitism (Freud 2010, 72-3). Furthermore, an important element in Horkheimer and Adorno’s analysis of anti-Semitism is laughter.

### **Offense and Mimesis: Paranoia, Projection, Ridicule**

At the heart of “Elements of Anti-Semitism” is the thesis that anti-Semitism is a false projection of the self’s internal impulses of fear and hostility onto an “other.” This false projection is an inversion of a “true” or “human” way of relating to the world, which Horkheimer and Adorno designate with the paradoxical term, “authentic mimesis”: the “capacity (...) for reflection as an interpenetration of receptivity and imagination” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 164-165). Anti-Semitism’s pathological inversion of authentic mimesis takes place as a reaction against the repression of mimesis by what Horkheimer and Adorno call the “existing universal,” as opposed to the yet-to-be-realized universal of a truly free society. They describe the existing universal as an “empty,” purely instrumental form of rationality that has its origins in ancient Greece, but that has almost completely come to dominate society with the development of modern technology and capitalism.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, giving and taking offense are central to the anti-Semitic reaction against this existing universal. With a historical stroke that is as broad as Freud’s in *Civilization and Its Discontent*, which they cite in the footnotes, Horkheimer and Adorno argue: “Civilization has replaced the organic adaptation to otherness, i.e. mimetic behavior proper, initially, in the magical

phase, with the organized manipulation of mimesis, and finally, in the historical phase, with rational practice, work. Uncontrolled mimesis is ostracized” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 148). With the triumph of technology in “late capitalism,” they contend: “All that remains of the adaptation to nature is the hardening against it,” that is, “the blind mastery of nature, which is identical to farsighted instrumentality” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 149). However, mimesis reappears in encounters with others whose mimetic gestures are perceived as offensive (*anstößig*). Evoking—in a rather problematic way—contemporary stereotypes of “Ostjuden,” Jewish people of Eastern European origin, Horkheimer and Adorno suggest that Jewish people display, in their gestures and emotions, an “obsolete merchant behavior” that confronts Germans who are not Jewish with their repressed humanity, because this behavior is at least somewhat mimetic.<sup>17</sup> According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the offense taken to the mimetic gestures or emotions of others leads those who take offense not primarily to a renewed identification with the proscription of mimesis by the existing universal, but to an indulgence of their own mimetic drive in a form that makes this indulgence only a “wretched parody of fulfillment.” With anti-Semitism, Horkheimer and Adorno argue, taking offense becomes a pretext for an exclusionary group formation that takes place through the repressive pleasure of indulging the repressed mimetic drive, which often happens through laughter, ridiculing, or guffawing that is merely a parody of true joy and happiness. Anti-Semitism allows individuals to indulge their mimetic drive in a repressive way, both through their participation in the fascist apparatus that manipulates this drive, and vicariously, through the caricatural performances of anti-Semitic leaders:

The Führer, with his ham actor’s face and his charisma of crankable hysteria, leads the round dance. His performance accomplishes by proxy and in effigy what is denied to everyone else in reality. Hitler can gesticulate like a clown, Mussolini risk false notes like a provincial tenor, Goebbels talk as glibly as the Jewish agent whose murder he is recommending, Coughlin<sup>18</sup> preach love like the Savior himself, whose crucifixion he impersonates for the sake of always more bloodshed. Fascism is also totalitarian in that it seeks to make the rebellion of oppressed nature against

domination immediately useful for domination (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 153).

What might be the relevance of “Elements of Anti-Semitism” for an analysis of Geert Wilders’ anti-Islam politics of offense? The rapid acceleration of globalization during the last few decades has intensified the hegemony of what Horkheimer and Adorno saw as the “existing universal.” More than ever before, the “rationality” of capital, and the discourses of liberal individualism that often accompany it, suppress, or render irrelevant, modes of identification and affiliation that have an essential mimetic component, such as national, linguistic, cultural, racial, ethnic, familial, professional, political, and religious identifications and affiliations (Balibar 2002 and 2011). National identifications are rendered less relevant with the nation-state’s diminishing role as the primary unit of political, social, and economic organization, and declared obsolete in the name of certain versions of cosmopolitanism. Linguistic identifications are rendered less important by the increasing use of “global” English as the default language. Professional identifications are rendered irrelevant by the deprofessionalization, in the name of free competition, of work that used to require formal training or membership of professional organizations. Religious identifications and affiliations are relegated entirely to the private sphere by discourses of secularism that reduce religion to an individual (lifestyle) choice and proscribe religious expression in public (Asad 2003). And racial or ethnic difference is disavowed by a discourse of color blindness that refuses to acknowledge racial or ethnic privilege and categorically denies the existence of racism.

Geert Wilders’ anti-Islam politics of offense can be interpreted as a reaction against the manifestation of these universals in the Netherlands. Against the universality of capital, cosmopolitanism, secularism, and color blindness, the gestures, expressions, emotions, languages, accents, voices, hairstyles, and clothing of Muslims—or, sometimes more broadly, of presumed immigrants or *allochthonen*, those who originate from “other soil”—stand out as markedly different. An electorate that has internalized the proscription of mimesis, of identifying as being anything other than as private, self-possessed, entrepreneurial, secular, color blind, liberal individ-

uals, may perceive this difference as offensive. Indeed, the indignant and acrimonious reactions against recent attempts to transform the figure of Black Pete, the notorious black-faced “helper” of the Dutch Santa Claus, suggest a similar mechanism. This indignation seems to stem from the confrontation with a historically—more specifically: colonially—developed racial and ethnic difference in a context where, as Gloria Wekker observes in her recent book, *White Innocence*, “whiteness is not acknowledged as a racialized/ethnicized positioning at all” (Wekker 2016, 2). An interpretation of Wilders’ politics along the lines of “Elements of Anti-Semitism” would be that Wilders taps into the offense that some people, alienated from their mimetic drive, take to the sensible difference of Muslims, and that he uses this offense to form an exclusionary collective by giving them license to indulge their impulses of hostility and mimesis, in a repressive way.

Consider Wilders’ 2008 propaganda video *Fitna* (Wilders 2008). *Fitna* begins with an animation of a Koran that opens by itself: the left page shows the Danish cartoon caricature of the prophet Muhammad wearing a bomb with a noisily burning fuse as a turban; the right page has a digital clock counting down seconds from fifteen minutes. A hand turns the page back; on the right is a Koran passage in Arabic; on the left, an English translation: “Surah 6, verse 60: Prepare for them whatever force and cavalry ye are able of gathering/to strike terror/to strike terror into the hearts of the enemies, of Allah and your enemies”; a voice-over recites the text in Arabic. The right page fades into footage of an airplane flying into the World Trade Center; this footage then goes full-screen, and the recitation fades into Edward Grieg’s mournful and majestic “Aase’s Death” from *Peer Gynt*. This alternation of Koran recitations and video footage continues for nine minutes. As well as the bombings in Madrid and London, the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, and a decapitation, the footage also shows calls for violence addressed to agitated crowds, a three-year old girl asserting that the Koran teaches that Jews are apes and pigs, and veiled women holding up a sign that “Hitler was right.”

The second half of the video is marked by the heading, “The Netherlands under the Spell of Islam,” and by a temporary transition from Grieg’s mourning to the

subdued orientalism of Tchaikovsky's "Arabian Dance" from *The Nutcracker*. Footage of Muslims in the Netherlands and statistics that show a sharp increase in the number of Muslims, still superimposed on a book page, blend into a postcard depicting five Dutch mosques and reading, "Greetings from the Netherlands," with a voice-over of fundamentalist sermons recorded in Dutch mosques (translations are given in subtitles). The next heading reads: "The Netherlands in the Future?!" and is followed by footage of a stoning, a young girl with her legs tied together (presumably because her genitals have just been ritually mutilated), a man expressing his violent homophobia, etc., ultimately blending back into two Koran pages in Arabic. A hand appears and turns a page, the image turns black, with the sound of a page being torn out. Then follows the moral, in white letters: "The sound you heard was a page being removed from the phonebook. / For it is not up to me, but to Muslims themselves to tear out the hateful verses from the Koran." After a few more lines, culminating in the slogan: "Stop Islamisation / Defend our freedom," the cartoon of the bomb-turban reappears on a white page, the clock counts down to 00:00, and the explosion is represented as lightning, rumblings, and thunder. The Koran closes and the credits appear, listing Wilders as the script writer and "Scarlet Pimpernel" as the director and editor, reusing the pseudonym of the fictional English fop whose heroism—helping French aristocrats escape the guillotine to England during the Terror—had to remain a secret, even to his tragically confused wife.<sup>19</sup>

*Fitna* casts Islam as a lawless force whose full catastrophic explosion is yet to come. Figuring the prophet Muhammad as a ticking time bomb, *Fitna*'s message, inserted immediately before the lightning, rumbling, and thunder at the end, is that "we"—the Dutch, Europe, the West—need to arrest the countdown towards the apocalypse and stop the "Islamisation" of "our" territory, restraining the imminent explosion of this lawless force into global violence. At the same time, *Fitna* shows resemblances to jihadist propaganda videos on the internet that draw on apocalyptic imagery from the Qur'an. Furthermore, the film uses an Islamic legal concept as its title (Wilders explained in an interview: "Islam and the Koran are my test. For me, the depraved [*verderfelijke*] Islam is *fitna*"), and Wilders frequently mimics

other Islamic legal concepts as well: he has advocated the suspension of constitutional rights for Muslims by arguing that the time has come for a "liberal jihad." He has also dismissed critics of his anti-Islam rhetoric as *dhimmis* (non-Muslim subjects of a state governed by Sharia law), and he has used the concept of *taqiyya* to accuse Muslims of deception.<sup>20</sup> *Fitna* and the jihad propaganda videos that it seems to mirror might both be analyzed as instances of repressive desublimation that emerge as reactions against a specific kind of globalization, mimicking each other's paranoid projections of impulses of fear and hostility and thus foreclosing what Horkheimer and Adorno call "authentic mimesis," reflective responsiveness to difference.<sup>21</sup>

Another reason for returning to "Elements of Anti-Semitism" for interpreting Wilders' rhetoric and imagery of offense might be that one of Horkheimer and Adorno's main analytical moves is away from the "Jewish question" and towards the question of anti-Semitism. According to the analyses developed in "Elements of Anti-Semitism," it is a mistake to treat the distinction between Jews and non-Jews as a question that needs to be answered or as a problem that needs to be solved. The distinction between Jews and non-Jews only becomes a problem because of anti-Semitism, which emerges as a pathological reaction against the existing universal of liberal capitalism. The free society that is the horizon of Horkheimer and Adorno's critical theory does not solve the supposed problem of Jewish particularism by sublating the distinction between Jews and non-Jews into a "true" universal. On the contrary: instead of imposing sameness, a truly free society, for Horkheimer and Adorno, would be a space for the free expression of difference and for the non-repressive, "authentic" mimesis of such difference.<sup>22</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of the "Jewish question" can inspire a critique of the proposition that Europe, or the Netherlands, has a "Muslim question" that needs to be answered, a "Muslim problem" that needs to be solved, and it might suggest a shift of the analytical focus to the question of anti-Islam populism.

Towards the end of *Orientalism*, Edward Said suggested that there was not just a structural similarity but also a historical continuity between anti-Semitism and post-World War II anti-Arab animus, an animus which he connected with "a fear

that the Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world” (Said 1978, 287). In his essay, *Semites*, Gil Anidjar argues that this suggestion, which remains undeveloped in *Orientalism*, “[s]hould have become an entire field of study” (Anidjar 2008, 122, endnote 76). Calling for analyses that recognize “[t]he ways in which these two political identities—the Jew, the Arab—have been coconstituted [sic] by, and most importantly, with and within Europe,” Anidjar asks: “What is Europe such that it has managed to distinguish itself from both Jew and Arab (...) and to render its role in the theologico-political distinction, in the separation and enmity of Jew and Arab invisible—invisible, perhaps most of all to and within ‘itself?’” (Anidjar 2008, 36). Anidjar’s suggestion that the creation of the Israeli state and the so-called Middle East conflict have become a crucial site for European “political-theological” self-definitions is certainly applicable to Wilders’ anti-Islam populism: as I mentioned above, supporting the Israeli far-right is the Freedom Party’s primary foreign policy concern. And while Wilders used to distance himself strongly from other European far-right parties, in part, it seems, because of their anti-Semitism, he has recently been seeking alliances with other European far-right parties such as the Front National in France, which has toned down its anti-Semitic rhetoric and switched targets to Islam. However, while genealogies like the ones proposed by Anidjar are important, and while Wilders’ particular criticisms of Islam and the specifics of his Israel politics need to be historicized, Horkheimer and Adorno’s displacement of “the Jewish question” in “Elements of Anti-Semitism” also allows for an analysis of the way in which the distinction between the Dutch people and Muslims itself is enacted, through offense and ridicule, as a pathological manifestation of drives that ought to be channeled differently.

## Conclusion

On a Saturday afternoon in January, 2016, Wilders visited the busy produce market on the central square of Spijkenisse, a town near Rotterdam where many people vote for Wilders’ Freedom Party, to hand out “resistance spray,” cans of red spray paint with which women were to defend themselves against “testosterone bombs.”<sup>23</sup> Wilders used the mass sexual assaults in Cologne on the previous New

Year’s Eve to claim that asylum seekers posed a “great danger” to “the Dutch women,” because many of them “have a morality, for instance when it comes to interacting with women, that is not *our* morality.” A group of about ten women protested Wilders’ action with signs and slogans like, “Wilders [is a] racist, not [a] feminist”; “Not in our name”; and “My feminism is anti-racist: emancipation for woman *and* refugee”; one of the protesters calmly addressed Wilders through a megaphone: “Dear mister Wilders, we applaud your great concern for the safety and rights of victims of sexist violence in the Netherlands...” The protesters provoked angry shouting from Wilders’ supporters. A white man with a toddler on his arm was captured on camera, screaming past the ear of his crying child: “You want to be raped! You want to be raped! You are filthy! You are really fucking filthy! Bah! Bah! Bah bah bah! You want cock! You cannot get cock, because you are ugly!”<sup>24</sup> Oddly, it was the feminist protesters who were arrested; the prosecutors decided months later not to prosecute them, but the arrests ended the demonstration.

Commenters on social media were quick to ridicule the young father as an ignorant, anti-social, lower class individual with poor parenting skills.<sup>25</sup> However, I hope to have demonstrated the importance of confronting the affective mechanism at work here: the man’s sexist rant was grounded in indignation about the feminists’ demonstration, and mirrors the rhetorical-affective phenomenon that is at the heart of Geert Wilders’ own political performances, namely that of giving and taking offense. But what the protesters were facing was not only the offensive rhetoric and the indignation of Wilders and his supporters, but also the repressive tolerance enforced by a mayor who tolerated Wilders and his supporters dominating the central public space in her town with his racist ideology, while having the protesters arrested.

To contest repressive tolerance, Marcuse urged his readers to “break the established universe of meaning” (Marcuse 1969, 98). However, breaking the established universe of meaning, the “public language” that neutralizes critique, is particularly challenging at a time when anti-Islam populists such as Wilders have themselves

appropriated the critique of tolerance, and present their politics of offense as resistance against the “politically correct” public language. In addition, considerable parts of the public sphere have been poisoned by the nihilist maxim that “what can be offended must be offended,” which gained much traction in the Netherlands after the murders of anti-Islam politician Pim Fortuyn by an animal rights activist in 2002 and of filmmaker and self-proclaimed village idiot Theo van Gogh by a college drop-out-turned-Islamist in 2004 (“what can be offended must be offended” might be considered Van Gogh’s life motto). The idea that indiscriminate offense is inherently critical has been monetized, among various other media, by the highly popular Dutch shocklog, *Geenstijl*, which adopts an expression of moral disapproval—*dat is geen stijl*, literally: that is styleless, i.e. it violates basic standards of decency—as a badge of honor, prides itself on being “tendentious, groundless, and gratuitously offensive” [*nodeloos kwetsend*], and encourages readers to post unfiltered tirades in response to its sarcastic, ad hominem tabloid journalism, usually about politicians or celebrities who are deemed hypocritical or pretentious, or about women and minorities who are considered to manifest themselves too conspicuously in the public sphere.<sup>26</sup> Instead of creating a space for critique and discussion among an active public, *Geenstijl* produces a solitary virtual crowd of white, heterosexual, male, middle-class users who affirm the same exclusionary messages over and over again in monological *reacties*.

Revisiting “Repressive Tolerance” and “Elements of Anti-Semitism” suggests that an effective contestation of this “public language” requires an engagement with the subjective and affective dimensions of politics, rather than a defense of “neutral” forms of liberalism that attempt to bracket or repress these dimensions altogether. Rereading “Repressive Tolerance” suggests that the freedom to offend needs to be reclaimed from anti-Islam populists like Wilders and from offense-for-the-sake-of-offense nihilists, and mobilized, for instance, through public demonstrations that do not merely “express an opinion,” but that, in Marcuse’s terms, actively seek to enact a “rupture.” Thus, the feminist protesters in Spijkenisse sought to break the link established by Wilders between sexual assault and Muslims or immigrants, and between anti-Islam and anti-immigrant politics and feminism, by insisting on

protesting at the produce market, where everyone could see them, disobeying apparent orders to move the demonstration to a different location, refusing to tolerate a Wilders stunt that took place on a central location without noticeable contestation, and that Wilders’ racism was framed as a contribution to the “marketplace of ideas.” Reclaiming the freedom to offend might also imply breaking the taboo on calling Wilders a fascist, a taboo that is upheld not only by people arguing that comparisons with fascism are an affront to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and an insult to the people who vote for Wilders, but also by liberals who argue that comparisons with fascism are too “loaded” to play a productive role in public discussion.<sup>27</sup>

But revisiting “Repressive Tolerance” and “Elements of Anti-Semitism” also suggests the importance of reclaiming the freedom to *take* offense and to express indignation, that is, to insist on the need for nonrepressive sublimation. The freedom to take offense might be opposed to the sizeable “liberal” opinion industry that dismisses a wide array of social justice struggles as “identity politics,” complains that political correctness is the greatest problem of our time, and is obsessed with calls for trigger warnings and safe spaces on U.S. college campuses that, I would argue, are sometimes rather necessary. Obviously, Marcuse’s and Horkheimer and Adorno’s texts do not contain blueprints for political action, but I hope to have indicated some ways in which returning to the critical practice that they embody might help us move beyond simplistic analyses of populist affect, and contribute to imagining a nonrepressive politics in the present.

## Notes

1] I would like to thank Drucilla Cornell and Wout Cornelissen for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.

2] For a lexicon of Wilders’ rhetoric, see Jan Kuitenbrouwer, *De woorden van Wilders en hoe ze werken* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2010). All translations of Wilders’ rhetoric are mine.

3] The subtitle of Wilders' 2006 "Plan voor een nieuwe gouden eeuw" [Plan for a New Golden Age] translates as: "Lower taxes, smaller government, substantial improvement of middle incomes." Wilders, 2006. The title may have been conceived by analogy with William Kristol and Robert Kagan's Project for the New American Century, which existed from 1997 to 2006. For an early analysis of the financial support for Wilders by anti-Islam foundations in the United States, see Freke Vuijst, 2009.

4] On December 9, 2016, the District Court in The Hague convicted Wilders of incitement to discrimination, without, however, imposing a penalty.

5] Marcuse's basic diagnosis of a change from an original to a lapsed or degenerated form of tolerance follows a familiar trope in Frankfurt School analyses of liberalism, for instance in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (particularly the theses on anti-Semitism that I discuss below) and in Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. An earlier critique that focuses specifically on the concept of tolerance is Erich Fromm's "Die gesellschaftliche Bedingtheit der psychoanalytischen Therapie" (Fromm, 1935).

6] The activists had been found not guilty in the first instance by the Tribunal Correctionnel de Mulhouse in December, 2011.

7] This prohibition had been added to the 1881 law in 1972, to implement the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

8] In February, 2010, the then Minister of Justice, Michèle Alliot-Marie, had issued a memo—the "circulaire Alliot-Marie"—requesting that prosecutors bring criminal charges against individuals calling for a boycott of Israeli products. See Médard, 2015.

9] *Otto Preminger Institut v. Austria*, par. 56. I have analyzed this judgment in Bot, 2012.

10] See, on this topic, also Brown, 2006. Brown barely mentions Marcuse's essay, even though her critique of tolerance as a discourse of repression is quite similar to Marcuse's. However, unlike Marcuse's essay, Brown's Foucauldian discourse analysis does not contain an emancipatory alternative to "tolerance as a discourse of depoliticization"; "tolerance as a discourse of power"; "tolerance as governmentality"; "tolerance as/in civilizational discourse," to mention some of Brown's chapter titles. Marcuse refers to the emancipatory alternative to repressive tolerance as "discriminatory," "liberating," or "universal" tolerance (Marcuse, 1969:107, 109, 111).

11] The Dutch word for the human head is *hoofd*; a *kop* is an animal's head.

12] The neologism *haardbaarden*, "hearth beards," sounds like *baatbaarden*, "hate beards." Jan Kuitenbrouwer points out that members of parliament have to approve the transcripts before they are published, so that Wilders deliberately had the word *baardbaarden* be put on record. Kuitenbrouwer suggests that Wilders may have wanted to avoid a reprimand by the moderator, but it is more likely that he wanted to avoid another hate speech charge, even though it is dubious that a judge would make much of the difference. Kuitenbrouwer, 2010:96).

13] "New Dutch": a term denoting immigrants and their second and third generation descendants that was briefly used as an alternative for the stigmatizing word, *allochtoon*. Wilders here uses the term sarcastically.

14] I have modified the translation throughout.

15] Indeed, similarities between Marcuse's work and *Dialectic of Enlightenment* led to considerable tensions. See Wiggershaus, 1994:497.

16] Marcuse develops the concept of repressive desublimation most fully in *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse, 1991:56-83). In "Repressive Tolerance," Marcuse analyzes repressive desublimation as a mechanism of depoliticization (Marcuse, 1969:115).

17] I thank David Kettler for discussing Horkheimer and Adorno's use of these stereotypes with me.

18] Charles Coughlin (1891-1979) was a Canadian-born anti-Semitic radio preacher and Roman Catholic priest who migrated to the United States in 1923.

19] Cf. Emmuska Orczy's 1903 play and adventure novel, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. Orczy herself was a baroness who was born in Hungary and escaped the threat of a revolution with her parents in 1868, ultimately to London.

20] "Koranfilm Wilders heet Fitna," Nu.nl February 9, 2008.

21] On the relations between militant secularism and Islamic terror, see Roy, 2005. See also Scroggins, 2012, which suggestively juxtaposes the biographies of an anti-Islam ideologist and an Islamic terrorist. Joost Bosland also discusses projection and polarizing identification in his diagnosis of the "madness around Wilders" (Bosland, 2010:70-1).

22] For a discussion of this topic in other texts by Adorno, see Düttmann, 2000.

23] <http://www.hartvannederland.nl/nederland/zuid-holland/2016/arrestaties-bij-uitdelen-verzet-spray-wilders-spijkenisse/>

24] <http://www.rijnmond.nl/nieuws/137513/Wilders-deelt-verzetsspray-uit-in-Spijkenisse>

25] See, for instance: [http://www.dumpert.nl/mediabase/6715913/eabe7992/tokkie\\_schreeuwt\\_jul-lie\\_willen\\_verkracht\\_worden\\_tegen\\_feministen.html](http://www.dumpert.nl/mediabase/6715913/eabe7992/tokkie_schreeuwt_jul-lie_willen_verkracht_worden_tegen_feministen.html)

26] For a critique of this shocklog, see Lovink, 2008.

27] For a good overview of this taboo, see Broer, 2017.

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## Biography

### Michiel Bot

Michiel Bot is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Law, Jurisprudence, and Legal History at Tilburg University (Netherlands), where he teaches courses in law and humanities. He holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from New York University, where he wrote a dissertation titled, "The Right to Offend: Contested Speech Acts and Critical Democratic Practice," and he has held postdoctoral fellowships and visiting appointments at Bard College (New York) and Al-Quds Bard College (Palestine).

**Reframing the Technosphere:  
Peter Sloterdijk and Bernard Stiegler's Anthropotechnological  
Diagnoses of the Anthropocene**  
Pieter Lemmens and Yuk Hui

## Introduction

In June of 2016 the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (1947) and the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler (1952) engaged in a public debate in Nijmegen on the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene is the term for a new geological epoch in which the human has allegedly acquired 'geological agency' (Chakrabarty 2009), thus becoming the most important geological (f)actor on the planet – a non-physical factor that is indeed an *actor* (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016). This situation obviously burdens 'humanity' with an unprecedented responsibility, not so much vis-à-vis the earth, which is arguably totally indifferent to the current ecological crisis, but with respect to its own survival, and most probably also with respect to other lifeforms, which are also dependent on the life-sustaining conditions of the biosphere. The latter's future has never before been, in the eyes of the scientists and humanities scholars, so decisively associated with the figure of this uncanny and now apparently earth-shattering being the Greeks called the *anthropos* as now.

As is well known by now, the notion of the Anthropocene was coined in 2000 by the Dutch atmospheric chemist and meteorologist Paul Crutzen in a colloquium on the Holocene at a conference of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) in Mexico, in which he apparently stood up and claimed that we were not living in the Holocene anymore but in the Anthropocene since the human (*anthropos*) had now become a 'geoforce', most significantly through anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). In a short yet seminal article in *Nature* two years later he argued that the Anthropocene as the 'human-dominated geological epoch' had started with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, mentioning the design of the steam engine by James Watt in 1784 as a crucial event (Crutzen 2002). Acknowledging as his forerunner the Italian geologist Antonio Stoppani, who already in 1873 recognized the human as a 'new telluric force' on a par with the natural forces, he briefly sketched some of the destructive impacts of humanity on the planet and proclaimed that barring a global catastrophe the human species will no doubt remain a major geological force for many millennia to come (*ibid.*).

The Anthropocene first of all marks the entrance of humanity into a phase in its history which will be characterized by huge changes in the earth's biosphere, i.e., in the global ecological system that has up until now rather silently and robustly supported its cultural-historical projects (Steffen et al. 2011, Barnosky 2012 Rockström & Klum 2015). If most 'anthropoceneologists', and in particular so-called 'ecomodernists' or 'ecopragmatists' among them, emphasize the 'anthroposization' of the earth and like to characterize the Anthropocene as the 'human era' in which humans will shape the planet and decide about the future of the biosphere (Brand 2009, Crutzen & Schwägerl 2011, Ellis 2011, Lynas 2012), thinkers that are more philosophically oriented and also more critical about modernity, such as Clive Hamilton, Timothy Morton, Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers, stress the feedback effects of the Earth System upon anthropogenic impacts as its most typical and also most worrying characteristic. Both Latour and Stengers, for instance, invoke the image of 'the intrusion of Gaia' (Stengers) to highlight the *agency* exhibited by the earth as agitated by human action (Latour 2014) and present this as a

new figure of transcendence radically questioning humans and forcing them to accord with her whims (Stengers 2015). Morton understands the Anthropocene as signaling the 'end of nature' as we know it (Morton 2009) and as the age of 'hyperobjects' intruding the human sphere (Morton 2013). Clive Hamilton accentuates the Anthropocene as an unprecedented *rupture* in the functioning of the Earth System as a whole, inaugurating a completely different, post-holocene condition that urgently calls for a new responsibility of the human and a complete reorientation of the human-earth relationship (Hamilton 2017).

The Anthropocene has gained a lot of attention in academia in the last couple of years, especially also among humanities scholars and social and political scientists, generating an intense, rich and varied debating landscape, frequently referred to as the 'Anthropo-scene' (Lorimer 2016). One issue concerns the Anthropocene's starting point. Some have argued that it already began with agriculture (Ruddiman 2003) or more generally the 'agrilogistic' mode of inhabiting the earth (Morton 2016), others claim it started only after the Second World War, with the so-called 'Great Acceleration' (Zalasiewicz et al. 2015).

Another, more controversial issue concerns the very name given to the new epoch. Although we can certainly agree with the critique, leveled principally by Marxist thinkers such as Jason Moore, Elmar Altvater, Christian Parenti (Moore 2016) and Andreas Malm (Malm 2015) but also by Naomi Klein, that the true 'culprit' of the global ecological crisis that is now reframed as the Anthropocene is not 'humanity' or 'the human species', (and if so only a certain segment of it), but 'capital' or the capitalist mode of production, and that a better term would therefore be 'capitalocene', we nevertheless think that a focus on the *anthropos* in the sense proposed in this article – i.e., as a fundamentally technologically empowered, para-natural, (or why not 'meta-physical', and therefore 'monstrous' creature?) – remains indispensable to our current age of planetarization. 'Technocene', also suggested by Sloterdijk (Davis & Turpin 2015), seems in this sense also a viable alternative, yet it is not our aim here to contribute to the current discussion around the appropriate 'nomenclature', important as it no doubt is.<sup>1</sup>

Sloterdijk and Stiegler have both offered interesting and pertinent philosophical diagnoses of the Anthropocene, approaching it from their respective anthropological, or better, anthropogenic perspectives, which should more precisely be understood as *anthropotechnic* or *anthropotechnogenic* perspectives, as we will explain shortly. Both perceive the Anthropocene as a critical event in the technogenic adventure that in their view constitutes the essence of the process of anthropogenesis. For both, that is, the Anthropocene signals the necessity, for the *anthropos*, to radically change the course and the very nature of this technogenic adventure, an adventure from which it is born and upon which it vitally depends since it has invested in it everything that it is. And finally, both suggest, each in their own specific way, a response to the Anthropocene in the form of a proposal that is properly anthropotechnological: a *homeotechnological* revolution in the case of Sloterdijk and a *negentropic* turn of technology in the case of Stiegler. As we shall see, in both cases this is also immediately a *technopolitical* issue, entailing an *immunopolitics* in the case of Sloterdijk and a *pharmacological noopolitics* in the case of Stiegler.

Since both have developed their technological and technogenic perspectives on the *anthropos* decisively in dialogue with the thought of Martin Heidegger, and in particular with his view on the essence of technology as enframing and the need for a radical turn from this very essence, we will start with first briefly sketching their respective techno-logical re-interpretations of Heidegger's existential ontology, as well as their decidedly un-Heideggerian views on the technogenesis of human existence. We will also briefly introduce their principal theoretical paradigms of sphero-immunology and pharmaco-organology. Our account of their critical re-interpretations of Heidegger's ontological or onto-historical view of technology will be postponed until our discussion of their anthropotechnical diagnoses of the Anthropocene.

### The relation between *Anthropos* and *Technē*. Temporal vs. Spatial Analytics.

Both Sloterdijk's and Stiegler's anthropotechnologies start from a similar critique of Heidegger's notion of the 'ontological difference' as the dimension of the question of being. The former responds to it with what he calls the anthropological difference which historicizes Heidegger's transcendentalist conception of being-there and the clearing of being, and reconceptualizes it as resulting from the technogenic and self-domesticatory evolution of the species within self-made and self-maintained 'inner spaces' or 'anthropospheres', leading to the break of proto-humans with their animal *Umwelt* and launching them into the openness and indeterminacy of the world, or in other words, engendering their sensitivity for the difference between Being and beings. The latter deconstructs it with the concept of the 'original default' as a 'necessary default' [*défaut qu'il faut*] which theorizes humans as beings without origin or essence and thus vitally dependent on technical 'compensations', these constituting their 'essentially accidental' openness and allowing for their 'ek-sistent' mode of being. As such, they bring the ontological-transcendental to ground by demonstrating a history of the ontological through the ontic, a decidedly materialist, and that is to say 'technogenic' (Sloterdijk 2017., 142) 'history of the clearing "from below"' (ibid., 100).<sup>2</sup>

The *anthropos* in the thought of Sloterdijk and Stiegler is an unstable historical and philosophical category, which is always becoming. The readings of the history of anthropology and philosophy according to the two thinkers share a common term: 'exteriority' – an attempt to deconstruct Heidegger's concept of the temporal *Ek-stasis*. However, this concept is performed in a symmetrical way in being mirrored by the thought of Heidegger. On the one hand, Sloterdijk in his three volumes of *Spheres* rediscovered the question of space, and developed what he called an 'ontotopology' in contrast to Heidegger's 'ontochronology'; on the other hand, Stiegler in his three volumes of *Technics and Time* reproaches Heidegger's *Seinsfrage* for consisting of a forgetting of technics as constitutive of time.

For Sloterdijk, the figure of man is the monstrous – a translation of the German *das Ungeheure*, which is Hölderlin's translation of the Greek word *το δεινον* in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Heidegger translated it in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* and his later courses on Hölderlin as 'uncanniness' [*das Un-heimlich*], which Heidegger also associated with "homelessness" [*Un-heimisch*]; meaning the fundamental homelessness of the human as a being without origin (Heidegger 1993, 86). The homelessness associated with the uncanniness of human existence is grounded for Heidegger in man's relation to Being (Warminski 1990, 205). Like Heidegger, Sloterdijk finds in this monstrous figure of the human the question of original technics. However, he goes further by proposing what he calls an 'onto-anthropomonstrosology' (Sloterdijk 2017, 105) characterized by a default of 'coming to the world' [*Zur Welt kommen*]. Coming to the world is not yet being in the world, in the sense that *Dasein* has to look for the *Da* of its *Da-sein*. It is also not only to look for, but also to *build* a sort of insulation as well as a relational space *as sphere* – in the sense of a self-domestication (ibid., 108). And it is within these spheres that the human as a world-open, existential creature is forged, as it were. Spheres are in fact anthropogenic engines, 'hothouses' or 'incubators' in which humans are born. The genesis of the human being is as such 'an actual house affair [...], a drama of domestication in the radical sense of the word' (ibid.). Sloterdijk's historical anthropology takes a materialist reading of technics to characterize the evolution of human being originating initially from lithotechnics (stone tools). 'Becoming human', he writes, 'happens under the protection of lithotechnics' (ibid., 114) and Heidegger's clearing as 'the place where Being [*Sein*] arises as that which is there [*da*] (ibid., 202) is initially 'a work of stones' (ibid., 116).

We can understand both Sloterdijk and Stiegler's project as a partial response to Heidegger's writing after the *Kehre*, a turn from *Being to Time* to the history of Being, in which he considered the history of Western metaphysics as a progressive oblivion of Being, which is realized in modern technology. Heidegger delivered an important talk in 1949/1955, later published as "The Question Concerning Technology", in which he points out that the essence of modern technology [modern Technik] is no longer technical or technological, but rather Enframing [*Gestell*]. If the essence of Greek *technē* means *poiesis* or bringing-forth [*Hervorbringen*], modern

technology as the realization of metaphysics has completely bypassed the question of Being and sees exclusively in every being the possibility to calculate and command; in other words, beings are treated as standing-reserve [*Bestand*]. This critique of modern technology as metaphysical project is taken up by both Sloterdijk and Stiegler, in a sympathetic but contradictory sense, namely that they demonstrate technology as the necessary condition of care [*Sorge*], a central concept in *Being and Time*, referring to the basic ontological structure of Dasein as 'ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-the-world' (Heidegger 2001, 237). By *deconstructing* Heidegger's writing after the *Kehre* and *reconstructing* his writing before the *Kehre*, they arrive at their own spatial and temporal reconceptualization of technology. In comparison to Sloterdijk's critique of Heidegger's failure to fully take up the question of space, Stiegler reproaches Heidegger's *forgetting of technics* as time in his historical account of Western metaphysics as the history of the *forgetting of being*. Stiegler takes Heidegger's concept of the 'already-there' further to show how falling [*Verfallen*] is *necessarily* a question of technics as time. The *Unheimlich* takes a new meaning; it is not referred to human being as ontologically homeless, but rather more in terms of the Freudian *Uncanny* (*Unheimlich*), *ēpimētheia*, an *après coup* or a *Nachträglichkeit*: 'The *unheimlich* character of all prostheses is, besides, what *Dasein*, with its eye "on the simple fact of existing as such," cannot endure while being from the start supported by it' (Stiegler 1998, 219).

For Stiegler, technical objects are essentially to be understood as a form of social memory, constituting what he calls an 'epiphylogenetic' memory ('epi' meaning 'on top of', through which an individual memory becomes available to the species – 'phyllo' – as a whole), i.e., 'a past that I never lived but that is nevertheless my past, without which I would never have had a past of my own' (ibid., 140). It is this external memory that founds and supports the human's historical-cultural mode of being. As for André Leroi-Gourhan, a French paleoanthropologist very influential to Stiegler, this memory is the constant process of exteriorisation in the ethnic group: 'Like tools, human memory is a product of exteriorization, and it is stored within the ethnic group. This is what distinguishes it from animal memory, of which we know little except that it is stored within the species' (Leroi-Gourhan 1993, 258).

Epiphylogenetic memory is distinct from phylogenetic (species-genomic) as well as epigenetic (individual-nervous) memory; in the words of Stiegler, it is a 'technological memory' (Stiegler 1998, 177), an artificial memory which we can find in languages, the use of tools, consumption of goods and practices of rituals. These involve the exteriorisation of memory and the liberation of organs. This anthropological understanding allows Stiegler to develop what he calls a *general organology*, a study that sees technics as the liberation as well as perfection of organs. At the core of general organology is also the question of time (as desire, pro-tention and attention), which comes rather from Stiegler's reading of Husserl's lectures on time-consciousness. To put it in a nutshell, Husserl distinguishes what he calls the primary and secondary retention, the first being, for example, the melody that we retain in our immediate memory; the second being our memory of this melody tomorrow; the tertiary retention is, for Stiegler, the technical retention of traces, especially the technics of writing and recording. The three retentions constitute a circuit that allows Stiegler to expose the ignorance of tertiary retention in the history of modern philosophy, notably in Kant, Husserl and Heidegger.

Based on the two different analytics, namely the spatial and temporal, one finds a significant difference between Sloterdijk and Stiegler, concerning the question of, and approach towards, care. We may also want to consider this difference as that between the general approach of Sloterdijk's immunology and Stiegler's organology. For Sloterdijk, in order to argue for the priority of space, the latter becomes the condition of the possibility of time as care, as he says that 'the care for en-housing [*Ge-Häuse*] and the care for self are not to be distinguished in the beginning' (Sloterdijk 2017, 122)). En-housing means protection, like a case. It is the primary function of the sphere. The house fundamentally concerns the question of insulation and protection. The spheres or anthropospheres as thought by Sloterdijk function like a membrane, or a 'think wall' that acts as an immune system by preventing undesirable things from entering, as well as providing flexibility in confronting, other spheres.

Sloterdijk pushes his 'sphero-immunology' much further than Plato and Nietzsche, whom he considers to be immunologists *avant la lettre*, to include 'insurance techniques' as well as juridical, therapeutic, medical and biological systems, or in other words, he is aiming for a 'general immunology' or 'general theory of immune systems' (Sloterdijk 2016, 25) which extends from the biological to the symbolic and the technological. The task of the philosopher becomes the task of an immunologist. The term ontology deviates from an objective and universal description of the world, and is obliged to carry a cultural and medical meaning in the post-meta-physical epoch. One has to be careful here however: it is too simple to see Sloterdijk's immunology simply as a passive defense system, since it is also a reaction against the global condition transformed by media, technology and capitalism. In this view, the simple distinction between enemy and foe disappears; what replaces it is a co-operative logic (*ibid.*, 450). Therefore, general immunology, and in particular global immune design, becomes the first principle of survival under globalization, for both individuals and cultures, as we shall see later.

This question of care takes another form in the writing of Stiegler, since it is fundamentally an organology of retentions—or a general organology, which is articulated through three types of organs: the psychosomatic organs of human individuals; social organizations; and all kinds of technical organs (Stiegler 2014). This is largely due to his reading of Simondon, whose concept of psychic and collective individuation allows Stiegler to go beyond and against the original care in *Being and Time*: authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*]. It is because care is now posed as the question of individuation and transindividuation, the psychical and individual cannot be separated from the collective, and without the latter the individual will not be able to individuate.<sup>3</sup> The concept of individuation (here as the question of time and of desire) largely distinguishes the political analysis of Stiegler from Sloterdijk's (which pivots on space and protection), and is especially apparent in the case of the latter's recent plea for the praise of borders against Angela Merkel's refugee politics. (Sloterdijk 2016). Could this be a reflection (reverberation?) of the difference in temporal versus spatial analysis of the two authors? The question of border is fundamentally spatial and therefore one could maybe ask if a metaphysical limit is not already laid down in Sloterdijk's politics.

In contrast to Sloterdijk's historical analysis of a politics of spatial poetics, Stiegler also takes off from Plato's immunology, but with a lucid awareness that any immunology is a *pharmakon*, i.e., at once and simultaneously healing-protective and toxic-destructive (Stiegler 2013). The philosopher as therapist, like Sloterdijk's philosopher as immunologist, needs to decide what health is. Simondon and Freud here play a central role for the diagnosis of Stiegler. The question of individuation in the thought of Simondon is politicized by Stiegler, hence individuation is no longer a neutral term that Simondon employs to describe psychic and collective transformation, but rather a 'measure' that determines what is a successful individuation or not. Simondon uses the term 'disindividuation' to describe a transitional phase of individuation in which the being in question is de-structured and then re-structured. In Stiegler's interpretation, disindividuation becomes a notion to describe the difficulty or incapability to individuate. Stiegler's innovation lies in his reading of Freud, through whom he transforms the question of individuation into the question of libidinal economy, i.e., of an economy of desire understood as the sublimation of drives.

The 'positive use' of the *pharmakon* is the key to reconstructing a libidinal economy, which is in the process of being ruined by industrialization and marketing. To demonstrate his notion of the libidinal economy, we can follow the example that Stiegler often evoked. In his analysis of Edward Bernays' use of psychoanalytic technique for marketing, the libidinal energy is transformed into id, meaning into pure drive. Libido, in the reading of Stiegler, is an investment, whilst drive is not an investment but rather close to addiction, a disinvestment. Simondon's individuation in this context becomes an economy of investment. The opposite is found in the case of Richard Durn, frequently evoked in Stiegler's later writings. Durn was a jobless French environmental activist who killed eight of his fellow citizens in 2002 in an attempt 'to do evil at least once in his life, to have the feeling of existing', a feeling that he felt he had completely lost (Stiegler 2009, 39). Traversing Simondon and Freud, Stiegler goes back to Heidegger's concept of care, and to understand 'taking care' as resistance against the logic of the industrial economy (Stiegler 2010).

The short-term vision of today's hypercapitalist industry subsumes the technical system to the economic system and uses the technical system to violently disturb the existing stability in order to profit from such a transformation (Stiegler 2010, 102–4). It is worth noting that Stiegler is running the Institute for Research and Innovation (IRI) within the Centre Pompidou in Paris, as well as heading the lobbying group *Ars Industrialis*, which attempts to propose and realize what he calls an 'economy of contribution' based on new conceptual designs of collaborative software. The pharmacological measurement is applied in the technologies that Stiegler investigates. For example, in the recent debate on algorithmic governance and automatism, in view of the problem brought about by automation including unemployment and so on, Stiegler proposes to analyze automation in a different way with reference to Denis Diderot's idea of improvisation, in order to demonstrate the positive use of automation. With these two variant *Dasein* Analytics and positioning of the question of Being, we will proceed to their respective diagnostics of the Anthropocene.

### **Anthropotechnical Diagnostics and Therapeutics of the Anthropocene: Sloterdijk's Sphero-Immunological Approach**

For Sloterdijk, the Anthropocene not only denotes the fact that the human has now become the most important geological *force* within the biosphere, but much more importantly, the insight that this human will have to become increasingly *responsible* itself for the maintenance of this biosphere as the very condition of its own survival. Besides naming a geological fact, the term Anthropocene designates nothing less than a *call* to humanity, a call with an unprecedented and unsurpassable ethical and political urgency that compels humans to *assume* the responsibility for the habitability of the Earth's biosphere that they *in fact* already *have*.

This taking of responsibility will become vital in the future since it has become perfectly clear that the Earth will not be able in the long term to support the exploitative and care-less ways in which ever growing parts of humanity have been inhabiting her since at least the Industrial Revolution unleashed by capitalism. The

crucial insight that the so-called ecological crisis has produced is that we can no longer persist, (as humanity, according to Sloterdijk, has actually done already since the rise of the so-called 'high cultures' [*Hochkulturen*] but in a gravely more intensified way since modernity), in treating the Earth exclusively as the stage and unlimited resource-fund for its cultural-historical plays. As Sloterdijk writes in his 1989 treatise *Eurotaoismus*, at the end of which he provides a perceptive and prescient sketch of the global situation of humanity in the epoch of what is now called the Anthropocene, 'it is only when the play starts to ruin the stage that the actors are forced to take another view of both the stage and of themselves' (Sloterdijk 1989, 305). The invention of this other view of itself and its earthly habitat is what the Anthropocene puts on the agenda of the *Anthropos*, as it were. It first of all means abandoning the still dominant 'backdrop ontology' of nature conceived as 'the inoperative scenery behind human operations' (Davis & Turpin 2015, 334).

What was once called 'nature' and conceived of as an ever reliant, productive, abundant and robust backdrop has been fatally implicated in the *maelstrom* of human productivism and consumerism – 'enframed' by it, as Heidegger would have it – with its impending exhaustion as a result. The continued existence of this so-called 'nature', which we have now uncovered as being just a small and fragile 'film' covering a planetary body, can no longer be entrusted to her own autarky since she has been scientifically explicated and technologically exploited, and will become dependent on us humans, that is to say, as Sloterdijk suggests, 'on a new world-forming gesture, executed by people for whom it has become evident that the protection of the stage is the play itself' (Sloterdijk 1989, 310).

In the apocalyptic last chapter of *You Must Change Your Life*, Sloterdijk claims that the awareness of the fact that we cannot continue our current care-less lifestyles any longer but need to 'change our lives' and start 'taking care of the whole' is nowadays almost universally shared, even forming the quintessence of today's *Zeitgeist*. It has become the one and only ethical imperative with an absolute and universal appeal, now that traditional ethical systems are definitively exhausted and no longer possess any persuasive force (Sloterdijk 2009, 699).

Arguing that the global crisis, as the herald of a possible global catastrophe, shares many characteristics with the ancient God of monotheism (ibid., 702-3), and suggesting that one can currently perceive a gradual transformation from monotheism to 'monogeism' (i.e., the belief in the one and only planet) in the minds of ever more Earthlings (Sloterdijk 2005, 16), Sloterdijk speculates that this crisis will inevitably initiate, and will *have* to initiate, nothing less than a global *immunological turn*, i.e., a revolutionary transformation in the way humans construct and organize their immuno-spheric residence on the planet, indeed 'a new world-forming gesture', that is to say in the terms of immunology, a new spheropoietic project. This transformation is in essence an (anthropo)technological transformation, a radical change in the technological relation of humanity toward the planet and toward itself.

In brief, this transformation amounts to a radical re-orientation of the *anthropos*' immunization strategies, not only in the sense that the spontaneous 'immunity services' of the planet cannot be taken for granted anymore and will increasingly depend on humanity's own *techno*-spheropoietic ingenuity and carefulness, but also in the sense of having to switch from local and particular immunospheric projects (e.g. those of local cultures and communities) primarily directed *against* the threats from the local 'natural environment' to increasingly global *co-immunization* projects that consider the totality of these local natural (as well as cultural) environments as parts of a singular shared biosphere, taking this as their principle object of collective concern, i.e., as that *for* which immunization projects should take care of. It is a geopolitical transformation from local to global immunization strategies, from local protectionisms to a 'protectionism of the whole' (Sloterdijk 2009, 712).

A viable future for humanity on this planet can therefore only be conceived for Sloterdijk on the basis of constructing a 'global co-immunity structure' or a 'global immune-design', infused by a spirit of 'co-immunism' (ibid., 713), based on the awareness of a shared ecological and immunological *situation* and the realization that this new situation, which is actually that of the Anthropocene, cannot be dealt with on the basis of the existing local techno-cultural resources only but is in need of a planet-wide 'logic of cooperation' (ibid.).

As Sloterdijk emphasizes already in the final section of his 1993 book *Weltfremdheit* (Sloterdijk 1993) such a global co-immunization project could very well prove to be a challenge that is *too big* for the *anthropos*, that is to say, as it currently exists. Yet if there is one over-arching insight that runs through all of Sloterdijk's onto-anthropological reflections, it is that humans are those beings that are *always* confronted with problems that are *far too big* for them but that they nevertheless cannot avoid dealing with. This structural burdening with what the Greek tragedians called *ta megala*, the 'big things', which puts human beings under permanent 'growth stress' and/or 'format stress' – today unfolding foremost as 'planetary stress' (Sloterdijk 1995, 53) – is what anthropogenesis as hominization and coming-into-the-world through sphero-poietic expansion is all about (Sloterdijk 1993, 380; Sloterdijk 2009, 700, 706).

If the human matures by increasing his awareness and responsibility through confrontations with the 'big things', the anthropocenic challenge of creating a global, i.e., planetary, co-immunity structure will probably make clear for the very first time, and to *all* those involved, what 'growing up' in its most general sense truly means for humanity (Sloterdijk 1993, 376). Although the *anthropos* charged with responsibility for the Anthropocene is still 'below the age of maturity' today (Davis & Turpin 2015, 327), the challenge of the Anthropocene forces him, and provides him with the chance, to assume and acquire the proper maturity.

Sloterdijk emphasizes that the project of global co-immunization most crucially involves a technological and, that is to say, an anthropotechnological revolution, which is not to be understood as a technological fix but as a world-wide techno-cultural and techno-social mutation if not, indeed, an onto-anthropological mutation. Like Stiegler, as we shall see shortly, he argues that the human as a spheropoietic being is 'condemned to technology' just as much as it is condemned to 'being-in' [*In-Sein*] and can therefore only confront the anthropocenic challenge through a radical reversion of the very same technological power-ingenuity that has been instrumental in bringing about the anthropocenic condition, mainly by putting the biosphere as ultimate life-support system in danger (Sloterdijk 2017, 191-2). If, for the later Heidegger, only *a* god could save us from our entanglement



in enframing, in the current context of the Anthropocene, Sloterdijk suggests, we should interpret the notion of god in terms of 'the potential to create natures' and should start conceiving the saving power in terms of humanity's still premature and precarious 'potential to co-operate with the natures' (ibid., 192).

As such, the said technological reversion is conceived by Sloterdijk in terms of what he calls a *homeotechnological* turn, i.e., a turn from the traditional, largely contra-natural, dominating, Earth-ignoring and Earth-ignorant *allotechnological* paradigm to a co-natural, non-dominating and Earth-caring *homeotechnological* paradigm. Briefly put: whilst the traditional allotechnologies are contra-natural, (other (*allo*) than nature because based on principles and mechanisms not found in nature itself and structurally despotic and exploitative), homeotechnologies instead are co-natural, i.e., like (*homeo*) nature, in the sense of being co-operative with principles and mechanisms already operative in nature itself, and as such, Sloterdijk claims, allowing for a non-dominating and non-exploitative relation to nature (Sloterdijk 2017, 144-6).

### **Stiegler's Pharmaco-Organological Approach**

If Sloterdijk proposes an immunological turn as response to the Anthropocene, Stiegler in his most recent writings argues for an organological and pharmacological - or in short pharmaco-organological - transformation. For Stiegler, the notion of Anthropocene first of all refers to the coming to light of the systemic and massive *toxicity* of the contemporary global organological configuration, resulting obviously from the process of industrialization initiated with the invention of the thermodynamic machine and its deployment by capital - originally with the steam engine which kicked off the Industrial Revolution - which is understood by Stiegler as an organological revolution. It is this organological toxicity that is the root cause behind the pollution and deterioration of the natural ecological systems constituting the Earth's biosphere (Stiegler 2016, 8).

Stiegler interprets this organological poisoning, which he has been analyzing in his work for almost two decades now and which manifests itself most prominently in what he refers to as processes of *proletarianization*, as meaning, among other things, the loss of knowledge, both practical and theoretical knowledge, which finally leads to the loss of the knowledge of living [*savoir vivre*]. This is because once the know-how [*savoir faire*] is short-circuited by artificial organs, such as what happened when artisans were forced to give up their skills and enter the factory, it led directly to the loss of individual and social life competences. The technical organs are taking over more and more functions and responsibilities of the human subjects and social institutions that together form a global technical milieu (Stiegler 2010, 40ff)—a condition of planetary proletarianization *par excellence*. This milieu serves ever more exclusively the prolongation and intensification of the consumerism, as well the productivism, that are necessary for continuing the process of capitalist valorization, which has imposed itself as the ultimate and almost sacred finality of the human adventure, albeit a nihilistic and self-destructive finality, as Stiegler has argued on many occasions (e.g. Stiegler 2010, 5).

It is capitalism and its deployment of the thermodynamic machine that has unleashed the world-wide ecological destruction and climatic disruption that are the most obvious signals leading geologists and atmospheric scientists to propose that we have entered the geological epoch of the Anthropocene. But the true cause of the problem of the Anthropocene for Stiegler does *not* reside in these thermodynamic machines and their carbon emissions as prime cause of the destruction of natural ecologies. Of course, we should diminish carbon emissions and think of cleaner, renewable energy sources and more eco-friendly technologies, but the root of the problem lies in the logic of capital and its persistent and all-too-successful strategies, over the last two centuries, for overcoming its own intrinsic limits, which is precisely the crucial cause behind the proliferation of the above-mentioned processes of proletarianization into all sectors of society (ibid., 74).

The first of these limits, already recognized by Marx, was the so-called tendency of the profit rate to fall, resulting from the imperative to increasing productivity through the reduction of labor costs, which forced capital to a first step in an ever-

expanding automation of its production processes via the delegation of workers' skills to machines, gradually expropriating those workers of their skills and know-how, proletarianizing them in the process. This led, at the end of the nineteenth century, to the problem of overproduction, to which capital responded in a second step by inventing consumerism through the adaptation of workers' desires to the output of capitalist production via marketing, public relations and advertising, engendering the proletarianization of the consumer subject by gradually discharging it of its 'knowledge of living' [*savoir-vivre*] and responsibility for its own existence and the world around it (ibid., 25).

As a result of the systemic exploitation of consumers' libidinal energy, this strategy necessarily implied, Stiegler contends, capital encountering a second limit at the end of the twentieth century, which he calls 'a tendential fall in libidinal energy' (ibid., 90) or, in other words, the destruction of desire as the very motor of the capitalist economy and its degeneration into drives and the formation of a drive-based economy of addictive consumption and short-termist financial speculation (ibid., 84), which is what we are currently experiencing and is very probably now at the brink of a systemic collapse. It is this destruction of desire *as* a destruction of care, attention and responsibility induced by the toxicity of the technical milieu of the mind geared to the stimulation of consumption, which eventually leads to the destruction of the natural geophysical milieus of the Earth as well, according to Stiegler (Stiegler 2013, 88).

And this constitutes capitalism's third limit, which is precisely the meaning of the Anthropocene, as we would argue. This limit can only be overcome through a radical transformation of the capitalist economy, which Stiegler conceives of as an organo-pharmacological turn through which the generalized toxicity of current organological configurations, mainly constituted by the digital networks principally apprehended as *pharmaka* that are simultaneously toxic and curative, is somehow pharmacologically transformed into a technical milieu that can serve as the basis of a new system of care and attention, of a *global ecological* care and attention, through the invention of new (socio)therapies and practices based on this technical milieu (ibid.).

The deepest problem of the Anthropocene, again, does not lie in the climate, ecological and energy crises per se, however acute they are. These crises are for Stiegler only symptoms of the more fundamental crisis in the climatic conditions of the human 'spirit' so to speak, i.e., in the ecology of this spirit *as* originally and fundamentally constituted and conditioned by a technical milieu, or more precisely a *mnemotechnical* milieu, and thus of the *libidinal energy* – in the form of knowledge, desires, attention, care, etc., – produced (or destroyed) by that ecology and flowing through it (ibid., 91). In this regard, the solution to the problem of the Anthropocene, which is that of finding *a way out* of it, consists principally in combatting, through a noopolitics, what Stiegler calls capitalist's *psychopower*, a notion obviously echoing Michel Foucault's notion of biopower, by which he means the systemic capture and channeling of people's desire and attention toward consumption via psychotechnologies (radio, cinema, TV, Internet) deployed by the capitalist economy as technologies of control.

As today's global mnemotechnical milieu is constituted foremost by the digital network technologies, this noopolitical combat should focus on the Internet. As such, Stiegler proclaims the need for a total reinvention of the architecture of the Internet, being the global mnemotechnical system constituting and conditioning the noetic capacities – and most fundamentally the potential-retentional horizons – of the *anthropos* in the Anthropocene, thereby significantly determining the anthropocenic condition. Most concretely, Stiegler argues for pharmacologically transforming the purely calculative, controlling and increasingly automated digital networks of today's utterly nihilistic cognitive and cultural capitalism into what he calls a 'hermeneutic web', which allows precisely for *de-automation* and *deproletarianization* of subjects and with it for the invention of new modes of knowledge, know-how and care necessary to confront the anthropocenic situation (Stiegler 2016, 148).

Generalized automation, robotization, big data, algorithmic governance and all the other socio-technological innovations enabled through digitization, have been put into the service almost exclusively of capitalist valorization, engendering the generalized toxicity of the technical milieu of the spirit [*ésprit*] that terrorizes our age

of nihilism. However, all these innovations can in principle be re-forged into instruments for a new system of global ecological awareness and care through a pharmacological turn, transforming the current toxic milieu serving the nihilistic needs of capitalism into a therapeutic, curative arsenal for the constitution of a new, care-taking industrial economy. Such a non-competitive but cooperative economy, which the French economist Franck Cormerais calls an 'economy of contribution, is' based on a *libidinal* economy in which care becomes the very center of the economic 'value chain' (Stiegler 2013, 88).<sup>4</sup>

Interpreting the purely computationalist and hyper-speculative nature of contemporary capitalist globalization completely controlling, and thereby eliminating, individual and collective protentions (i.e., all openness to the future) in Nietzschean terms, as the accomplishment of nihilism through the devaluation of all values, Stiegler understands this pharmacological turn towards a new economic and noetic system of valuation centered on care as a 'transvaluation of values' (Stiegler 2016, 9). Its intent is to break with capital's destructive hold over the protentional horizons and creative and imaginative potentials of humanity and to inaugurate a new *epoche* in which the process of organological *becoming* [*devenir*], which is currently poisoning all three organ systems and deteriorating the planetary *oikos* as a result, can be re-appropriated and adopted for inventing and constructing a new way of life and a new *future* [*avenir*], which is thought by Stiegler as an *exit* from the Anthropocene into what he has proposed to call the *Neganthropocene*, a notion, as we would like to show here, that strongly resonates with Sloterdijk's idea of a homeotechnological turn.

Employing a terminology derived from thermodynamics, Stiegler has started to conceptualize the 'logic' of organology and pharmacology within the context of his thinking of the Anthropocene with the notions of entropy and negentropy, giving them a much broader meaning than solely the physical one, and applying them to all processes of becoming and, more specifically, of individuation, be they physico-chemical, vital, psychic, social or technical. Regarding entropy, Stiegler finds his scientific and economic support from the work of the Romanian economist Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, as well as the Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger. As the

latter proposed in 1944, the maintenance of life demands not only energy but also a maintenance of low entropy, and therefore we can probably say life itself is a negentropic force. Georgescu-Roegen draws an analogy between thermodynamics and economy. For him, values such as natural resources are considered to be of low entropy, and wastes are considered to be high entropy (Georgescu-Roegen 1986). The economic process is always an entropic process. If thermodynamics in physics concerns the material flow, economy analogically concerns the flux of the enjoyment of life based on the use of exosomatic instruments. The concept of exosomatization surely resonates with exteriorization that we have discussed above, and Stiegler attempts to go further by showing that it is possible and necessary to produce a negentropic economy through a re-organization of the exosomatic instruments, namely a new organogenesis.

Anthropic life as a technical form of life that is not just organic but also organological, Stiegler argues, is both negentropic and entropic since technics as an irreducible *pharmakon* can accentuate and accelerate both negentropy and entropy (ibid., 31). Negentropy as a thermodynamic concept very briefly refers to the order as well as the potentiality in a system or process, whilst entropy means disorder and loss of potentiality. Interpreting the generalized toxicity of the current organological configuration in terms of an entropization (and thus disindividuation, dissociation and proletarianization) of all the processes of human individuation giving rise to the toxification and deterioration of our planetary ecology, Stiegler characterizes the Anthropocene as the *entropocene* to (ibid.). Overcoming it explicitly calls for a *negentropic turn* in the thoroughly organological condition of the *anthropos*, which has until now been largely neglected in philosophy (although, arguably, sensed, even in all its gravity, by the late Heidegger through his notion of enframing) but presents itself for the first time *as such* with the Anthropocene, imposing itself as *the* question par excellence.

This negentropic turn should be understood as a *neganthropic* turn, inaugurating the *neganthropocene* and calling for a new figure of the human that Stiegler calls the *neganthropos*, imagined as arising from a new organological configuration constituting a new global culture and political economy in which all human activity,

first of all in the noetic domain, will be governed and motivated by the criteria of negentropy and where the new 'value of values' will be negentropy (ibid., 33), allowing the process of anthropogenesis to become a process of neganthropogenesis.

A crucial element in this turn, as already stated, is a pharmacological reinvention and reappropriation of the digital network technologies – the 'digital organology' – and their automatizing capacities precisely for the purpose of *dis*automatization and *de*proletarianization in order to overcome the systemic stupidity and structural carelessness imposed by these networks through the capitalist exploitation of those capacities, which only breeds more entropy, stupidity and impotence.

As such, the Internet could become the support of a new, global organological intelligence, knowledge and capacity-to-act necessary to overcome the Anthropocene and usher in the neganthropocene. Of course, the whole technosphere should ultimately experience a negentropic turn in this sense and in this respect, and Stiegler argues that we might be living through an 'organological chrysalis' (ibid., 156) at the moment in which all three organological dimensions are metamorphosed simultaneously. Given the truth of the anthropocenic condition interpreted in a strong sense, this would entail nothing less than a veritable metamorphosis of the Earth's biosphere into an engine of negentropy again. Since humans have become the dominant geological (f)actor and have thereby entered the Anthropocene, anthropogenesis *as* technogenesis has become the crucial biospheric process, and this means that technology, and in particular the way in which it affects the energetic play of entropy and negentropy in the biosphere, 'constitutes the matrix of all thought of *oikos*, of habitat and of its law' (ibid., 28).

### **Comparative Analysis of Sloterdijk's and Stiegler's Diagnosis and Therapy**

What both Sloterdijk and Stiegler very much seem to appreciate in Heidegger, is the growing insistence in his later work on the fundamentally *ambiguous* nature of

technology, i.e., of its ontological-aletheiological essence, famously encapsulated in his reference to the quasi-mystical Hölderlinian phrase that 'where the danger is, the saving power grows as well' and that it is precisely the danger of technology's essence which harbors the saving power. Yet whereas Heidegger thinks of this saving power in a purely ontological sense, Sloterdijk and Stiegler re-interpret it in a more ontic or empirical sense, or better in an ontico-ontological sense, to refer to the ambivalent nature of concrete technologies vis-a-vis human existence.

In a sense, we could say that both perceive the Anthropocene through the lens of Heidegger's idea of enframing, and re-interpret his famous notion of the turning in an 'onto-anthropo-technological' sense as a fundamental epochal transformation of our relation to being and beings that the anthropocenic condition is imposing on human being-there. Yet, unlike Heidegger, they consider this relation as technological from the origin and therefore think of this transformation as an essential change *in* our technical relation to being and beings and not as a turn *away* from this technical relation towards an allegedly more original and supposedly non-technical 'abiding within' or 'enacting of' the ontological difference.

More originally, for Stiegler, this turn should be thought of as an organological turn from an overwhelmingly entropic configuration of the three organ systems that constitute the *anthropos* to a negentropic one, via a 'pharmacological turn' of the global (mnemo)technical milieu. Sloterdijk conceives of it as a turn from al-technology to homeotechnology which, given that it denotes a technology that co-operates and co-immunizes intelligently and cautiously with the intelligent, immunitary and informational processes and mechanisms present in the biosphere itself, can also be considered a negentropic curative.

For both also, we could argue, the Anthropocene itself evokes in a certain way, and simultaneously, the greatest danger and the greatest saving power, in the sense of being a culmination point in the unfolding of enframing – or what Stiegler calls the 'event' of industrialization as the conquest of fire through the thermodynamic machine, and which Sloterdijk designates as modernity's 'total mobilization' (Ernst

Jünger), or its fossil-fuel based 'kinetic expressionism' – which provokes a crisis, an 'urgency' in being-there's understanding of being and therefore in being itself (comparable maybe to Heidegger's *Not des Seyns* yet more concrete). This presents both a *need* and a *chance* to accomplish a radical anthropotechnological turn, a *bifurcation* as Stiegler has put it most recently, in the anthropic adventure Heidegger called *Dasein*, a nege/ant(h)ropic or homeotechnic bifurcation in our technological *modus vivendi* on the still largely unknown planetary body we have discovered to exist and depend upon.

What both authors emphasize is that today the Earth's biosphere has become thoroughly implicated in the anthropic process of organological becoming (Stiegler), or spheropoietic immunization (Sloterdijk), and this means that, in Stieglerian terms, it has been affected by and drawn into the ambiguous organo-pharmacological destiny of the human species, currently suffering the entropic, toxifying tendency of industrialization (and lately hyper-industrialization), giving rise to the world-wide ecological crisis. In a way, the whole biosphere is in the process of becoming an organological system or an 'anthroposphere', becoming as such conditioned by the entropic-negentropic ambiguity of the *pharmakon*.

Both obviously acknowledge the destructive effects of technological enframing on the biosphere, although Stiegler lays much emphasis on the fact that it is first of all the noetic and libidinal potential of human subjects and collectives, and that means their very *attention* for the world and for others, that is deteriorated by the industrial (read: capitalist) organology, ecological destruction being 'only' its inevitable consequence. Meanwhile, Sloterdijk does not really seem to recognize this problem of what Stiegler has termed the 'global attention deficit disorder' resulting from capitalist 'psychopower', or at least he does not give it much attention in his reflection on the Anthropocene, although he recognizes the dangers of the 'mass frivolity' and ego-centered hedonism in which today's consumer-subjects are mostly absorbed (Sloterdijk 2013, 228) and once emphasized that our future destiny on the planet would depend on what he called 'higher metamorphoses of the attention coalitions' of humanity (Sloterdijk 1993, 376).

For all their critique of industrial technology's destructive record so far, both thinkers also believe that the only solution to this destruction can be found in the very capacity of industrial technology *itself* to counter its own destructive tendency and heal its nihilistic legacy, provided that it is *intelligently* and *completely* transformed from a *destructive* into a *constructive* power, and (as emphasized foremost by Stiegler) from a *desublimatory* into a *sublimatory* force. As indicated already, Sloterdijk suggests that the techno- and noosphere added to the Earth's naturally evolved geo- and biosphere as a result of anthro(techno)genesis amounts to a potentialization of the Earth such that its 'carrying and sustaining capacity' might be increased substantially, even to the point of multiplication, on the condition that it permutates (homeotechnologically) from exploitation of the Earth to co-production with it (Crutzen et al. 2011, 108-9).

Of course, this is *prima facie* no more than a bold conjecture, inspired no doubt by Buckminster-Fuller's *Operation Manual for Spaceship Earth* (published in 1968), but it is nevertheless, for Sloterdijk, anthropogenetically supported by the expansionist, 'antigravitational' and extremely improbable spheropoietic history of our species. As the neotenic and 'deficient' animal par excellence, the human is a structurally overburdened being yet also endowed with unlikely surpluses resulting from a long history of technical overcompensation of its 'deficiency' (which Stiegler calls his original default). Technologically multiplying the Earth might be an excessive demand indeed but the human has so far always and only advanced through confronting and overcoming the impossible, as Sloterdijk reminds us (Sloterdijk 2009, 700). In this regard, the Anthropocene really exposes humanity to its ultimate test. This resonates quite strongly with Stiegler's acknowledgement of his proposal for a negentropic bifurcation as being an 'improbable possibility' or 'quantum jump' that is nevertheless absolutely necessary, indeed vital, since it concerns the very survival of human being *as such*.

## Conclusion

It seems that both Sloterdijk and Stiegler put their stakes each in their own way very much on the negentropic potential of a radical transformation of the technological relation of the *anthropos* to the biosphere, an anthropotechnological or organological turn of the noo- and technosphere that is, through which the anthropic process of individuation that has become destructively entropic is being completely metamorphosed into a negentropic process, or from an allo- to a homeotechnological path. For Stiegler such a turn would bring along a new kind of 'human' (or better non-inhuman) being he calls the *neganthropos*, whilst Sloterdijk speaks of a *homo humanus* (a term used by Heidegger in his letter *On humanism* from 1945) who would recognize its being-there on this planet as a technogenic destiny and assume a careful and caring homeotechnological attitude with respect to nature (or Earth) instead of the traditional, dominating allotchnological one. Referring to Whitehead's processual cosmology, Stiegler makes the bet that an inversion of the local transformation of the cosmic order or process of concrescence induced by organological organogenesis, could liberate unprecedented potentials of negentropy within the biosphere, which echoes Sloterdijk's Deleuzian-Fullerian speculations about the possibility of a multiplication of the 'one Earth' via a homeotechnological and biomimetic reconstruction of the technosphere. That this presupposes a radical detoxification of the noosphere (to put it in Stiegler's terms) is only suggested by Sloterdijk, and not theorized in any sense, let alone explicitly researched.

To briefly conclude, the thoughts of the two thinkers are valuable for understanding in a new way the question of technology posed by Heidegger in his famous 1949 lecture 'The Question Concerning Technology'. In comparison, Stiegler has actively engaged with leftist politics while Sloterdijk seems to retreat to a more conservative agenda as we have seen with regard to his stance regarding the refugee politics; this dialogue hopes to create an apparatus which lets us discover certain constellations in their thoughts, allowing us to reflect on the future of the Anthropocene in a profound way – instead of only thinking about the human as op-

posed to nature we suggest rather to focus on the human-nature-technics connection. However, we would like to highlight two questions, which seem to us to demand more clarity in the thought of Sloterdijk and Stiegler. It is not our intention to answer these questions but simply to elaborate as to why they deserve our attention and are in need of future reflection. The first question concerns what 'being healthy' really means. Both thinkers analyse our contemporary technological situation like physicians diagnosing their patients. This figure of the philosopher is incarnated in Sloterdijk's theory of general immunology and Stiegler's general organology. The task for the philosopher-physician figure is to find the symptom in order to then prescribe the patient a remedy. This task implies two further sub-questions. Firstly, what determines a healthy society? Secondly, how can decisions and actions in this regard be carried out in a democratic way? Plato had also faced these challenges, but he skilfully avoided them by giving the task to the philosopher-king in the *Republic*.

The second question concerns an ethics for the Anthropocene. This question has been touched on in, respectively, Sloterdijk's immunology and Stiegler's pharmacology. However, there is also a certain ontologization of technics in their concepts in universal terms. Anthropologists such as Philippe Descola, Bruno Latour, Tim Ingold, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and Roy Wagner, however, are proposing an ontological pluralism (Holbraad & Pedersen 2017), intended to encourage the diversity of ontologies that are foundational to different cultures, for example the non-modern concept of nature found in some Amerindian tribes (Descola 2013). We can (should?) see this proposal of a 'multinaturalism' or 'ontological pluralism' as a challenge to the still universal onto-anthropological discourse of technology embraced by Sloterdijk and Stiegler. This challenge immediately raises the following question: will not their ontologization of technics go in a direction that is opposed to ontological pluralism and which enforces a global technological culture that will eventually become homogeneous? And should we therefore not completely reopen the question of technology again, and, instead of limiting our analysis to the legacy of Heidegger, namely by understanding technology as either Greek *technē* or modern technology, start to think in terms of a multiple cos-

motechnics (Hui 2016)? It is precisely because neither *technē* nor modern technology is able to account for the technics in pre-modernized China, Japan, India, Amazonia, etc., in which we can generally identify a unification between cosmos and ethos through technical activities. If, as Crutzen claims, the Anthropocene began with the industrial revolution, it is the realisation of the homogeneous industrial technology which has dominated all other forms of cosmotechnics on the earth and turned the cosmos into a mere techno-scientific system (Heidegger's *Gestell*); it also actualizes contemporary globalisation by constituting a global axis of time in favour of synchronization and efficiency, depriving the temporal dynamic of localities. If we want to overcome the Anthropocene and embrace another globalisation that respects ontological difference, it is necessary to understand the limits of modern technology as well as to revive a multiplicity of cosmotechnics through an earth-oriented reappropriation of both modern technology and non-modern cosmologies. The two questions of societal health and an ethics for the Anthropocene are related to each other, since technology – we assume – is also the medium of ontologies across different ethnic groups and cultures, and ontological pluralism is fundamental to our anthropocenic future and to the necessary reframing of the technosphere. It seems to us that the ontologization of technology in the philosophy of the twentieth century demands a renewed self-scrutiny seen against the backdrop of the Anthropocene and in view of the multinaturalism evidenced by contemporary anthropology.

## Notes

1] See for an extensive discussion of the various alternatives for the Anthropocene in particular Bonneill & Fressoz 2016.

2] It is obvious that both Sloterdijk's and Stiegler's conceptions of the *anthropos* are deeply influenced by earlier strands of philosophico-anthropological thought that go back to Herder's designation of the human as the 'orphan of nature' and Nietzsche's idea of the human as the 'still unfinished animal'. In the case of Sloterdijk this is mainly the German tradition of philosophical anthropology of Scheler, Plessner and most importantly Gehlen, whose work is absolutely key to Sloterdijk's thinking of the human and the human-technology relation, but also biologists such as Jakob von Uexküll, Adolf Portmann and Paul Alsberg as well as the famous Dutch anatomist Louis Bolk. In the case of Stiegler

it is principally the paleoanthropology of André Leroi-Gourhan, whose work he encountered through his reading of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. As a matter of fact, there are also many remarkable affinities between Stiegler and Gehlen, e.g., with respect to the latter's notions of the gap [*Hiatus*] between need and fulfillment, the human as the 'deficient being' [*Mängelwesen*] and its corresponding need for technical and cultural compensation as well as continuous self-interpretation.

3] As one of our reviewers rightly remarked, there is certainly a lot of attention in Sloterdijk's work for processes of individuation, or subjectivation, yet it is overwhelmingly focused on individual human beings, as for instance in *You Must Change Your Life*.

4] This economy of contribution is quite different from Sloterdijk's 'economy of generosity', i.e., of the voluntary and abundant spending by the rich, as proposed in *Rage and Time* (Sloterdijk 2012, 28ff), which is rather 'pluto-aristocratic' in nature and inspired by Nietzsche and Bataille, whilst the economy of contribution is more Marxist in inspiration and related to community-based open source and free software models of production and consumption, having affinities as well with the economic ideas of André Gorz.

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## Biography

### Pieter Lemmens

Pieter Lemmens teaches philosophy and ethics at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. He has published on themes in the philosophy of technology and innovation studies, on the work of Martin Heidegger, Peter Sloterdijk and Bernard Stiegler as well as on post-autonomist and post-operaist Marxism (Hardt, Negri, Berardi) and on themes from philosophical anthropology and postphenomenology. His articles have appeared in journals such as *Techne*, *Philosophy of Technology*, *Human Studies*, *Krisis* and *Boundary2*. He translated Stiegler's *Philosopher par accident* in Dutch (2014) and co-edited a book on the philosophy of landscape and place (2011) as well as a volume on contemporary German philosophy (2013), both in Dutch.

### Yuk Hui

Yuk Hui is currently research associate at the ICAM of Leuphana University Lüneburg where he also teaches at the institute of philosophy. He has published articles in periodicals such as *Research in Phenomenology*, *Metaphilosophy*, *Angelaki*, *Parrhesia*, *Cahiers Simondon*, *Jahrbuch Technikphilosophie*, *Implications Philosophiques*, *Intellectica* among others. He is the author of *On the Existence of Digital Objects* (Minnesota University Press, 2016) and *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics* (Urbanomic, 2016), and co-editor of *30 Years after Les Immatériaux: Art, Science and Theory* (Meson 2015).

**Imaginal Interventions:  
An Interview with Chiara Bottici**  
Rob Ritzen

**Introduction**

At times, it feels that reality is only trying to catch up with fiction. ‘What will happen when America has a dictator?’ it reads on the cover of my edition of Sinclair Lewis’s *It Can’t Happen Here*. Published in 1935 the book describes the election of Buzz Windrip as President of the United States by provoking fear and promising drastic economic and social reforms while promoting a return to patriotism and traditional values. Once in the White House, Windrip takes complete control of the government and institutes an American version of fascism (Lewis 1935). Who never had the intuition that fiction and reality are actually more intertwined than we want to admit? It is very difficult, however, to clarify the complex ways in which the political domain and the nexus of images, stories and narratives are indeed interrelated.

Chiara Bottici’s work is precisely an attempt to build up a philosophical framework for thinking about the role of images and narratives in politics. Her book *A Philosophy of Political Myth* develops a philosophy that makes it possible to view political myth as more significant than being merely true or false. Her point of departure takes Blumenberg’s view of myth as not presenting a given once and for all, but as

being a process of continual reworking (Bottici 2007). According to him a narrative must always answer a need for significance in a specific period and context in order to function as a myth (Blumenberg 1979). Bottici recognizes this and argues that myths indeed should be seen as re-appropriations and as the maintenance of images, symbols, stories and narratives that give significance to people’s lives and worlds. As such, people play an active role in the working of myth and are not merely persuaded by them. This also means that there is no clear distinction between truth and unreality.

The discussion between fact and fiction, reality and imagination, truth and untruth has revived again these days. In America and England *post-truth* was elected as word of the year in 2016 and the Society for the German Language nominated a similar word, *Postfaktisch* (Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache 2016). The entry in the Oxford Dictionaries describes *post-truth* as ‘relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’ (Oxford Dictionaries 2016). It seems common sense that people’s opinions, choices and actions are shaped not merely by objective fact but also depend on feelings and mores that give significance to their life and the world they live in. It seems undeniable, however, that these are also conditioned by a prescriptive view of how one would wish human beings to be. In political thought, for example, the view that we needed more rationality in politics has been dominant in the twentieth century, especially since the 1990s, after ‘the end of ideology’. The works of John Rawls (e.g. 1993) and Jürgen Habermas (e.g. 1992) – the successor of Horkheimer and Adorno in the Frankfurt School’s critical theory – are of primary importance in this current of political thought. They presuppose the possibility of rational choices once the structures and processes of decision-making were to be made fair. The underlying belief of their views, however, is that conflicts can be solved through an improvement of civilization and social organization, and settled through peaceful deliberation by way of amicable compromise. Even though their theories are suggested as models for everyday politics however, they could only really be put into effect in a world that, as yet, does not exist.

It is precisely through a recognition of the particular and changing character of politics today that Bottici proposes a new direction in critical theory in her latest book *Imaginal Politics: Images beyond Imagination and the Imaginary* (2014). To anyone who uses Facebook, Twitter or just follows the news these days, it seems harder than ever to figure out what is real and what is not. Mediatization has changed politics in a drastic way, becoming inseparable from images whose omnipresence works on our imagination. Images have to be continually worked on and maintained to secure their reality through sedimentation in everyday thoughts, language, and acts. Yet we also all have the capacity to do the imagining ourselves, to produce images of both existing and non-existent objects, Bottici argues (2014). In *Imaginal Politics* Bottici analyses the relationship between politics and our imaginative capacities as well as the transformation this connection is undergoing today. According to her 'we live in a society of spectacles that rests on the commodification of the imaginal, within which we are all socialized' (Bottici 2014, 192). The book is about what she refers to as the imaginal. This concept enables her to maneuver through the philosophical impasse between imagination seen as an individual faculty and the imaginary understood as our social context. In her view, the imaginal makes space for that which precedes the division between real and unreal as well as that between the individual and the social.

Various authors of the Frankfurt School, such as Adorno, have pointed to the political disposition of imagination by emphasizing the role that society as a whole exercises in the creation of compliant subjects (e.g. Adorno & Horkheimer 1969). These works emphasize the supposed heterogeneity of imagination, but even in the work of Marcuse, where imagination seems to unfold the possibility of freedom, it represents that which does not yet exist and as such remains linked with utopia (e.g. 1980, 1991). Bottici however departs from the work of Cornelius Castoriadis, for whom imagination was the condition for the possibility of reality (Castoriadis 1975). In his view, the imaginary is a field of the undetermined creation of figures, which create the possibility of there being objects. What Bottici calls the imaginal is such a space where figures of the possible emerge. The social functioning of the imaginary, however, is confined by its own symbolic resources, history, and nature. Thus, it is not a space of free imagination but rather the act of imagining a different

distribution of the edifice of the social. As such the imaginary is a social practice – a common struggle.

Out of the tension that arises from this struggle between the already instituted social imaginary and the instituting power of collective self-making emerges the real, according to Castoriadis (1975). Rather than a staging of political ideas, work on the social imaginary seems to be an ongoing process of production. To come back to images, one might see it as a post-production factory, a practice of continuously erasing, adding, re-appropriating and re-associating. In this way, the imaginal is seen by Bottici as a field of possibilities wherein these images of the social are animate. Once "out there" images also start to live their own life. Here Bottici follows Mitchell's view of pictures, understood as complex assemblages of virtual, material, and symbolic elements. Rather than questioning the intentions and views of the maker of the picture, he argues that we should ask what pictures actually 'want from us' (Mitchell 2005). Images thus have an undecided nature, they 'can be either alienating or liberating according to the different contexts' (Bottici 2014, 70). The question of their reality, then, is contingent upon the way we act upon them.

We seem to have forgotten that the political field can actually be changed in unexpected ways and that the rational choice is not always the political choice. For Bottici 'this political world that is full of images seems to lack imagination' (Bottici 2014, 108). In such a constellation, there appears to be no space for imagination, understood as the radical capacity to envisage things differently and to construct alternative political projects. Those who argue that 'another world is possible' are characterized as unrealistic, if not fanatical, and in this way are excluded from the spectrum of viable political options.

If we are to understand politics as whatever pertains to the life we have in common, politics is imaginal because we need an image of the public to make it exist, according to Bottici. Indeed, the relevance of the struggle for people's imagination seems to increase in comparison to the traditional view of politics as a struggle for the distribution of power and the use of legitimate coercion. The link between

politics, and what Bottici has named the imaginal, has been tightened in the technical transformations of contemporary capitalism. Recognizing that the imaginal is elemental to the political enables us to better understand contemporary politics and its manifestations through images, simply because persuasion of- and through people's imagination is recognized as part of politics. It is because of the disqualification of the imaginal as a valid domain of struggle by liberal political theory, and the focus on the center as a "reasonable utopia" by the Left, that the terrain has been left open for experimentation by neofascism. Developing counter-practices of imaginal interventions would be a way to repopulate the imaginal again as a political struggle for a life in common. We cannot ignore it anymore: images no longer simply mediate our doing politics, but now risk doing politics in our stead.

**Rob Ritzen:** It struck me that while your book *Imaginal Politics: Images beyond imagination and the imaginary* is about a world of spectacle and speed, your method of research seems to be out of step with that very world you describe. Can you tell us about your way of working?

**Chiara Bottici:** I am definitely out of step with the world we live in. Philology, Ancient Greek, Latin, Psychoanalysis: they are all dead languages. Yet, precisely for that reason, they can give you a perspective on current life. My method has always been in-between critical theory and history of philosophy. I think that the two of them, critical theory and history of philosophy, are actually two sides of the same coin; whenever we tell a story about the past, we always tell it from the standpoint of the present, but if we want to understand the present, we have to understand how we actually got here, which other roads we missed on the way, and thus, also, possibly whether we can get off this path. That's the reason why I am obsessed with genealogies. The philosophical move both in *Imaginal Politics* and in *A Philosophy of Political Myth* consists of asking: what do we say when we say this or that? And most importantly: how did we come to such a situation where one can say this and that? Why can we say, for instance, "this is the fruit of your imagination" in order to say that something is unreal, if it is true that in Ancient Greek one could say something similar in order to convey exactly the opposite, that

is, that something is real? What do we mean when we say, "this is purely imaginary"? Both theories of imagination and theories of the imaginary, despite their burgeoning, are currently stuck in a philosophical impasse. In order to move forward, we first need to grasp how we got there, what were the material interests that produced such a genealogy, and thus, also identify the potential resources for moving beyond them.

**RR:** Can you further explain what you mean by genealogy? Is it a history, a reconstruction of the past?

**CB:** The genealogical method that I use is not meant to provide a history with a capital H. I am not interested in reconstructing a linear path, and thus freeze a concept into a particular history. My aim is to do exactly the opposite, which is to show the contingency of conceptual formation. This can be done in different ways. One may, for example, try to jump outside the current concept of imagination and start using it to mean something else – let us say, "apple." This can be more or less successful depending on one's position on hegemony and power. Some writers actually have the capacity to do this. Another way of intervening is to build up a creative re-appropriation of a word through a genealogical investigation of its roots. I think this gives you more of a grasp of the constellation at stake, because you build on the contingency of its genealogy. For instance: there are passages of *De Caelo* where Aristotle used the term *phantasia* to mean true vision: how can it be that the corresponding term 'fantasy' now means exactly the opposite? By showing the contingency of conceptual constellations, we are in a better position to transform them. In this sense, the genealogical method is not meant to reconstruct continuity but to emphasize breaks, and thus open alternative roads.

**RR:** You pointed out that there seems to be an impasse in philosophy created by the alternative between the concepts of imagination and the imaginary. Could you explain the difference between these concepts and the tension that arises from them?

**CB:** It is more than a tension; I would say it is a dilemma. The concept of imagination, as it has been developed in our Western tradition, is imbued with what some people call the philosophy of the subject. That is to say, it is imbued with the idea that we are individuals, subjects endowed with a series of faculties; among the latter, on the one hand, we have reason, which is a faculty to produce abstract laws and concepts; and on the other, we have imagination, understood as the faculty to perform ‘all sorts of capricious and illegal marriages,’ to use Francis Bacon’s expression. The concept of the imaginary has been introduced in philosophy precisely as an attempt to go beyond this understanding. Yet, this attempt to go beyond the individualistic philosophy of the subject has at times turned into an equally problematic metaphysics of context. In short, whereas imagination is the individual faculty that we possess, the imaginary is the social context that possesses us. This is a dilemma, rather than a tension or even a contradiction, in the sense that both horns of the dilemma can be true: that is, it can well be the case that we imagine both individually and collectively.

**RR:** How does your concept of the imaginal overcome this dilemma?

**CB:** The imaginal is a space that can be both individual and social. Developing the concept of the imaginal means moving away from the idea that, on the one hand, you have individuals, understood as containers with their faculties, and, on the other, you have contexts, which, in turn, contain individuals. I want to move beyond both these views by including what they each have to say while at the same time taking into account the space in-between. This space in-between is the place images inhabit, independently of who produces them -- socially or individually. The imaginal is a move towards this space which is neither totally individual nor totally social, but which is both individual and social. It is also a space that can be both real and unreal. The idea is to point to a kind of suspension of our presuppositions, so that we can approach this space without a priori assumptions about status of reality of images as well as about their social or individual nature.

**RR:** What do you mean when you say that the imaginal is made of images in the sense of pictorial representations?

**CB:** First of all, I mean that they are (re)presentations, that is, representations that are also presences in themselves. When we say re-presentation we usually mean that an image re-presents an external reality that is outside of the image itself. By speaking about (re)-presentations, I am trying to distance myself from that view. Even in psychoanalysis, there is often a tendency to think of images as signs of another, deeper reality for which the representation stands -- for instance, dreams that stand for deeper unconscious conflicts. Now, the invitation of the imaginal is precisely to suspend this search for something “deeper” and “beyond” images themselves and take images as presences in themselves. This is in general my definition of images. But, for the purpose of my argument in the book *Imaginal Politics*, I decided to focus particularly on pictorial (re)presentations. In that context, I emphasized the visual side of images, although I acknowledged that there are other types of images, such as acoustic, olfactory, and tactile images. And I did so, because in that context I wanted to emphasize the primacy of sight in contemporary politics, with the consequent transformation of the visual that accompanies it in our late capitalist conditions. This is why, even though I maintain a broad definition of images, as both representations and presences in themselves, when it comes to politics, we should pay special attention to the primacy it accords to the pictorial and to the visual side of our capacity to imagine.

**RR:** What is then the relation between images and language in your view?

**CB:** It is very significant that you raise this question. We can hardly speak about images without bringing language in. After the so-called linguistic turn, and under the influence of people like Heidegger in Germany and structuralists in France, there has been an emphasis on the primacy of language for philosophical research. The crucial idea is that we inhabit a world that is made of and through language. Even in psychoanalysis, which is a movement that began with the study of dreams and images that cannot be reduced to simple linguistic descriptions, we have witnessed the growing influence of the linguistic turn. To combat such a trend, I have tried to point to a dimension of images that comes before language. In this sense, I refer to Jungian psychoanalysts who argue that the image is primordial, in the

same way in which the unconscious is: what is the unconscious, if not, and foremost, a stream of images?

**RR:** Is this interest in psychoanalysis and its political usages something that you derived from the Frankfurt School?

**CB:** Yes, but *Imaginal Politics* was also a way to position myself in the field. My first job was in Frankfurt, which for me was first and foremost the city of “the school”: books by authors such as Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse have been crucial interlocutors of my formative years. After the Habermasian turn in critical theory, there has been an emphasis on discursive rationality, that is to say, on the a priori structures of language that mediate doing politics, which is not my primary focus of analysis. In *Imaginal Politics*, I try to look at what is before language and at the role that this “before” plays in politics. To give you an example: take the dispute around the Mohammed cartoons, the image of the prophet, with a bomb in his turban. This cartoon appeared first in a Danish newspaper, therefore in a language notoriously impossible to learn. If instead of a cartoon, this had been an essay or an article, nobody would have cared about it. The whole polemic (and the deaths it provoked) was triggered by the power of images to travel outside of language and outside of language boundaries. This is what I mean by the primacy of the image.

**RR:** Do you think then that images have nothing to do with language?

**CB:** I think there are images that can be reduced to linguistic descriptions and there are even images that you can visualize only through languages, such as the example of a polygon with infinite sides. Yet, I think we went too far with language. There are people who think that images are *just* language. But they do so because they transpose onto them linguistic structures; they say this is a metonym, this is a metaphor, thereby projecting onto images literary categories invented to understand words. Instead, I am trying to point to what is always not-yet-linguistic in images. If you look at children’s evolution, it is pretty clear that they communicate through images well before communicating with words. It is striking how quickly

we forget that. Even in psychoanalysis, with all its emphasis on infantile years, there is an almost exclusive focus on the post-oedipal, post-language phase, with very little work being done on the pre-oedipal. In a way, developing the philosophy of the imaginal means going back to the pre-oedipal stage and asking: what happened before we actually learned linguistic rules? What was the power of images then – and thus, what is left of that power in our adult lives?

**RR:** Let us go back to politics then. The view that politics has always mirrored theological concepts and motives is very widespread in political theory today. Instead, you claim that politics has always been imaginal; could you explain this shift?

**CB:** *A Philosophy of Political Myth* was already an attempt to criticize the increasing influence of political theology. There is the tendency today to consider political theology as the only alternative to a purely rational approach to politics. Those who say that rationalism is not enough and that, therefore, we need some form of political theology commit the mistake of excluding precisely all that is between the two. In the work on myth, I propose considering mythical narratives as one of those things in-between. Sure, we need stories, but not all stories need to be religious stories; not all stories need to depict the world in terms of good and evil, nor do they need to embody questions of life and death -- the general strike, for example, Sorel’s idea that in order to mobilize working-class people you need a big myth such as the general strike. The myth of the general strike tells the story: “if you don’t strike, it is going to be a catastrophe for the working class.” This narrative is a myth, but it is a secular one. The example of the general strike also tells us something about the way in which myth works. A common opinion is that this myth failed. Yet, in New York City, during the Occupy movement, a lot of activists, beginning with many New School students, were occupying the main university building and protesting with posters that called for a general strike, using exactly the same terms and narratives. The slogan they were using was ‘we are all in the same boat and the boat is sinking’; this is just a variant of the narrative Sorel was referring to. This is to say that I am really critical of a political theology revival and of the false alternative between rationalism and political theology that it presupposes: it seems to me that this alternative hides more than it illuminates, and what

it hides is precisely a most interesting space for our political choices. By depicting all that is not rationality as part of this big melting pot of “political theology,” we end up in a night where all cows look equally grey, so you cannot distinguish between things. In this way, the general strike becomes as much of a political theology as does the Messianism of ISIS and the caliphate. What do we have to gain by assimilating all these different things? There are narratives that are more deleterious than others, some which already smell of death from the very beginning.

**RR:** How do you bring together the notions that there is always already a world we enter and therefore a context that shapes us and the possibility of creativity of those who inhabit it?

**CB:** This is a crucial question. How can we be both shaped by the social imaginary we live in and yet be free? The answer is both phenomenological and ontological. Phenomenologically speaking, I argue that precisely in this capacity to produce images that come before the language we learn through socialization, we experience our freedom. One may then ask where is this creativity ultimately coming from? And then we need to provide a more ontological answer, which, in the book, draws inspiration from Hannah Arendt’s statement that natality is the basis of our capacity for action (and remember here that for her, “action” means bringing about the new). Natality constantly brings new bodies, new lives into being, and thus grounds the possibility to initiate something completely new. But maybe we have to take a step back to explain why this banal fact is so important. Do you know why philosophers like political theology so much? It is because they are obsessed with death. There is a tendency in the West to look at death as the defining moment of our existence, and therefore as the moment that is politically most salient. In the Hobbesian paradigm, for instance, we are told that we have to subject ourselves to a sovereign power otherwise we will end up killing each other. Within this perspective, even phenomena such as nationalism become good because the persistence of a nation beyond our death gives us the illusion of immortality. Way too many philosophers, from Hobbes to Heidegger, have been looking at human beings as fundamentally beings-toward-death. In this way, they tend to forget, but also make

us oblivious of, the fact that we can die only because we are born. You can understand why this happens; psychologically speaking, it is almost impossible to remember one’s own birth. Most of the time, we remember it only in the form of trauma. Yet, we can actually constantly witness the phenomenon of other people’s birth. This brings me to another point: death is also a truly individual business, because even if you commit collective suicide, you are still going to die alone, in a very bodily sense of the term. Birth, on the contrary, is always something you cannot choose, and most importantly, it is something that you cannot give yourself: it has to occur in the company of somebody else. This is perhaps the ultimate reason why philosophers like to focus on death much more than on birth: because we control our own individual death much more than we could ever control our own individual birth. But it is also the reason why, following Arendt, I argue that birth should be at the center of our political thinking.

**RR:** There seems to be tension between the constituted power, understood as the sovereign power to inflict death, and constituent power, understood as the power of life to start something new. How do you resolve this?

**CB:** From the point of view of the imaginal, this is the difference between what Castoriadis calls the instituting and the instituted dimension of our capacity to imagine. In fact, as I mentioned before, the reason why I embarked on the enterprise of writing the book *Imaginal Politics* was that I had been obsessed for a long time with the question: “where is the new coming from?” If we are always born in a context that institutes us, where is the space for the new? Where is, if you want, the truly constituent power coming from? I wanted to understand whether there is a possibility of escape. In order to have the possibility of escaping, you need to be able to find a moment when the mechanisms of domination break down and the new breaks in. The imaginal is precisely this dimension where such a break can happen. This can be described by pointing towards phenomena such as art movements and vanguards – even though vanguards no longer exist because avant-gardism became a dominant ideology. But, more in general, we can phenomenologically point to moments of ruptures generated by the unconscious. Yet, as I mentioned before, in order to understand how this can potentially take place, we have to go

back, ontologically, to birth. There are constantly new births on Earth, new human beings who arrive in unexpected ways; they have their own individuality, their own voice, their own faces, their own bodies, and they are different each time. Maybe we will get to a point where this will get completely lost and we will have only clones. But we are not yet there, so there is still space for hope.

**RR:** Could you relate this to the mode of image production today? What are the consequences and possibilities opened to us when the image becomes as pervasive as it is today?

**CB:** In the book, I focus on the capitalist transformation within the current post-Fordist mode of production. Within the latter, imagination is not only a moment in the consumption of commodities (what Marx called commodity-fetishism), but rather a crucial moment of the production process itself. We all have to be creative: participative management, multiple jobs, renewable skills are just a few examples. In the 1960s, people could still say “all power to the imagination” and think it would be liberating. But what is to be done now that imagination has taken all the power and capitalism has subsumed this imperative of creativity within itself? This really is what makes the question of where the new is coming from particularly crucial. In the book, I point towards what I call homeopathic strategy that is a strategy of creative re-appropriation that takes pieces of the spectacle and uses it against the spectacle itself. In another context, for a short piece I wrote for the New School *Public Seminar*, I even spoke of an aesthetic of recycling based on such a homeopathic recipe (Bottici, 2016).

**RR:** Does this mean there is no more original or no more outside of the spectacle as a possible strategy for critique? Is this the basis of the homeopathic strategy you describe in your *Imaginal Politics*?

**CB:** Yes. In homeopathy, you take a small amount of the substance that causes the sickness, and you use it against the sickness itself. This also means that you have to take the same poisonous substances in order to cure what is poisoning you: but in a very small amount and, in particular, through a form adapted to the patient at

stake each time. So every homeopathic remedy has to be adapted to the particular person under treatment. It is not that if we each have a sore throat, then we all get the same substance to cure it. If you have a sore throat, it means something particular to your body specifically, so we have to find the remedy that is most adapted to you.

**RR:** Recent social movements, for example, apart from their use of image re-appropriation, also use the physical occupation of a spatial entity; be it in New York, Tahir Square, or Istanbul. The strategy of recycling seems to be played out at the level of images, whereas the homeopathic strategy seems to bring a bodily aspect with it. Is there a role for something as elementary as having a body in imaginal politics?

**CB:** Yes. Our body is also an image: how do you distinguish between my own body and that of the woman sitting over there, at the reception of the hotel, if not through an image, or perhaps a set of images? Vice versa: I also think that images in their turn are also bodies. To speak about images as something opposed to, or even separate from, bodies, means assuming a form of metaphysical dualism that opposes the mental and the material, the bodily and the spiritual. But when it comes to ontology, I am a Spinozist: for me, there is one unique substance that expresses itself through an infinity of modes. So I think of the Occupy movement or the Arab revolts or the more recent No Border movements as both imaginal and bodily: what are the activists doing, if not occupying a space with their bodily presence and thus also triggering a new image of society?

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(Routledge, 2011, with Benoit Challand) and *The Anarchist Turn* (Pluto 2013, with Simon Critchley and Jacob Blumenfeld). Her short stories have appeared in *Il Caffè illustrato*, while her novel *Per tre miti, forse quattro* was published by Manni Editore in 2016.

### **Rob Ritzen**

Rob Ritzen is a curator and philosopher. He is co-initiator of [That Might Be Right](#), an organization for collaboration and alternatives to the present. He curated: *Between the Sheets: Intimate Experiments, Loving Assembly, Affecting Commons* (2017) a series of assemblies where cultural practitioners presented their work, thoughts and interests in an supportive scenography; *We Tell Stories - An Anthology* (2012) a series of exhibitions which explored the notion of storytelling in artistic practices and the potential to overcome the separation between doer/thinker/spectator; *When Squares [Re]Frame Meaning* (2011) an exhibition on the public square as a place for the production of meaning, inspired by the Arab Spring and the occupation of Tahrir Square.

## **Biographies**

### **Chiara Bottici**

Chiara Bottici is a philosopher and writer. She is Associate Professor of Philosophy at New School for Social Research. She is the author of *Imaginal Politics: Images beyond Imagination and The Imaginary* (Columbia University Press, 2014), *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) and *Men and States* (Palgrave, 2009). With Benoit Challand, she also co-authored *Imagining Europe: Myth, Memory, Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) and *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations* (Routledge, 2010). She also co-edited the collection of essays *The Politics of Imagination*

**Uncomfortable Ethnographies:  
The Politics of Race and the Untimeliness of Critique**  
Sudeep Dasgupta

**Review of: Gloria Wekker (2016) *White Innocence*. Durham: Duke University Press, 240 pp.**

In a recent article titled “The coercive character of our ‘normal’”, Sander van Walsum (2017) briefly refers to the controversy surrounding the Dutch politician and ex-VJ and media presenter, Sylvana Simons. Van Walsum tries to understand the sharp turnaround in the public profile of Simons, from popular media presenter to hated public voice against racism. To the extent that Simons remained *simply* a “coloured” face in media culture, she was popular. But hidden behind that popularity lay the problematic politics of tolerance which Wendy Brown’s (2006) book-length analysis has exposed. For Simons could be popular only to the extent that her race was a commodity and/or an irrelevant aspect of her identity, and not “an issue”. The moment she scathingly brought up the racist and colonial mentality in the Netherlands, the often revolting public attacks against her began. Van Walsum suggests Simons’ exposed the racist assumption that she existed precisely thanks to the public and so should conform to its expectations - that is, shut up about race, and racism, since the Netherlands was not racist. After all, how could she have been so popular if it had been so?

The Simons controversy exposes something particular, and peculiar, within Dutch society. On the one hand, the claim that Dutch society is extraordinarily liberal, open-minded, and yes, that word again, tolerant. On the other, the dramatic rise in racist and xenophobic political populism since the late 1990s. Gloria Wekker confronts this paradox, and its attendant historical precedents, in her politico-economic and cultural genealogy of contemporary Dutch society. As an activist and public intellectual, Wekker’s longstanding involvement in issues around gender, race and sexuality are crystallized in a clearly constructed and lucidly developed series of arguments which in book form confront this paradox head on. This paradox is addressed by Wekker by framing herself as an anthropologist with the goal of “making the familiar world strange” (ix). Wekker’s goal of making the commonplace consensus strange seems appropriate given the claims of incomprehension and denial by which accusations of racism are met.

In the Introduction, Wekker identifies the central object of her analysis, “the white Dutch sense of self”, an ethnographic analysis of which would reveal that “whiteness is not acknowledged as a racialized/ethnicized positioning at all” (2). In making this argument, Wekker connects to a longer intellectual study of whiteness, such as Richard Dyer’s *White* (1997), whose relative invisibility in studies of race and ethnicity kept whiteness as the norm rather than as a subject (and ethnicity) itself worthy of analysis. Specifically for the Dutch case, Wekker argues, whiteness is the effect of “an unacknowledged reservoir of knowledge and affects based on four hundred years of Dutch imperial rule” which structures “dominant meaning-making processes” including, one may presume, the vociferous denials of racism. She deploys Edward Said’s concept of the “cultural archive” (1993) as an analytical tool for understanding how the present Dutch climate around race relations is structured. The terms “imperial rule”, “cultural archive” and an ethnography of white Dutch selfhood are linked thus by Wekker: “a racial grammar, a deep structure of inequality in thought and affect based on race, was installed in nineteenth-century European imperial populations and ... it is from this deep reservoir, the cultural archive that ... a sense of self has been formed and fabricated” (2). And it is this self which she argues is marked by “white innocence”.

The recurrent appearance of the word “deep” should already suggest to the reader that Wekker’s analysis is based on a depth-hermeneutic that begins with and dives below the surface articulations of racial and ethnic discourse in the Netherlands. In revealing the present legacies of the hidden colonial archive, Wekker takes recourse to a primarily psychoanalytical language of “splitting” and “displacement” (4) to explain the processes by which the denial of European history manifests itself in the crises around racism today in Dutch society. This plumbing the depths of Dutch history and the cultural archive however, does not seek to find *one singular cause* for the prevalence of denial in the construction of white Dutch selfhood. Wekker immediately states that she attempts an “intersectional reading of the Dutch colonial archive, with special attention for the ways in which an imperial racial economy” is marked by “gendered, sexualized, and classed intersections” (2). Her intersectional analyses, spread out across the subsequent five chapters, focuses primarily on the western part of the Dutch empire, that is, Suriname and the Antilles. Each of these chapters fleshes out what Wekker identifies as three paradoxes which structure the white Dutch sense of self:

- a refusal to identify with migrants;
- the innocent victim of German Occupation;
- Dutch imperialism.

At first, a reader might find the stating of these elements confusing since they do not seem to name a paradox but perhaps historical “features” of Dutch selfhood. It is here, however, that the sometimes uncertain place of psychoanalysis is important to emphasize, since what Wekker is arguing is that in each of these elements, *a process of denial* is crucial. That is, (1) the historical reality of migration which structures *all* and not just non-white Dutch populations is denied; (2) the Dutch self-image as victim represses the memory of violence and collaboration in the Netherlands which marked the extermination of Jews under the Occupation; and (3) a denial of the crucial importance of Dutch imperialism in structuring forms of white superiority in the Dutch context.

These three denials, Wekker convincingly argues, enable a self-presentation of the white Dutch Self as “innocent”, the central concept through which Wekker develops her analyses in the chapters that follow. In other words, a process of denial helps the positing of a self-image of innocence – and innocence is of course a powerful mode of refusing accusations of racism. The paradoxes she identifies are fleshed out in three “innovations” in her methodology. Firstly, as already stated above, Wekker thinks of race, sexuality and gender together in an intersectional frame. Secondly, she links metropolitan and colonial history in her analyses; and lastly, she links the Eastern and Western spheres of Dutch imperialism. Each of these innovative perspectives are differentially evidenced in the five chapters which follow. The reader thus encounters different features of a complex theoretical and conceptual framework (three paradoxes and three perspectives) being deployed at different levels of intensity in each of the five controversies she constructs.

The first chapter analyzes “case studies of everyday racism” ranging from controversial statements on a Dutch TV talk show to literary analysis of Ellen Ombre’s *Negerjood*. Unlike the other chapters, which primarily though not exclusively fasten on a single object of analysis, this chapter captures in miniature, as it were, both the wide range of Wekker’s field of analyses as well as the conceptual resources she will deploy throughout the book. The importance of psychoanalysis is felt most strongly in this chapter with invocations of Fanon on the European unconscious, and processes of “internalization and splitting” (41). Further, the crucial link between racism, gender and sexuality are brought out through a reading of the submerged effects of the experience of slavery in the work of Toni Morrison (*Beloved*), the work of historian and sociologist Rudolf van Lier (*Samenleving in een Grensgebied*) and historians including Avtar Brah and Laura Ann Stoler.

The second chapter turns to important sites of knowledge-production blessed with the official sanction of being sciences, namely the University and governmental policy-making. The chapter swiftly shifts the focus from the sphere of popular culture (such as TV) to explore the enormous power that the nexus of racism and sexism exerts within government policy-making, the academy generally, and women/gender studies in particular. One of the most important insights Wekker

offers in her analysis of policy-making is the shift from “commensurate participation in society” and “integration, *while holding on to one’s own identity*” (55, emphasis added) to an increasing focus on “*shared values*” (55) and the necessity of integrating migrants into “Dutch society”. In other words, a broader focus on “employment, education, housing and political participation” (55) toward a more egalitarian society has been increasingly replaced by firstly the *identification* of “problem” groups (Turks, Moroccans, Antilleans) and their *integration* into Dutch society. Wekker’s own involvement in different government policy-making organs provides for compelling evidence that “long-standing ideas about and practices with regard to race” (58) structure the aims of policy, the allocation of funds, and the involvement (or not) of relevant, non-white partners in the process of policy-making. Her analyses reveal that the category “woman” is considered white, that “allochtonous women” do not fall within the ambit of “women” while the specific differences *between* allochtonous women are ignored. This colour-blindness regarding gender is then convincingly shown precisely in the area of women/gender studies, where once again the category “woman” does not include women of colour. In this chapter, Wekker’s intersectional focus on class, sexuality, race and gender clearly exposes the compartmentalized functioning of intellectual labour within the University, and policy-making generally.

The third chapter “The Coded language of the Hottentot Nymphae and the Discursive Presence of Race, 1917” fastens on an interesting if little-known case in the history of psychoanalysis in which three Dutch women were treated by the psychoanalyst Dr. J.H.W. van Ophuijsen. Here, the complex processes of identification and displacement become evident in the paradox Wekker identifies in which, while the white, upper-class women, believing they possessed overly developed labia minora, identified with “the supposed morphology of black women’s genitalia”, their doctor, on the other hand, dismissed their claims and persisted in diagnosing them as suffering from “a masculinity complex”. What propelled the doctor’s denial of these women’s racial imaginings, and why was it necessary, Wekker asks, for colonial ideologies of black women’s bodies and sexualities to be read through the lens of *masculinity*? In exploring this paradox fed by denial (the doctor’s) and displacement (the three women), Wekker deploys the

notion of the colonial archive, and the relation between the metropolis and the colony, to show how crucial sites of cultural dissemination, including advertisements, magazines and the World exhibitions, had provided a script through which these white women were exposed “to knowledge about black women and their bodies” (93). Further, Wekker shows how medical-scientific discourse furnished fantasies of the civilized male and the evolutionary higher-placed white race, thus relegating both women and people of colour to inferior positions in both scientific and popular discourse. Wekker convincingly shows how the black female body becomes the over-determined site through which an “explicit discourse on gender and sexuality...was informed by implicit assumptions about racial difference”(106).

It is in the chapter titled “Of Homo Nostalgia and (Post)Coloniality” that the strength of Wekker’s intersectional analysis comes most to the fore, as she moves between a genealogy of the women’s and gay rights movement, the contemporary defence of gay rights, and the disparaged figure of the un-integrated allochthon. The Dutch situation is particularly important here, since the alignment of Left and Right with specific political views gets undone in the wake of xenophobic gay rights and women’s rights discourses. While elsewhere, particularly the U.S., conservative social views issue from a combined homophobic and racist milieu, Wekker rightly argues that in the Dutch case seemingly feminist and gay rights’ discourses are closely aligned with malignant notions of cultural alterity and racial/ethnic/cultural inferiority. Hence the subtitle of the chapter ‘Or, Where did all the Critical White Gay Men go?’. Wekker rightly argues that women’s emancipation was understood in far more expansive terms including issues of education, employment, child care and sexual violence. The gay liberation movement, on the other hand, argues Wekker quoting existing research, was marked by “the depoliticized character of Dutch gay identity” (116) which was “anchored in domesticity and consumption” (Mepschen et al 2010, 971) and closely linked to normative notions of citizenship and exclusionary notions of nationalism.

Wekker fleshes out this normativity by exposing how a white European understanding of gay identity underwrote both the identification of sexuality of

people from other cultures as well as the demand for integration through the rhetoric of exposure in “coming out” discourse and speaking in public. Noting the virtual absence of “white and black, migrant and refugee lesbians” from the current political landscape, as well as the class-blindness of sexual rights discourse, she argues that “the assumption that speaking about one’s sexuality is only natural and thus good for everyone” (121) remains unquestioned. This equation between sexual acts and sexual identity which undergirds sexual rights discourse is singularly white, middle-class, European. Yet, precisely by claiming the status of former victims of homophobia, a nostalgic discourse of defensiveness against minorities is deployed by Dutch gay men.

In addition to an unexamined normativity, Wekker deploys Said’s concept of the cultural archive to situate the ambivalent relationship of desire and disgust which structures much public discourse of white Dutch gay men. The ethnic other (in this case, young men of Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds) is both desired and vilified. Wekker refers to a controversial interview with the late Pim Fortuyn, an openly gay man whose political campaigns targeted primarily those in the Netherlands having an Islamic background. Fortuyn’s stated desire for young Moroccans was matched by a dismissive stance toward their seemingly backward attitude - that is, denial of their homosexuality. Wekker insists that the raced and classed discourse of the white right to avail itself of the bodies of women and men in colonial history emerges precisely in this dialectic of desire and disgust. Thinking through gender, race and sexuality allows Wekker to situate the nostalgic gay rights discourse against minorities within a comparative perspective (with the women’s rights movements) and through an identification of the persistence of colonial modes of thought on coloured bodies and their sexualities. Her analysis punctures a developmental discourse of sexual and gender rights from an intersectional perspective, fleshing out in greater detail an earlier critique by Judith Butler (2008) of the link between history, time and sexuality.

The last full chapter of the book explores the increasingly virulent reactions in Dutch society to the critique of the figure of Black Pete (*Zwarte Piet*), often identified as a Moorish servant to a white bishop, Sinterklaas. This cultural

tradition accompanied by much festivity is celebrated annually on December 5. *Zwarte Piet*’s integral place within *tradition*, particularly one enjoyed primarily by *children*, Wekker convincingly argues, helps explain the impassioned responses any anti-racist critique of this figure precipitates. Here the claim of “innocence” is most clearly seen since the figure of the innocent child enjoying a well-established Dutch tradition functions as a mechanism whereby the claim of racism can be denied. Wekker situates a series of controversies, including the cancellation of an artistic intervention around *Zwarte Piet* by two artists invited by the Van Abbe Museum in 2008, to then analyze the defensive (and aggressive) responses elicited primarily on the internet to critiques of the figure of *Zwarte Piet*. Deploying Paul Gilroy’s notion of “postcolonial melancholia”, Wekker frames the discourse that claims *Zwarte Piet* is part of “our” (Dutch) tradition as a melancholic response of sadness where something valuable from colonial history is threatened by the presence of the unwanted outsiders within. Coupled with the continual references to children, and thus a discourse of innocence, the structure of denial and then displacement (foreigners do not understand “our” tradition) generates an aggressively defensive discourse of an innocent white Dutch identity.

Wekker’s argument that whiteness exempts itself from charges of racism through claims of innocence is innovatively built up by moving her analytical gaze across a very disparate range of objects – from TV talk shows, psychoanalytical case study, popular controversies around tradition, literary analysis, and institutional critique. As a method, taking this very varied set of objects as scenes for analysis, often punctuated by tellingly painful and pungent personal anecdotes, makes for refreshing reading since no one disciplinary paradigm with its own privileged object domain prevails. Structuring this wide-ranging series of analyses through the triple-paradox framework helps the reader to situate her attention even as analytical objects shift rapidly. The use of psychoanalytic language (denial, repression, splitting, internalization, displacement) is iconoclastic, since Wekker’s engagement with psychoanalysis is primarily through its generative power evidenced in the work of writers such as Fanon and Césaire, rather than through explicit invocation of Freud and/or Lacan as “masters” of the discourse.

Wekker's book-length study of *White Innocence* is untimely. If timeliness means being appropriate, and exhibiting the norms of propriety, then *White Innocence* speaks to an interlocutor – the white Dutch self – who would find the book inappropriate, and confronting. And that is precisely the book's aim. One could argue that being untimely, in this sense, is precisely what critique means. Wekker's scholarly intervention in an increasingly fraught public debate around race exhibits precisely the right sort of untimeliness, that is, puncturing the complacent, consensual and self-deluding image of a small, liberal and innocent nation whose culture is far from racist.

*White Innocence* is untimely in another sense too. There might be a sense for some readers going through the book that "of course" would be the obvious response to an argument which claims that colonial history and deep structures of racism, misogyny and homophobia structure the white self – that is, a sense of "haven't we heard this all before?" But this is precisely where the book is untimely in a productive and critical way. For in the *Dutch* context, as Wekker clearly shows, it is precisely a *denial* of colonial history, with its attendant intellectual, affective and discursive consequences, that marks the contemporary multicultural scene of politics. The book then is not repeating an argument in an all-too familiar context. Rather, it is inserting a critical analysis into a national context which has strenuously denied any implication in the dark history of colonialism and racism. These two forms of untimeliness make Wekker's intervention particularly useful in a Dutch political climate unwilling to look critically at its own self-image, as well as for theorists of race beyond the Netherlands who seek to understand how racism manifests itself quite differently in different geo-political contexts.

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## Biography

### Sudeep Dasgupta

Sudeep Dasgupta is Associate Professor in the Department of Media Studies, the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) and the Amsterdam Centre for Globalization Studies (ACGS) at the University of Amsterdam. His publications focus on the aesthetics and politics of displacement in visual culture, from the disciplinary perspectives of aesthetics, postcolonial and globalization studies, political philosophy, and feminist and queer theory. Book publications include the co-edited volume (with Mireille Rosello) *What's Queer about Europe?* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2014), and *Constellations of the Transnational: Modernity, Culture, Critique* (New York and Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2007). He is organizing the forthcoming ACGS conference "Postcolonial Mediations: Globalization and Displacement" in 2017.

## Water

Matthijs Kouw

### **Recensie van: René ten Bos (2015) *Water, een geofilosofische geschiedenis*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 352 pp.**

In *Water* wordt het gelijknamige element geanalyseerd vanuit het standpunt van de geofilosofie, waarin het denken en de wereld waarbinnen het denken zich voltrekt met elkaar verstrengeld zijn. Deleuze en Guattari, geofilosofische denkers pur sang, thematiseren het landschap waarbinnen het denken plaatsvindt en stellen dat het landschap meedenkt met het denken. Subject en object kunnen volgens de geofilosofie niet naast elkaar worden geplaatst en hebben een wederkerige relatie tot elkaar. Ten Bos schaart zich bij deze geofilosofische standpunten door te stellen dat water meedenkt met de filosofie: 'We zouden het moeten aandurven dit denken in water onder te dompelen' (16). Wat volgt is niet alleen een exposé over hoe het denken door toedoen van water vorm heeft gekregen, waarbij diep wordt gegraven in de geschiedenis van de filosofie, maar ook een pleidooi voor de relevantie van geofilosofisch denken. Als water voortdurend doorsijpelt in het denken, zoals Ten Bos betoogt, hoe kan dan de geschiedenis van de filosofie worden herschreven en welke rol is daarbij weggelegd voor een geofilosofische manier van denken?

De wortels van geofilosofisch denken zijn te vinden bij Thales – verguisd door Aristoteles en Plato, maar omarmd door Nietzsche omwille van Thales' overtuiging dat de natuur uit zichzelf tot ons zou kunnen spreken (25). Thales stelt dat water het leidende principe, de zogenaamde *archè*, is van alle realiteit. Dit 'waterige' begin van de filosofie duidt op een meer ongewisse bodem van het denken, dat geen vaste grond aan de voeten krijgt. Het denken verdrinkt in de wereld die het overspoelt. De werkelijkheid is volgens Thales daarom het beste te begrijpen als een 'eeuwig-durend worden' (36). Na Thales hebben filosofen geprobeerd het vlietende karakter van water weg te denken, bijvoorbeeld door te stellen dat de mens alleen de werkelijkheid kan doorgronden als hij bereid is God als het eerste principe te erkennen (32). Het stromende karakter van de eeuwig wordende werkelijkheid bedreigt de zuiverheid en stabiliteit van de polis, aldus Plato. Door het mogelijke binnendringen van 'verkeerde zeden en gebruiken van overzee' is de polis volgens Plato gebaat bij een 'groot redder en goddelijke wetgevers' (52). Immers, een stad die zich openstelt voor de zee kan in moreel verval komen. Plato draagt de 'manier van de logos' aan als een methode die 'het wezen of de essentie die alle veelvoudigheid moet verbinden', zodat men door een wereld kon koersen die werd gezien als 'onmiskennbaar divers en veelsoortig' (66). De meervoudigheid van de wereld kan tot uitdrukking worden gebracht wanneer deze wordt ingeperkt. Volgens Ten Bos kan de democratie de meervoudigheid van de wereld blijvend benadrukken: 'Het geruis van de democratie is een echo van het geruis van de zee' (71). De democratie is in fundamentele zin anti-logos omdat zij kan leiden tot een voortdurend hernieuwd omarmen van de meervoudigheid van de wereld, waarmee zij steeds opnieuw de eenheid van de polis ter discussie stelt. Democratie kan volgens Ten Bos worden gezien als een voortdurend experiment.

Zoals opgemerkt heeft het denken over de natuur (en het water zelf) te maken gehad met een zekere afkeer van het denken van Thales, oftewel thalassofobie. Wie denkt dat Herakleitos' bekende uitspraak *panta rhei* of 'alles stroomt' doelde op een diepe poëtische meditatie op de manier waarop fysieke processen verlopen komt bedrogen uit. Herakleitos reflecteert op de manier waarop water doorlopend zijn stemming beïnvloedt: 'Wie bijvoorbeeld in een rivier stapt om haar te doorwaden, wordt zelf ook doorwaad' (84). Water heeft voor Herakleitos ook een meer sinistere

associatie met duisternis en slapen: in beide gevallen geeft men zich over aan een bepaalde situatie. Uiteindelijk leidt dit tot een ambivalent beeld van water, wat ons kan doden door verdrinking maar daarnaast ook dient als brandstof voor het leven en de ziel. In plaats van het denken onder te dompelen in water verkondigt Plato een aards of *chthonisch* perspectief waarbij de logos kan voorkomen dat het denken ten onder gaat in het onwezenlijke, veranderlijke en vloeiende water. Vanaf het begin van de jaartelling neemt de thalassofobie een meer extreme vorm aan wanneer gnostici de zee zien als 'een materieel symbool voor de duisternis waarin het goddelijke verzonken ligt' (108). Het christendom, de gnosis en het neoplatonisme verbinden een toenemende angst voor de kosmos met de overtuiging dat heil alleen kan worden gevonden door een speurtocht naar de eigen ziel, al dan niet met behulp van de troost die men kan vinden bij de medemens. Dante verkondigt in deze tijd een heel andere visie. Water en aarde, zo betoogt hij, vermengen zich op allerlei manieren en hebben daarom geen vastomlijnde contouren of grenzen (113). Dit staat haaks op de rigide onderverdeling van de elementen in het in die tijd dominante aristoteliaanse wereldbeeld. Hieruit rijst de vraag of water nu hoger ligt dan de aarde of juist lager dan de aarde. Dante kiest geen positie in dit debat en lijkt zich neer te leggen bij de 'essentiële onverklaarbaarheid van de verhouding van water met de aarde' (120). Water verschijnt aan het denken 'als iets volstrekt ondoorgrondelijks' (Ibid.). In plaats van het vinden van de ultieme oorzaak van de verschijnselen in de wereld, roept Dante op het denken opnieuw op de dieptes van het water af te stemmen door empirisch onderzoek.

Dit betekent echter niet dat het denken over water haar apotheose bereikt met het empirisch onderzoek dat heeft geleid tot de molecuulformule  $H_2O$ , die slechts een deel van de betekenis van water kan duiden. Ten Bos meent dat er altijd 'een residu aan onrust blijft hangen' wanneer we water uitpuddend proberen te beschrijven' (123). Pogingen water van betekenis te voorzien vanuit een geofilosofisch perspectief dienen van dit bewustzijn doordrongen te zijn. Meer gepast is een vorm van 'verlegenheid' (124). Ten Bos meent dat water moet worden gezien als rizoom, een niet-hiërarchische en niet-doelmatige 'wortel'. Daarbij beroept Ten Bos zich op het werk van wetenschappers die werkzaam zijn op het gebied van de hydrologie

en chemie. Deze wetenschappers hameren zelf voortdurend op het grillige en onvoorspelbare gedrag van water.

Water verhoudt zich slecht tot eigendom en vormt de inzet van conflicten tussen natiestaten. Vanaf de zestiende eeuw leidde de overtuiging dat de paus de enige en absolute autoriteit in de wereld was tot hevige oorlogen. Hugo de Groot ontwikkelt in deze tijd een volkenrecht dat stelt dat ieder volk de zeeën zou mogen bevaren en handel zou mogen drijven met andere volken (167). De Groot zag dit idee als een heilige wet of natuurwet die op geen enkele manier door politieke machten terzijde mocht worden geschoven. Bovendien zag hij de zee als ongrijpbaar, onbegrensaar en onuitputtelijk, wat het onmogelijk maakt de zee als eigendom te zien. Op vergelijkbare wijze stelt filosoof Carl Schmitt dat aanspraken op eigendom en soevereiniteit alleen gelden op het land. Schmitt hekelt de nadruk op het land in de politiek omdat water en zee volgens hem de oergrond van het leven zijn. Vanaf het moment dat de Engelsen kiezen voor een maritiem bestaan ontstaat volgens Schmitt een ommekeer van het ruimtebeeld, waarbinnen de wereld niet louter vanuit het land maar juist vanuit de zee werd gezien. In het liberaal-kapitalisme kan de zee worden gezien als een 'gladde' ruimte zonder lijnen, inkervingen en punten. In deze ruimte kan men alleen overleven door te navigeren met behulp van geprojecteerde lijnen en meridianen. Hoewel het kapitalisme de 'gladheid' van de zee met lijnen wenst te doortrekken, zou het nooit zonder die gladheid kunnen functioneren (185). Daar waar het kapitalisme tracht de ruimte te construeren waarbinnen 'vrije' handel kan plaatsvinden, vindt men zowel een 'proliferatie van regels en technieken' als 'een toenemende wanorde' (Ibid.).

Aan de hand van Peter Sloterdijks werk bestrijdt Ten Bos Schmitts rigide scheiding tussen land en zee. Sloterdijk hamert op de amfibische kwaliteiten van mensen. Door te duiken staat het ik niet langer tegenover de wereld in een 'confronterende' zijnswijze, maar lost het ik op in een 'mediale' zijnswijze in wat Sloterdijk een 'sfeer' noemt (197). Voor Sloterdijk staat duiken gelijk aan verbinding, deelname en enthousiasme. Een ander element dat refereert naar water in Sloterdijks denken is de notie van eiland, dat wordt gezien als een 'utero-technisch' project waarmee 'de wereld op afstand wordt gehouden en mensen erin slagen dicht bij elkaar te zijn'



(203). Hoewel de mens aan overbrugging doet, zijn afzonderen en isoleren ook typisch menselijke eigenschappen. Sloterdijk stelt diegenen die aan overbrugging doen ten voorbeeld. Juist de mensen die vaste grond en zekerheid onder de voeten willen krijgen, zijn verliezers in deze tijd van globalisering. Deze mogelijkheid tot verbinding kan uitnodigen tot een romantisch beeld van de zee. Michel Serres wijst echter op het feit dat de zee ons gehele sensorium overhoopgooit: op zee weet je niet of je iets hoort of ziet en soms kun je je op je gemak voelen en dan weer volledig van slag raken. De zee is zowel intiem als vijandig. De grote witte walvis, het lijdend voorwerp van de toorn van kapitein Achab in Herman Melvilles *Moby Dick*, kan worden gezien als symbool van het kapitalisme dat zich aandienende in de tijd van Melville (237). Marx, eveneens getuige van het opkomende kapitalisme, duidde de nieuwe productieverhoudingen van zijn tijd in termen van stroming en circulatie, waarbij geld als smeermiddel optreedt. Wat betreft de rol van geld schrijft Marx dat 'geld enerzijds een soort beknopt overzicht van alle dingen levert, maar anderzijds die dingen ook afwezig maakt omdat men er alleen nog maar de ruilwaarde van ziet' (240). Ten Bos betoogt dat 'de karakterloosheid en betekenisloosheid van de zee lijken op die van wit en die van geld. Alleen in een wereld waarin niets vaststaat, kunnen karakterloosheid en betekenisloosheid ongeremd gedijen' (241). Kapitalisme gedijt daarom goed in een maritieme ruimte, wat in het geval van Melville wordt gerepresenteerd door de witte walvis.

De zee kan worden gezien als 'mineraalrijk land dat vraagt om rationeel beheer en duurzame ontwikkeling' (253). Dehistorisering en depolitisering van de zee, volgens Ten Bos inherent aan het kapitalisme, moeten worden bestreden omdat daarvoor het begrip van de relatie tussen mens en zee ons ontglipt. Inzichten uit de 'exacte' wetenschappen en de menswetenschappen kunnen helpen de relatie tussen mens en zee te duiden, waardoor de samenleving tot het inzicht kan komen dat ecologische crises niet met eenvoudige chirurgische ingrepen te genezen zijn. Het verkondigen van sombere boodschappen is echter niet lucratief voor de wetenschap, omdat dit niet aantrekkelijk is voor het bedrijfsleven, die de noodzakelijke financiering voor onderzoek levert. Een 'blauwgroene' vorm van kapitalisme lijkt het huidige denken over de zee te beheersen: 'Blauw is de gedachte dat de zee nog steeds een sky-high belofte inhoudt ... groen is de gedachte dat diezelfde zee nog steeds

een onuitputtelijke en vruchtbare levensbron is' (265). Tegenwoordig moet de waarde als levensbron worden gezien als 'onuitputtelijke geldbron', waaruit een 'kapitalistisch delirium' spreekt: 'Aan de ene kant wil de ondernemer de bestaande wereld ontstijgen en aan de andere kant wil hij de controle erop niet verliezen' (Ibid.). De ecologische destructie die deze houding tot gevolg heeft, kan de zee transformeren in de primordiale zeeën van honderden miljoenen jaren geleden, waar alleen eencelligen overleefden. Hoewel Ten Bos hier duidelijk zinspeelt op politiek-normatieve aspecten van de filosofie, wordt het niet geheel duidelijk hoe filosofen zich aan de hand van geofilosofische principes kunnen mengen in ecologische vraagstukken. Het denken mag zich weliswaar vol overtuiging in de diepte van het water storten, maar hoe kunnen filosofen ervoor zorgen dat beleidsvormingsprocessen een vergelijkbare koers gaan varen?

Na de beschrijvingen van de verhouding tussen de poëzie en de wetenschap, het overweldigende karakter van water dat het denken heen en weer slaat tussen uniformiteit en multipliciteit en de invloed van kapitalistische productieverhoudingen op het denken en water komt Ten Bos in het laatste hoofdstuk van *Water* tot een besluit met een meer methodologisch-conceptueel karakter. Hoe kunnen we 'het vloeibare' (285) begrijpen wanneer ons verstand, zo meent bijvoorbeeld Kant, eigenlijk helemaal niet daartoe is uitgerust? De (zuivere) rede trekt de mens op het droge, vanwaar de wereld kan worden gekend en gewaardeerd. Michel Serres roept op juist af te dalen in de diepte. Daarbij is weliswaar een rol voor de rede weggelegd, maar volgens Serres hoeven we ons niet te beperken tot 'punten, lijnen en vlakken' (287). Er is een vloeiende strategie nodig die wetenschap en ethiek met elkaar verbindt. Volgens Serres kan de notie van het *clinamen* van Lucretius een eerste aanzet geven tot een meer fluïde wetenschap. Het *clinamen*, een immanente vorm van verandering in de natuur, verduidelijkt dat objecten voortdurend kunnen worden beïnvloed door zaken die buiten hen plaatsvinden (294). Serres duidt het universum als een 'meervoudigheid van stromen' (295), waarbij er geen essentieel verschil tussen lokaal en globaal bestaat: 'Omdat het hele universum constant meedeint met alle kleine en grote gebeurtenissen, vervalt het hele verschil tussen beide' (Ibid.). Mens en wereld deinen mee met de wereld. Een nautische ethiek openbaart zich: 'Leer accepteren dat instabiliteit de wet is. Omarm complexiteit. Begrijp dat ethiek

identiek is met de natuurkunde' (297). In plaats van de wereld in een onwrikbare orde te plaatsen, laveert de wijze wetenschapper tussen 'evenwicht en afwijking' en streeft daarbij naar 'meedeinen, meeveren, meegaan' (298). Het verlangen van de rationaliteit naar eenheid is illusoir omdat deze slechts van buiten aan de wereld kan worden opgedrongen.

De meervoudigheid van de wereld is goed te zien in water. In het meervoudige 'hangt alles met alles samen en zoekt alles verbinding met alles' (300). Uiteindelijk is de wereld als water: ongreepbaar, onbegrijpbaar, hooguit zintuiglijk waarneembaar. Het geofilosofische project van Ten Bos lijkt voornamelijk gericht te zijn op de mate waarin de overweldigende en onpeilbare mysterieuze diepte van water wordt geaffirmeerd. *Water* laat overtuigend zien dat de geschiedenis van het denken een worsteling behelst tussen affirmatie en een thalassofobisch indammen van water. Ten Bos haalt Sloterdijk aan om de affirmatieve levenshouding die tegenover water kan worden ingenomen te verduidelijken: 'Wie duikt zegt ja en zoekt de verbinding, de deelname, het enthousiasme. Wie opduikt om adem te halen, zoekt de scheiding, de kritiek, misschien zelfs de distantie. Mensen zitten, als we Sloterdijk mogen geloven, altijd vast in deze ambivalentie' (201). Het affirmeren van de disruptieve kracht van het water kan voortdurend op de klippen lopen en is kwetsbaar. Daarmee rijst de vraag hoe de affirmatieve kracht van waterig denken kan doordringen in de zaken die Ten Bos problematiseert, zoals ecologische kwetsbaarheden en de wetenschap. De lezer die verwacht concrete richtlijnen voor interventionistisch waterig denken aan te treffen, zal teleurgesteld worden. In de hydrologie en hydrodynamica is inderdaad, zoals ook Ten Bos betoogt, een sterke mate van erkenning van de grilligheid van water te vinden. Water laat zich volgens hydrologen niet zonder meer 'vangen' in een model en elke kwantitatieve beschrijving van water moet aan een zekere sceptis worden onderworpen. Daarbij moet wel worden opgemerkt dat deze erkenning beperkt kan blijven tot diegenen die water op wetenschappelijke wijze bestuderen. Beleidsmakers die harde beslissingen moeten nemen over de veiligheid van waterkeringen zullen minder snel geneigd zijn het vlietende karakter van water te omarmen. De vraag blijft niet alleen in hoeverre en hoe ruimte kan worden vrijgevochten voor het denken zodat het zich kan onderdompelen in het water, maar ook welke krachten een dergelijke onderdompeling be-

lemmeren. Ten Bos levert een krachtig en erudiet pleidooi voor een instrumentarium dat gevestigde manieren van denken ter discussie kan stellen. Het komt er nu op aan dit instrumentarium los te laten op de wereld.

## Biography

### Matthijs Kouw

Matthijs Kouw is werkzaam bij Sim-CI in Den Haag, waar hij werkt aan simulatiemodellen van kritische infrastructuren en steden. Matthijs studeerde Wijsbegeerte en Wetenschapsdynamica aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam. In 2012 promoveerde hij aan de Universiteit Maastricht op een proefschrift over mogelijke gevaren van modellering in het waterbeheer en civiele techniek. Na het afronden van zijn proefschrift werkte Matthijs achtereenvolgens bij het Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving en het Rathenau Instituut aan slimme steden en verschillende risicovraagstukken, zoals klimaatverandering en cybersecurity.

**Can the Right of Necessity Be Both Personal and Political?**

Temi Ogunye

**Review of: Alejandra Mancilla (2016) *The Right of Necessity: Moral Cosmopolitanism and Global Poverty*. London: Rowman and Littlefield International. 140 pp.**

In *The Right of Necessity: Moral Cosmopolitanism and Global Poverty*, Alejandra Mancilla argues that agents whose basic rights to subsistence are not realised should be entitled to “take, use and/or occupy the material resources required to guarantee [their] self-preservation, or the means necessary to obtain the latter” (4). This *right of necessity* (RoN hereafter) is, according to Mancilla, a “concrete expression” of the basic right to those material provisions necessary for survival (70). When an economic order guarantees its members secure access to the content of their subsistence rights (food, water, shelter, etc.), the exercising of the RoN would be limited to rare emergency cases. But in a world such as ours, in which very many human beings experience severe and chronic deprivation, resort to the RoN would be far more common. In this sense, the RoN serves as a check on any system of property rights: if a socioeconomic regime does not create conditions within which the basic right to subsistence is fulfilled for all, then those whose rights remain unmet – or others acting on their behalf – are entitled to act to guarantee their survival. “Demanding otherwise from them would be unreasonable, as it would be

irrational for them to accept”, according to Mancilla (68). The RoN is a Hohfeldian “*privilege* compounded by a *claim* against others (including the owners of the targeted property) not to interfere with the agent’s actions” (85 italics in original). Defining the RoN as a privilege means that those who act to secure their survival have no duty not to do so. Combining it with a duty held by others not to interfere with the legitimate exercising of the RoN strengthens a right that would otherwise be weak.

The principal audience for this argument is moral cosmopolitans: those who hold that all individual human beings are equally the ultimate units of moral concern. One of Mancilla’s general aims is to rebalance the conversation on cosmopolitanism and global poverty in favour of a focus on “what the needy may be morally permitted to do by themselves and for themselves to fulfil or satisfy their basic right to subsistence” (3). Such a shift is indeed sorely needed: most contributions to the global justice debate to date have focused on the duties and (in)action of the well-off, treating the global poor simply as passive recipients of aid or sympathy. Another sense in which Mancilla’s contribution is very welcome is the careful and considered historical recovery of the arguments for the RoN provided by Aquinas, Grotius, and Pufendorf. These accounts demonstrate that RoN has a rich but as yet under-recognised historical pedigree.

In general, Mancilla’s case for the RoN is compelling: I found little to disagree with in many of the arguments she offers. Issues remain, nevertheless. Here, I focus on three. The first two relate to the assumptions she makes; the third to the likely practical and political implications of her argument.

**Feasible conditions**

Mancilla makes four normative and two factual assumptions, upon which the rest of her case for the RoN relies. Her normative assumptions are moral cosmopolitanism, the existence of the basic right to subsistence, the acceptance of the institution of property, and belief that any reasonable system of property rights must

satisfy everyone's basic needs. I will not discuss Mancilla's normative assumptions as I have no quarrel with them. Her factual assumptions are more controversial, however. The first is that "certain minimally favourable material and technological conditions hold at the global level, that make it not utopian but feasible to have everyone's basic right to subsistence satisfied" (16).

The problem with this assumption is that the feasibility of the satisfaction of subsistence rights for all is not fully determined by 'material and technological conditions' alone. As John Rawls says, when it comes to a society ensuring that all of its members enjoy human rights, while "money is often essential", "political culture" is "all-important" (Rawls 1999, 108-109). Rawls gives the examples of famines that occur as the result of political and institutional failure, as opposed to simple lack of food (1999, 109). He also refers to the difference that the position of women can have on population levels and the sustainability of the economy (Rawls 1999, 109-110). Attitudes about the status of women are often deeply embedded within cultural and religious practices, and not necessarily reducible to 'material and technological conditions'.

Rawls' comments on this topic are far from perfect or complete. In particular, he does not elaborate on the specific ways a regime can be burdened by unfavourable conditions, and the sense in which political culture is implicated in each of these ways. The general point is clear, however: in order to make the realisation of the right to subsistence truly feasible, a society would need to have a political culture that was hospitable to it. It is not clear that conditions globally can currently be characterised in this way (which is not to say that it can never be), even if one did accept that anything like a single global society existed. This takes us to the next problem.

### A basic global economic structure

Mancilla's second factual assumption is "that there is such a thing as a basic global economic structure of which most human beings take part" (16). I take the reason

why she needs this assumption to be that it provides a single global entity which can be held responsible for global poverty. Mancilla follows Thomas Pogge in interpreting human rights as "direct moral claims against social institutions imposed on oneself" (73). However, the crucial question Pogge does not consider in great depth, according to Mancilla, is what those whose human rights are not fulfilled are entitled to do for themselves while their institutions are failing. Mancilla regards her defence of the RoN as offering an answer to this question.

There are two problems with Mancilla's assumption of a 'basic global economic structure', both of which suggest it is redundant. First, it is not at all clear that she needs it in order for the most striking implications of her argument to win through. Even if it was not the case that most human beings participated in a single economic order, the global poor would still presumably be able to exercise the RoN within their local, national, and regional settings. Indeed, all of the cases Mancilla cites as examples of when something close to the RoN has been invoked in the real world (the *callamperos* in Chile, for example, or the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* in Brazil) are distinctly local in character (87-88).

The second problem is that, even if you accept Mancilla's assumption of a 'basic global economic structure', it does not follow from this that such a structure itself has the capacity to guarantee the subsistence rights of all. The reason for this is that a 'structure' is not necessarily an institutional agent – that is, a macro-level agent able to regulate relations amongst other sub-level agents in line with a given pattern or goal. The presence of capable institutional agents is necessary if individuals are to have secure access to the content of their subsistence (and other) rights. The paradigmatic example of such an institutional agent in our current world is the state, but capable global institutional agents need not be exact replicas. A number of global justice theorists – including Henry Shue, who Mancilla cites approvingly throughout the book – have persuasively argued that it is precisely the *absence* of capable institutional agents which helps to explain the present levels of global poverty and inequality (Ronzoni 2009; Scheffler 2008; Shue 1988).

If Mancilla believes that the current levels of global economic interaction and interdependence is equivalent to the existence of a set of global institutional agents capable of regulating relations between all individuals such that all enjoy the basic right to subsistence, then she is mistaken. Alternatively, if she holds that the right to subsistence can be realised in the absence of capable institutional agents, this would be mistaken too. Indeed, given that Mancilla herself accepts that basic rights generate “final duties” to “create conditions under which the legitimate exercise of the right of necessity by the chronically deprived simply disappears” (76), it is not clear that the assumption of a ‘basic global economic structure’ is doing any useful work in her account at all.

### Practical and political implications

The final problem with Mancilla’s argument for the RoN which I will discuss relates to its practical and political implications. This has two dimensions: personal implications for the agent exercising the RoN, and political implications for wider society. On the personal level, one question Mancilla deals with is whether those invoking the RoN can use force if others interfere with the exercise of their right. Mancilla’s response is disappointing (87-88). First, she distinguishes between violence and resistance with no explanation of what this distinction consists in. Then, she simply rules out violence *a priori* with an approving reference to Pogge where there should be an argument. Finally, she gives three examples of real world cases where the RoN has been successfully claimed without resort to violence, presumably to show that such results are possible. But the question is not whether it is *possible* to successfully exercise the RoN non-violently, but whether non-violence is all that can ever be *justified*. Given the current scale of deprivation globally and the inevitability of the resistance from those whose property will become vulnerable to appropriation by the needy, a more nuanced discussion of the characteristics of violence (directed at what, for example?) and fuller defence of pacifism is necessary. Does Mancilla really wish to rule out any resort to violence even if peaceful re-

sistance is itself met with obstinacy and force? Such a move would have the unfortunate implication of rendering the ANC’s campaign against Apartheid unjustified, for example. This takes us to the political dimension.

As Mancilla rightly emphasises throughout *The Right of Necessity*, the overall aim of moral cosmopolitanism must be the establishment of conditions within which all human beings enjoy secure access to the content of their basic subsistence (and other) rights. For this reason, her discussion of what she calls the “Remedy Worse Than Disease objection” – which suggests that accepting the RoN would have highly negative consequences for social order and lead to a worse state of affairs for all, including the poor – is very interesting (106-107). Mancilla’s response is two-fold. First – and rightly, I think – she questions why the burden is placed on the needy to sacrifice their subsistence for the sake of the status quo. Second, she suggests that the exercising of the RoN may in fact spur the global wealthy to take steps to reform the global order in line with cosmopolitan aims. Mancilla concedes that this as an “empirical claim” (107) – the problem is that it seems an implausible one. The few examples of real-world cases where peaceful invocations of the RoN have led to semi-permanent social reform do not evidence her claim; they are striking precisely because they are atypical. While it may not lead to near-anarchy, as Mancilla’s interpretation of the objection assumes, the RoN may lead to the overall aim of moral cosmopolitanism being harder, as opposed to easier, to realise. The likely response of those in power must always be borne in mind when engaging in action which seeks to have wider political effects, especially when these effects involve cost for those with power. This is part of the reason why resistance takes the form of civil disobedience (e.g. non-violent, public, etc.) in some contexts (see King 1991), and why the justificatory bar for violence is so high (which is not to say that violence can never be justified, as Mancilla suggests). Without a more careful discussion of the likely political implications of the RoN, Mancilla has no basis to claim that it could bring us closer to the overall cosmopolitan aim. It looks just as – perhaps more – likely to do the opposite.

Despite the problems just noted, Alejandra Mancilla's *The Right of Necessity* is a timely, well-argued and original addition to the literature on global justice in general, and moral cosmopolitanism in particular. The most significant contribution it makes is to shift attention to the agency of those typically considered the victims of injustice. The central question we are left with is a pertinent one: what if the actions necessary to secure immediate needs are in tension with the overall cosmopolitan aim?

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## Biography

### Temi Ogunye

Temi Ogunye is a Political Theory PhD candidate in the Government Department at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His research explores how to people should respond to different circumstances of injustice.

**Dialectics of Secular Revelation:  
Jameson's Cognitive Mapping Aesthetic, Thirty Years On**  
Marc Tuters

**Review of Alberto Toscano and Jeff Kinkle (2015) *Cartographies of the Absolute*. Alresford: Zero Books, 311 pp.**

How do we, as the increasingly atomized individuals of capitalist societies, formulate a collective relationship to capital when conditions seem constantly to mitigate against such an effort? This is, perhaps, the central question of Western Marxism, a once vibrant tradition of critical thought, for which it has been claimed that the American literary critic Fredric Jameson today stands as the foremost living exemplar (Anderson 1998, 74). In *Cartographies of the Absolute*, Alberto Toscano & Jeff Kinkle take Jameson's conceptual framework to be axiomatic, along with most of the political and philosophical foundation of Western Marxism; and while their intention is not to comment directly on Jameson's hermeneutics, the book could nevertheless be understood as *the* single most sustained response, within the entire field of cultural analysis, to Jameson's challenge, made at the conclusion of his famous essay on postmodernism, that "[t]he political form of postmodernism, if there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial scale" (1984, 92). In addition, then, to touching on a few of the book's own unique contributions, in what follows

I will be sketching an outline of a particular discursive tradition with which, I will argue, this book finds itself deeply enmeshed.

Referred to as both his most influential concept (Tally 1996, 399) and his least defined concept (Jameson 1992, *viv*), Jameson initially formulated the notion of cognitive mapping as a kind of metaphorical remedy to his metaphysical diagnosis of subjective disorientation under conditions of late capitalism — as an imperative to represent the hidden totality of class relations through the development of a new aesthetic form. Formulated, in part, as a kind of dialectical response to the epistemological relativism characteristic of intellectual trends in American academia at the time of writing in the mid-'80's, Jameson was also responding to formal preoccupations in the field of architecture, thus orienting much of his analysis to a study of the built environment, which he saw as the "privileged aesthetic language" of late capitalism, due to its "virtually unmediated relationship" to capital (1984, 79 and 56). In essence, Jameson's project could be understood as a continuation of the basic problematic of Western Marxism, as inaugurated by Georg Lukács (1971), concerning the dialectical relationship between, on the one hand, the divisive symptoms of capitalism that result in social class divisions and, on the other, attempts to represent the a priori totality underlying those same processes.

If Toscano & Kinkle's approach can be identified with Jameson, then it can also be counter-posed to the work of Bruno Latour, another highly influential yet very different type of thinker who likewise tends often to be preoccupied with metaphors drawn from cartography. Indeed, the opening chapter of their book puts forward a rather in-depth critique of Latour's incapacity to comprehend the larger dynamics of capitalism from within the bounds of a methodology (derived in part from ethnography) that refuses to accept the a priori existence of any so-called "social explanations" (2005, 1) including, most notoriously, the existence of capitalism itself (1993, 173). Whereas Jameson's cartographic epistemology is an attempt "to think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system" (1984, 80), for Latour "[t]otality does not present itself as a fixed frame, as a constantly present context; it is obtained through a process of summing up, itself localized and perpetually restarted" (2006, NP). While it is perhaps understandable why

Toscano & Kinkle would find Latour's methodological commitment to the small-scale ill-suited given the scale of ambition in *Cartographies of the Absolute*, at the outset of the book their polemical stance against Latour seems to preempt the possibility of exploring more productive tensions in the dialectical relationship between different cartographic modes of thought. Whilst this opening polemic is not necessarily representative of the book as a whole, it does however demonstrate their scholasticist fealty to a particular type of hermeneutics. In conclusion, then, whilst their book is original — even, at times, idiosyncratic — in the way that they have selected their objects of study, I will argue that in terms of their methodology Toscano & Kinkle are, in fact, quite traditional.

Jameson first expanded upon his initial call to develop “an aesthetic of cognitive mapping” (1984, 89) at a famous conference on the topic of “Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture” (Nelson & Grossberg 1988), and then in a book-length version of the postmodernism article in which he described the challenge of cognitive mapping in quasi-gnostic terms as a revelation of “the true economic and social form that governs experience” (Jameson 1991, 411). Jameson was, in effect, writing a kind of artistic manifesto *avant la lettre*, calling for: the development of “a whole new technology, which is itself a figure for a whole new economic world system” (1984, 58); the development of a pedagogical art-form, whose objective would be “[t]o teach, to move, to delight” (Nelson & Grossberg 1990, 347); but also, calling for experimentation at the formal level, instructing his readers to forget “all figures of maps and mapping” in order to “try to imagine something else” (Jameson 1991, 409). Thirty years later, then, Toscano & Kinkle have set out to assess the extent to which Jameson's call has been answered, producing what amounts to a taxonomy of the “cartographic turn” in the arts of cinema, television, photography, and installation. Matching Jameson in terms of scope, interdisciplinarity and theoretical ambition, Toscano & Kinkle read these cultural artifacts “symptomatically” as material traces of a late capitalist world system in crisis. In separate chapters centered around the critically lauded cable series *The Wire* ('02-'08) as well as the now forgotten genre film *Wolfen* ('81), for example, Toscano & Kinkle read depictions of the decaying inner-city landscapes of Baltimore and New

York City — both, respectively, around the period of a major financial crisis — as commentaries on what Marx called the “vampire-like” quality of capital.

Whilst Jameson was evocatively vague in his initial discussion of the cognitive mapping concept, he would go on to apply the term to describe his own method of cultural analysis, when, in an analysis of 1970s Hollywood ‘conspiracy films’, he stated that “in the intent to hypothesize, in the desire called cognitive mapping — therein lies the beginning of wisdom” (1992, 3). Jameson's approach here was itself indebted to Louis Althusser's technique of symptomatic reading — an exegetical approach to cultural analysis concerned with the “necessary invisible connection between the field of the visible and the field of the invisible” and the “psychological weakness of ‘vision’” (1970, 19) that was also influential in the field of film criticism in the 1970s. Believing capitalism, then, to be the ultimate referent and true ground of being, a kind of actually-existing metaphysics whose fundamental laws could be mapped, Jameson's cognitive mapping method — the fundamental framework for Toscano & Kinkle's whole approach — was therefore to render visible the noumenal economic base hidden in the cultural artifacts of the superstructure.

Referencing a 1928 letter to Henry Ford in which the Colombian poet José Eustasio Rivera claimed that, if rubber could speak “it would exhale the most accusing wail” (193), Toscano & Kinkle discuss, for instance, an approach that they refer to as “materialist prosopopoeia” (43) as a name for a cognitive mapping aesthetic that attempts to show “that the causes of ‘our’ social life [lie] elsewhere, in the processes of extraction, dispossession and subjugation that constitute imperialism and colonialism” (16), discussing, as exemplary, a piece by the British contemporary artist Steve McQueen entitled *Gravesend*, that uses the medium of video installation to portray the commodity chain of rare earth minerals in electronics manufacturing. While attempts at debunking the seeming ‘bargains’ of globalized capitalism has, as of recent times, become a kind of cause célèbre of liberal virtue — with campaigns for ethical consumerism attempting to bring a measure of transparency to the working conditions in Chinese smart-phone factories, and regulatory schemes for corporate social governance seeking, on paper at least, to redress the problem of conflict minerals — Toscano & Kinkle view the former as weak and ineffective



symbolic actions that, in attempting to render commodity chains transparent, paradoxically represent “a new kind of opacity” (201). They are thus fascinated by attempts to render multinational global capitalism visible whilst at the same time being fundamentally suspicious of the contemporary discourses of ethical transparency.

In the same manner that Jameson performed symptomatic readings of 1970s Hollywood conspiracy films as another example of a cognitive mapping aesthetics, Toscano & Kinkle also survey a selection of Hollywood films from the 2010s addressing the global economic crash of 2008 in which they are much less interested in the quality of their narratives than they are concerned with decoding how, for example, in the filmic diegesis, “the inanity of built space (alternating between the triumphant banality of the glass skyscraper and the tawdry iteration of ‘luxury apartments’ and sundry cubbyholes) are ‘realistically’ depicted in these films” (169). According to Georg Lukács — the former theologian, who, as we have seen, may be thought of as a cornerstone in the Western Marxist hermeneutical framework — it is precisely at these moments of transition and crisis that the fundamental gap between the false appearance of things and their underlying reality becomes apparent. While Toscano & Kinkle draw from this framework when they speak of “crisis [as] a... *synthetic rupture*, potentially rendering visible the unity between seemingly disparate domains” (79), they are also critical of what we might call the post-industrial sublime, as for example represented in the photography of Lewis Baltz or Edward Burtynsky, which depict the effects late capitalism has on the built environment and on landscapes. Here, by contrast, they celebrate the works of Allan Sekula, to whom the book is dedicated, as well as those of Harun Faroki, visual artists, both of whom frame and narrativize their own work in critical essays that Toscano & Kinkle celebrate as attempts to rethink visual imagery as indexes of the machinic operations of global-spanning logistical processes — as opposed to naïvely realist modalities of representation.

While Toscano & Kinkle do speak of an idealized “realism shorn of didacticism” (193), as with Jameson’s original concept, their approach to aesthetics seems to value the pedagogical above all else. In so doing they might be said to re-stage the

same relationship of inequality between those who know and those who passively absorb an image, a notion of passive spectatorship that Jacques Rancière (2009) associates with Guy Debord — another Western Marxist figure who stands behind Jameson and Toscano & Kinkle, with Kinkle having, in fact, written his PhD on Debord. Against the ideal of critical art that he identifies with Debord — to “turn the spectator into a conscious agent of world transformation” through “build[ing] awareness of the mechanisms of domination” (2009[2004], 45) — Rancière advocates an approach that appreciates the capacity of art to open up a world of phenomenological experience that reveals the fundamental contingency of how the sensible world is distributed, a political promise that he argues may be contained with even the most self-secluding, and seemingly apolitical, of artworks. Embracing polemics over ambivalence, Toscano & Kinkle’s emphasis on the role of theory in producing univocal symptomatic readings — as well as in their preference for ‘critical’ artists— seems to lead to the conclusion that the aesthetic of cognitive mapping that Jameson had called for some thirty years previously, today finds its realization not in the field of aesthetics so much as in the interpretation of aesthetics in line with the same old framework that had called for the development of a new form of aesthetics in the first place. Within that framework, Jameson had initially conceptualized cognitive mapping as a kind of antidote to his famous postmodern diagnosis of subjective dislocation, in which he announced “a mutation in the object, unaccompanied as yet by an equivalent mutation in the subject” (Jameson 1984, 80). Perhaps then, when, in their conclusion — in spite of the many postmodern equivocations that they, like Jameson, have made regarding the fundamental partiality of perspective — Toscano & Kinkle speak wistfully of a future “politics with a totalising impetus” (241), the ultimate forebear of this call to critical awareness in face of unimaginable complexity might be understood less in terms of Western Marxism than of Kant’s third critique, according to which it is in the ultimate inadequacy of representation, in cartography’s very failure to systematically divide the boundlessness of the absolute, that reason becomes intuitively palpable and, through this critical act, that the individual comes to make sense of her true location in the world.

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## Biography

### Marc Tuters

As an educator at the University of Amsterdam's department of New Media and Digital Culture, through his affiliation with the Digital Methods Initiative (DMI) and as director of the Open Intelligence Lab ([oilab.eu](http://oilab.eu)), Marc Tuters' research seeks to ground media theory in an empirical engagement with the materiality of new media infrastructure. While his past research contributed to the field of new media art discourse by developing the concept of "locative media", his current work looks at how online subcultures use digitally-native formats to constitute themselves as political actors, with particular attention to the so-called alt-right.