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Inhoudsopgave

Editorial

Dear reader,

The creation of this edition has been special to me in many ways. Although such a statement may sound cliché in an editor-in-chief's first (solo) editorial, it is undeniably true. I am grateful to work alongside a fantastic team of talented individuals who each fill a valuable role at *Splijtstof*. In our discussions on some of the wonderful pieces you will soon read, *Splijtstof*'s role in providing a platform for writers of all philosophical disciplines and backgrounds became evermore apparent.

Every writer and editor embodies a unique perspective, shaped not only by their research but also by their experiences and values. When these perspectives are given space to interact, we can begin assembling a rich tapestry of ideas to challenge, inspire and expand our understanding of the world. As a publication platform affiliated with an academic institution, those of us at *Splijtstof* are presented with an important opportunity to use our platform to help encourage a more inclusive community. Accordingly, this edition welcomes a range of connections between *Splijtstof* and new, philosophically relevant perspectives.

52-2 is not a themed edition. However, as you read the following pieces, I invite you to reflect on the importance of spaces where a variety of voices can be heard - or read, as intended by those of us at *Splijtstof*.

Sophie Ingle

Editor-in-Chief

Photo: Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Nijmegen for Palestine: Demands for Radboud University

Charlie Harden-Sweetnam

Nijmegen for Palestine (NFP) has made the point clear: Radboud must suspend ties with Israeli universities. And yet our university does not listen. In order to give NFP the space to express themselves and provide a detailed and nuanced account of their demands, I interviewed some members, and asked them about their organisation: who is NFP, and what do they want?

There are, in this discussion, a few individuals to introduce:

- Jihad is a Palestinian man and student at the HAN University of Applied Sciences in Nijmegen.
- Mike is a Jewish activist and student of Medical/Human Biology at Radboud University in Nijmegen.
- Gijs is a Dutch activist and student of Philosophy, Politics and Society at Radboud.
- Anya Topolski is an associate professor of Philosophical Ethics and Political Philosophy at Radboud. She is also the founder of the NGO Another Jewish Voice (Belgium). She was consulted on these topics.
- I am a British man and activist, also a student of Philosophy, Politics and Society at Radboud.

On the 17th of November Jihad, Mike, Gijs and I sat down to discuss the ongoing war in Palestine and the aims of NFP. Nijmegen for Palestine is a democratic collective of students and activists united in their shared commitment to activism in solidarity with Palestine. In light of the terrible crimes committed by Israel and Hamas, their operations and membership have expanded.

This article was written in order to publish an exposé on the organisation of NFP in their own words. The demands for Radboud University are not solely formulated by NFP, but rather by the Students for Palestine organisation and aimed at many Dutch universities. NFP has tailored their demands slightly to meet its needs from Radboud.

Like Jihad, Mike and Gijs, I too am deeply concerned with the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Genocide is to be defined here as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" (Segal 2023). Segal's article, published in *Jewish Currents,* ominously concludes: "Israel's goal is to destroy the Palestinians of Gaza." We are therefore united in our aims to question Radboud's official position and decision

to remain silent in the face of genocide. It is important to us all that we engage with the university and pressure it to act in light of the ongoing war in Palestine.

This article will outline the four key aims of NFP with regards to Radboud University:

- Taking an active stance because there can be no neutrality.
- Transparent disclosure and severance of all official ties with Israeli universities.
- The establishment of direct, institutional, and official ties with Palestinian students and universities.
- To encourage academic freedom and discussion, and an end to the academic censorship.

Non-Neutrality

The first demand of NFP is to take a moral stance and condemn genocide. While academics from various faculties are actively educating students, Radboud as a formal institution makes no comment. In a statement on 20th October, Radboud claimed to be "concerned about the armed conflict in Israel and the Palestinian Territories" and to "speak out against any violation of human rights." (Radboud 2023). Radboud spoke out against Russia following its invasion of Ukraine, actively condemning the war (Radboud 2022). So there is a strong precedent for taking an active stance in relation to politics. "Russian institutions were boycotted, and the language used in statements was very direct and unambiguous. But when it's done by allies of the of the Netherlands, it's not the same," says Mike.

Genocide is to be defined here as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" (Segal 2023).

My first question to the activists was therefore: how do you perceive this "neutral" stance?

Mike: "Neutrality promotes the "idea that the status quo, the state of affairs of the last 75 years, is neutral. Then a lot of colonial violence is just hidden behind a fog of so-called neutrality."

Gijs: "By aligning themselves with the status quo, Radboud fails to recognise what is happening in Palestine. It implicitly agrees with the frame that Palestinians are the aggressor and that Israel's actions are legitimate forms of self-defence. This completely ignores the Nakba, 75 years of ethnic

cleansing, the ongoing settling of the West Bank, the brutal imprisonment of 2 million people in Gaza, and the fact that Israel's actions in Gaza right now effectively amounts to genocide."

Leading academics of the discipline of settler-colonialism (Salamanca et al 2012), academics at Radboud (Topolski 2023) and academics at Israeli universities themselves (Bashīr and Goldberg 2019) all resound with NFP in condemnation of the ongoing genocide in Palestine. The list of academics from Radboud and the wider academic community joining in condemnation is long and loud.

Radboud, however, chooses to project impartiality.

"A lot of colonial violence is just hidden behind a fog of so-called neutrality."

Jihad: "This is not neutrality, but inhumanity."

It's an alignment with the status quo of slow genocide. "This status quo", he added, "is that the Netherlands does not recognise Palestinian identity. The Dutch government denies Palestine as a country's legitimacy. As Radboud has set its own precedent of actively condemning war and human rights violations, neutrality over Palestine actually means to side with this narrative, to stand with the government's position, which is firmly pro-Israel, and to stand with Israel, in ongoing genocide."

I therefore asked NFP, what exactly do they want in terms of university positioning?

Mike: "Clear official positioning. In line with the calls of other universities in the Netherlands, there must be acknowledgement of the fact that there is a genocide happening. Condemnation of the war. Like they did with Russia."

Academic Boycott

The second demand of NFP is the disclosure and freezing of all official academic ties with Israeli universities. Dutch universities in the 1980s boycotted apartheid South Africa, and Radboud effectively boycotted Russia in 2022 (Radboud 2022). This shows, again, that there's a precedent set.

I therefore asked NFP: Why do you call for the disclosure of ties?

Mike: "There is a lot of information concerning the connections that we just don't know, because it is it just not available. So we just don't know in which way Radboud is cooperating with Israeli institutions."

Gijs: "Universities in the Netherlands (Radboud is a little different because of its status as a special university), have democratic elements. We

have the student council here, and the point is to have some democratic decision making for students. But that doesn't work if we can't know anything about the actual policy of Radboud. If everything is opaque, how are we going to make a decision about something that we don't know about?"

"What exactly does this academic boycott entail?" I asked.

Mike: "Academic boycott in the sense of no cooperation with Israeli academic institutions, even if it isn't specifically on projects facilitating genocide, that it is still cooperating with institutions whose purpose it is to maintain these settler-colonial relations."

My next question was: "Why do you want to freeze these ties?"

Gijs: "Israeli universities support their governments, just as Dutch universities are of their government, of course. They support the Israeli military with their research so we find it very problematic that our university, democratic, where we think we should have a say, supports an ongoing genocide."

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement clearly documents Israeli Universities, partner universities of Radboud, in their complicity with the Israeli state and its actions in Palestine. "Tel Aviv University, for example, has developed tens of weapon systems and the 'Dahiya doctrine' of disproportionate force employed by the Israeli military" (see Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, n.d., and Khalidi 2014). To sever ties with these institutions means to sever ties with the academic arm of a state that is committing genocide.

Furthermore, NFP argues, as a democratic university Radboud must listen to their scholars and students. In light of the genocide in Gaza, 19 professors at the university organised a teach-in to educate students on the war. Since then, they have created a public seminar series called the Situating Palestine Collective, in which Radboud itself plays no part. The collective is quickly growing and has already hosted two events at the time of writing.

Gijs: "Radboud must listen to the critical scholars they employ: what they say about this, what they understand the war in the context of genocide and settler colonialism. They specifically employ these scholars because they are knowledgeable about these topics. I think it would be a great step for Radboud to take to make use of this knowledge and listen to their employees."

Build Direct Solidarity with Palestinian Students and Universities

A self-described "emancipatory" university "committed to equal rights for social and cultural minorities" (Radboud Mission, n.d.), Radboud markets itself as an emancipatory university.

I asked: "How do you propose Radboud builds solidarity with Palestinian universities and students?"

Mike: "Radboud needs to amplify Palestinian voices and involve them more in the academic knowledge production. It must join movements initiated by Palestinian students, as well as offer scholarships, offer funding, initiate programmes that do epistemic justice to Palestinians and build university connections with suitable Palestinian partners."

Gijs: "[The marginalisation of Palestinian voices] undermines the idea that Radboud is a decolonial university. Because through Israel, it protects colonial interests of the West in the Middle East area."

Mike: "Radboud sees itself as a critical university, yet it never makes public statements in opposition to the interests of the Dutch government."

Academics of the Philosophy faculty seemingly agree; they are providing informative lectures on the Nakba and Shoah. At the second lecture entitled 'Situating Palestine through the Lens of Settle Colonialism', Dr Noura Alkhalili (from Palestine) outlined her struggle for higher education at Birzeit University (through her experience during the 2nd Intifada), given how Palestinian universities are constantly targeted and systematically silenced and isolated.

Those excluded from the zone of being have a very different lived experience, one much closer to those so many other parts of the world – the zone of non-being, the zone of the dammed of the earth, the zone of dehumanisation.

Radboud itself must cooperate with the Situating Palestine Collective, and support Palestinian academics, rather than remaining neutral and upholding the government position. To fulfil the "emancipatory" criteria they set themselves, Radboud and other universities must distance themselves from governments and entrenched Zionism.

Radboud must therefore be willing to take a critical stance and "change perspective" (Radboud's motto) on the mainstream media/government narrative that Israel is a legitimate actor in this conflict. In order to uphold its projected emancipatory identity, action is needed, not simple marketing campaigns. Radboud should build connections with Palestinian universities, offer scholarships to Palestinian students. This way they can contribute to amplifying Palestinian voices in the West Bank and Gaza.

Jihad: "To do so otherwise constitutes the usual hypocrisy of the Western political community."

According to Dr. Anya Topolski, what Jihad refers to as hypocrisy and many European liberals refer to as double standards, are "quite simply the true colours of the structural racism of the legal and political system we have built."

Political institutions have been built for those in what Franz Fanon calls the zone of being, what Dr. Topolski has theorised as the zone of the humanised. This is the zone in which we can speak of a legal framework, appeal to rights and freedoms. It is also the zone of administration and regulation, of material resources and recognition – it is a zone where we can articulate and have individual identities and stories. While most in Europe live in this zone, not all; the undocumented, the homeless, the poor. Those excluded from the zone of being have a very different lived experience, one much closer to those so many other parts of the world – the zone of non-being, the zone of the dammed of the earth, the zone of dehumanisation. In this world there are no rights and no recognition, there are no individual names or stories, just numbers. There is continuous oppression, violence, poverty. This is the world most Palestinians have been living in since the Nakba. While slowly more and more people are willing to see this, for too long many chose not to see it.[1]

Though we might want to see this as double standards, the reality is that this is part of structural racism foundational to the political and legal system we have established in the aftermath of the Shoah. It is tragic that it is now being used to silence academic freedom and Palestinian stories and voices. This, we believe, epitomises the need for Radboud to build direct solidarity with Palestinian universities and individuals.

Encourage Academic Freedom and End Academic Censorship

When our discussion came to the issue of academic freedom, NFP has plenty to say.

Jihad: "We need to make it clear we are not antisemitic. To support Palestinians against Zionism is in no way antisemitic."

Since the recent rise in violence from October 7th onward, the world has seen tragic rises in both Islamophobia and antisemitism (Yang 2023). This rise in hate entails that activism and education are ever more crucial. Conver-

1 Anya's full article on this subject is published here: https://www.sampol.be/2023/12/europa-is-medeplichtig-aan-de-genocide-tegen-de-palestijnen.

sation is needed to help not only maintain a safe space for everyone, but to address the systemic problems we're facing here; both in Islamophobia and antisemitism.

Mike: "As a Jewish person I feel very safe with the Palestinian solidarity movement. Antisemitism is just not part of the movement because people understand that they're fighting against genocide."

The current silence on campus (except for the demonstrations for NFP) is seen as an issue. NFP's demands state that:

"We believe the university's silence as this genocide unfolds has created a socially unsafe atmosphere that implicitly intimidates and suppresses our academic freedom."

The university must maintain appropriate safe spaces that facilitate dialogue and prevent hatred. They should not leave this in the hands of students and professors but take responsibility for the administration of the campus, as is their prerogative. When this is done, Radboud can support critical discussion on the war in Palestine.

Jihad: "Here in the Netherlands, news from a Palestinian perspective cannot be seen in the Dutch language - no way. You have to go to Al-Jazeera or something like that, to watch the real news, from the other perspective. All the Western media is just one perspective, so we need to break that illusion, ideally through education."

Conclusion

In our interview, NFP outlined their four main demands for Radboud University:

- End the neutral stance.
- Support the academic boycott of Israeli universities.
- Build solidarity with Palestinian academia.
- Promote academic freedom over censorship.

I join calls with NFP for our universities as democratic institutions to listen, to change and to act. Radboud cannot continue to stay silent and complicit with Israeli genocide in Palestine.

NFP organises regular demonstrations, events and more. Information can be found on Instagram: @NijmegenforPalestine.

More of Charlie's articles can be found online at: https://charliehardsw.wixsite.com/politics.

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Photo: Marilyn Kallasse

Off the Record with Marilyn Kallasse

Charlie Chowdhry

Marilyn Kallasse is a woman on a mission. She's a 21-year-old international student from Estonia. Not content with simply studying PPS, she is the Chair of F.C. Sophia, and can often be found working at the Coffee Corner at the UB.

Rather than starting by asking you for a fun fact about yourself, can you tell me a fun lie about yourself?

"I can't lie. I physically can't lie. I have never successfully lied in my life. I don't know. There are no lies... there is only truth. That is not a good answer, but YOLO. I can tell you a fun fact about myself, though!"

Oh! Go for it.

"I am very intrigued by countries ending with -stan. Two days ago, I watched an hour-long video about Turkmenistan. They have all the Guinness world records for having the most marble buildings in their capitals. Did you know that?"

I did not know that!

"Now you know!"

What's your favourite -stan country?

"I am intrigued by Kazakhstan... the capital looks like a mixture of Dubai and Las Vegas, and I am very intrigued by this. I watched a documentary about it, and the nature is very beautiful, so I am going to go there one day."

What is it like to do a full-time study, a part-time job and a board year all at the same time?

"...It's sometimes a very silent, loud scream... Sometimes it's hard, but I'm a big fan of time management. To be honest, right now there are only two things in my mind, board and work. The rest is kind of like, in the background. It's stowed in my filing cabinet. It is tiring, but I'm trying my best and right now I'm doing fine with it. I feel like an actual businesswoman, 'cos I need to have my phone ringer on all the time. It's a thing."

Speaking of being a successful businesswoman, what gives you a feeling of achievement?

"If we talk about doing a board year, I think the most fulfilling feeling is when someone notices that I did this thing, or that thing, and says: 'this was very nice'. I'm a big fan of words of affirmation. I've been getting a lot of 'good job's' and pats on the back, and I've been going 'whooo!'. It's so goofy."

Do you have some wisdom for us?
"I don't wanna sound too cheesy, but I think people should be more kind to themselves. If there are days where you feel like you can't do anything, like if you went to the library for 9 hours and all you did was Buzzfeed quizzes, that's fine. I try to practise with myself saying that it's okay, life goes on, and I shouldn't hold it against myself. I think some of my friends struggle with this as well. It's okay to realise at 12pm on a Monday that you're done and you can go home. We ball. And some of us are bald..."

[to me, as an aside] "You know how in courtrooms they have those keyboards to write everything down in shorthand? You would be so slay at that, typing all this down. It would be so slay."

If 2016 was the year of realising things, what was 2023 the year of?
"I mean, I feel like people started realising things in 2016 and STILL haven't fully realised everything. 2023 was – okay, another very cheesy answer – but it's about being kind to yourself and others, and it's just... I don't know, life is hard and there is inflation, like, beer is getting more expensive, it's all a lot. But I feel like at the end of the day, what we have is other people and ourselves and we should just be kind."

"I feel like an actual businesswoman, 'cos I need to have my phone ringer on all the time. It's a thing."

What is your favourite word in every language you speak, and what does each word mean?
"So in Estonian, my native language, my mother tongue, the word is 'tohuva-bohu'. It means chaos. It's a goofy word because, like, you can literally use it for anything. It's the Estonian equivalent of 'goofy chaos'. It rolls very nicely off the tongue. It's not a common word in the Estonian language anymore, like, you would hear a grandmother say it. I think that's very beautiful."

"In Dutch it's definitely the word 'smoorverliefd', because it means being 'head over heels in love' with someone, and I think it's so nice in Dutch that it's only one word. In other languages you have to use a lot of words to get the point across. But the Dutch came up with just one word for it, and I think that's really beautiful. Also, shoutout to Doe Maar for writing a great song."

"I think my favourite word in English... is an adjective, though. Does an adjective count as a word?"

If I answer the question, am I allowed to keep this part in the interview?
"Yeah... I guess... An adjective is a word, right?"

Yes.
"Okay... It's probably goofy! Because with goofy, you can give away so many things. 'That's goofy', as in, 'I think that's weird', 'that's goofy', as in, 'I think that's funny'... if I don't know what to say, I can say 'goofy'. It's a good word."

Is it kind of like when Paris Hilton says, when you don't know what to say, you can say 'That's Hot?'
"Yeah, literally. ...Oh, and I don't have a favourite word in German.[1]"

"I feel like at the end of the day, what we have is other people and ourselves and we should just be kind."

Which musical album changed your life?
"I think the album that has had a genuine physical effect on me was the first time I listened to Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* on the trolley to work – we have trolleys in Estonia, goofy[2] – and that's when... I've always, you know, been surrounded by music, but that was the moment when I really realised what music can do to people. And it's a great album!"

What are you reading right now?
"I haven't started a new book, but I love Dolly Alderton, and I just finished a book by her where people write prompts to her and she responds to them. Sometimes women in their 20s can feel like they need to have a boyfriend, bla bla bla, and what she writes is that the biggest loves in her life have been her friends. I think that's really important.

Next, I'm going to read *Everything You Ever Wanted* by Luiza Sauma. It's about a woman who moves to a different planet to start a new life. But I haven't started, I've only read one page."

1 I have received word that 'tohuvabohu' is also used in German. It is originally a Biblical Hebrew word meaning 'primordial chaos', i.e. the formless chaos/void before creation.

2 A trolleybus is an electric bus that gets power from overhead wires.

Speaking of starting a new life, what are your hopes for the future? Where will you be, and what will you be doing?
"I see myself staying in Nijmegen and doing my Master's here as well, maybe another board year. Then, I would like to work, for example, as an ambassador one day. I would like to be the Estonian ambassador in the Netherlands... but maybe that's too ambitious."

Do you have any final messages for the Universe, before I end the interview?
"Please come to F.C. Sophia's activities, they're really fun!"

Anything else?
"That's it!"

Uses of Dialogue; or, Why We Love Plato

Lucas Gronouwe

The author would like to thank Kyrke Otto and the *Splijtstof* editorial team for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Why do we love Plato? To the historian of philosophy, this must come across as a strange, if not out-of-place question. Not because he or she would necessarily deny its premise, but because our affective ties to the works of Plato are considered to be a private rather than a professional affair. Let us therefore slightly displace the question: why, after almost twenty-five centuries, do we still read Plato? Why is he still so prominent in philosophical research and study programs? Responses to such questions generally resort to one of two arguments, or a combination of those:

(1) We still read Plato because of the decisive theoretical and methodological mark he left on the further course of the history of philosophy. As *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* has it: "Plato [...] is, by any reckoning [...] one of the most [...] influential authors in the history of philosophy" (Kraut 2022). In every historical period, philosophers have deemed Plato to be a valuable or even indispensable interlocutor. And as the Encyclopaedia Britannica endorses: Plato is "best known as the author of philosophical works of unparalleled influence" (Meinwald 2023). I will call this *the historical resonance account*. It is exemplified by Whitehead's renowned witticism that "the European philosophical tradition [...] consists of a series of footnotes to Plato" (Whitehead 1978, 39).

(2) We still read Plato because his arguments remain an indispensable point of reference in contemporary discourse. This rationale is illustrated by the effort of ancient philosophy scholars to reinsert and reevaluate Plato's arguments in new contexts (such as his arguments against democracy in the context of political epistemology [Nawar 2023]). I will call this *the argumentative touchstone account*. The aim of this paper, then, is twofold: first, to demonstrate that both of these accounts are reductionistic; and second, to develop a more comprehensive justification for why we still read Plato's dialogues today.

Such a comprehensive account is warranted because the present-day significance of Plato extends far beyond his historical importance and the relevance of his arguments. Departing from such theoretical accounts, I will turn to the work of literary scholar Rita Felski to sketch the contours of an aesthetic rather than theoretical account of why we still read Plato today: an account that revives the literary character of the Platonic dialogues so

often neglected in philosophy. Felski's work is well suited for such a task, since her intellectual project may be described as an attempt to supplement the *detachment* of academic practices of interpretation with the *attachment* characterizing our ordinary engagement with texts and other artworks (see e.g. Felski 2008; 2020). In remainder of this paper, I will employ parts of this project to argue that both the historical resonance account (§1) and the argumentative touchstone account (§2) fail to do justice to the rich aesthetic experience reading Plato is. Subsequently, I take inspiration from Felski's theory of attachment to highlight some of the affective responses involved in the encounter with Plato's dialogues (§3).

The present-day significance of Plato extends far beyond his historical importance and the relevance of his arguments.

This paper is one of the first to transpose Felski's efforts within the domain of philosophy. My hypothesis is that Plato is perhaps one of the best authors for doing so, since, as Vittorio Hösle remarks, his dialogues constitute a bridge between literary studies and philosophy in that the *philosophical* dialogue is, after all, a *literary* genre (Hösle 2012, xv-xvi). I will engage more extensively with Hösle's study of the Platonic dialogues later. For now, I would like to warn the reader that this paper is not about *interpreting* the dialogues of Plato. Rather, it is about *describing* what these dialogues do (i.e. what responses they incite in the reader) and why they matter. Since Felski initially captured her project under the heading *Uses of Literature*, I have called the project initiated in this paper *Uses of Dialogue*.

§1. From Historical Resonance to Present-Day Relevance

That Plato is one of the most influential thinkers in the history of philosophy is undeniable. In nearly every period, from ancient to contemporary philosophy, his works gained traction as objects of inspiration, critique, commentary, exegesis, parody, deconstruction, and so on. Nevertheless, as an explanation for why we still read Plato today, such a historical resonance account is insufficient, because it relies on a narrow concept of history. In this section, I will argue for this claim by drawing on Felski's article "Context Stinks!", that tries to break the spell of the text/context distinction she believes is holding literary studies captive. My focus, however, will be on another central distinction in this text: the one between past and present.

Within philosophy programs, students' first systematic encounter with Plato often takes place in a course on the history of ancient philosophy.

The founding father of philosophy is situated in ancient Greece, alongside Socrates, Aristotle, the Athenian agora and democracy, the Peloponnesian War and the Greek pantheon at Mount Olympus. This is to say that Plato is located in his historical context, which is in many respects utterly different from our times. Literary scholar Wai Chee Dimock calls this phenomenon "synchronic historicism," since a text and its meaning are deemed to be coextensive with their original context of production. "The object of inquiry is dated," Dimock (1997, 1061) writes. "Its reference points are events that began and ended in its original context." According to Felski, such a model of history takes context to be "a kind of box or container in which individual texts are encased and held fast" (Felski 2011, 577).

However, the historical resonance account goes beyond synchronic historicism, because it draws our attention to the fact that Plato's ideas crossed the borders of ancient philosophy to resonate in other historical periods. This is reflected institutionally in that the name Plato often resurfaces in both historical and systematic philosophy courses in the wake of ancient philosophy. In this sense, the historical resonance account comes close to what Dimock calls "diachronic historicism," which depicts texts as time travelers that speak differently to new historical audiences (cf. Dimock 1997, 1061ff). On this account, however, history is still perceived as a "vertical pile of neatly stacked boxes" (Felski 2011, 577) we tend to refer to as the *past* in contradistinction with the *present*.

Plato's dialogues constitute a bridge between literary studies and philosophy in that the philosophical dialogue is, after all, a literary genre.

Having arrived at this point, we begin to see in what sense the historical resonance account is reductionistic. Although it can very well explain the relevance of Plato for understanding the history of philosophy, it is hard-pressed to give an account of how Plato is able to create attachments *in the present*. With its gaze turned towards to the past, the historical resonance account fails to provide an answer to questions related to the present-day relevance of texts:

> Why has this work been chosen for interpretation? How does it speak to me now? What is its value in the present? To focus only on a work's origins is to side-step the question of its appeal to the present-day

> reader. It is, in a Nietzschean sense, to use history as an alibi, a way of circumventing the question of one's own attachments, investments, and vulnerabilities as a reader (Felski 2008, 10).

Note that Felski does not consider history unimportant. The historical resonance account is not wrong, but incomplete, in so far as it evades "the question of why past texts still matter and how they speak to us now" (Felski 2011, 577). Hence, it cannot fully account for why we read Plato *today*.

In addition to its focus on present relevance rather than past resonance, Felski's theory is also better equipped to explain Plato's present-day appeal because of its concept of agency. The historical resonance account downgrades the agency of a text in favor of the explanatory power of context:[1] the reception of Plato in the middle ages, for example, is often explained by reference to the theological concerns that were central to the time, rather than the ability of Plato's dialogues to elicit emotions and affections. In Felski's account, the center of gravity is shifted to the agency or power of texts.

With its gaze turned towards to the past, the historical resonance account fails to provide an answer to questions related to the present-day relevance of texts.

Drawing on Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory – originally developed as a methodology for social science studies –, Felski proposes to see texts as non-human actors rather than as objects to be explained (cf. Felski 2011, 582ff). This revaluation of agency then allows Felski to explain why some texts survive, and others disappear. That is, quite simply, because the former are much better at establishing connections: "Artworks can only survive and thrive," Felski remarks, "by making friends, creating allies, attracting disciples, inciting attachments, latching on to receptive hosts" (Felski 2011, 584). But how do *Platonic dialogues* do this?

§2. From Theoretical Interpretation to Aesthetic Attachment

How do Plato's dialogues create attachments? What is it in these ancient works that attracts present-day readers? We have arrived at the preliminary conclusion that for answering such questions, resorting to historical

1 Felski (2011) levels this critique against "Birmingham-style cultural studies and its model of articulation theory" (581), but I believe it can be applied to the historical resonance account as well.

resonance is insufficient, since it fails to account for Plato's contemporary appeal. Hence, we might better focus our attention on the dialogues themselves. In this respect, the argumentative touchstone account seems to be a better candidate than the historical resonance account to explain why we still read Plato's dialogues today. This account emphasizes that since the arguments of Plato's Socrates are still relevant for contemporary concerns and discourses, one should definitely take note of them within philosophical research and education. In this section, I will argue that such reasoning is aesthetically reductionistic, by drawing on Felski as well as others.

Why is the argumentative touchstone account reductionistic? First of all, because it tends to reduce Plato's dialogues to their argumentative content. As the philosopher Lawrence M. Hinman has suggested in the 1980s, this tendency may very well be the product of the wide-spread assumption among especially analytic philosophers that "a philosopher's style is, at best, something which obscures the structure of his arguments". As a result, Hinman notes, some historians of philosophy tend to *purify* a philosopher's oeuvre of its stylistic elements:

> While no one claims that Plato was writing pieces for *Analysis*, many read and write about him as though he were doing precisely that. In a curious version of the patchwork thesis, the dialogues come to be treated as an aggregate of three and one half page articles which were presumably gathered together for Oxford University Press (Hinman 1980, 512).[2]

In this passage, Hinman mobilizes an equally widespread assumption among philosophers: that in isolating the argumentative content of Plato's dialogues something essential gets lost; something which is often referred to as form, style, or more generally: poetics or aesthetics.

Hösle provides additional support for this assumption in his juxtaposition of theoretical and aesthetic analysis. Acknowledging that the Platonic dialogues have an aesthetic quality, he counts them among a small group of "philosophical texts that must be enjoyed as works of art, that is, to which injustice is rendered if only their *argumentative content* is analyzed" (Hösle

2 The 'patchwork thesis' is the idea in Kant-scholarship that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* can be seen as a 'patchwork' of his earlier, pre-critical writings.

2012, 2; my emphasis).[3] This group includes texts that obviously are *about* something, such as rhetoric or poetry, but also have a rhetoric or poetic quality themselves. Plato's *Phaedrus* is a strong example of this.

However, this is not to say that a theoretical analysis of, for example, Plato's *Phaedrus* would be irrelevant. The Platonic dialogues do contain truth claims that any scholarly engagement with them should respect and account for. Hence the argumentative touchstone account is, just like the historical resonance account, not wrong, but incomplete, in that it rules out the aesthetic features of Plato's work. Yet, these aesthetic features might not only be pivotal for explaining the present-day appeal of Plato, but also, as Hösle points out, for understanding his arguments in the first place, for example when literary devices are used to bestow certain claims with greater authority than others. Hence, the argumentative touchstone account is founded on a denial of its own conditions of possibility.

The argumentative touchstone account is, just like the historical resonance account, not wrong, but incomplete, in that it rules out the aesthetic features of Plato's work.

Felski's analyses, in turn, render the argumentative touchstone account reductionistic in yet another, and perhaps even more radical sense. By operating at the level of the encounter between reader and text rather than that of the form and/or content of the latter, they debunk *academic analysis*, of both a theoretical *and* aesthetic nature, as just one aspect of our aesthetic engagements. This insight is first articulated in *Uses of Literature*, where "knowledge" is only one type of textual engagement amongst many others, such as recognition, enchantment, and shock. From this perspective, the argumentative touchstone account diminishes the Platonic dialogues to a source of knowledge – something which they obviously are, but not exclusively. Now this also means that the *cognitive* aspects of aesthetic response are absolutized at the expense of many *affective* ones (cf. Felski 2020, 16, *et passim*). As such, Plato's lively *corpus* becomes a *corpse*; a dead body to be dissected (Felski 2020, 152).

However, *Uses of Literature* packs less of a punch than it could possibly deliver in the face of the argumentative touchstone account. This it because

3 See for this point, which is elaborated in the next paragraph, also Chapter 3: "On the Relationship between Form and Content in the Philosophical Dialogue," especially 51ff.

it fails to explain how the forms of textual engagement that it describes are connected. *Hooked*, Felski's latest book, rectifies this shortcoming by revealing how interpretation and attachment, for example, are intertwined. Against the widespread view "that attachment is an *obstacle* to interpretation," Felski argues that it is actually its condition of possibility: "What we choose to decipher, how we decipher it, and to what end—these decisions are driven by what we feel affinity for, what resonates. Interpreting is far from being a purely cognitive exercise" (Felski 2020, 126, 128). *Affection* precedes *interpretation*, given, of course, that one is free to choose what to read, interpret, and write about.

In this sense, the argumentative touchstone account simply *defers* the question of why we still read Plato today. It emphasizes that Platonic arguments are an indispensable reference point for contemporary scholarship, but it does not explain how we are driven to these arguments and the literary worlds in which they appear in the first place. To develop a comprehensive account of why Plato is so successful in "making friends, creating allies, attracting disciples, inciting attachments, latching on to receptive hosts" – to reprise an earlier quote –, it seems we must turn our attention to the *affective* rather than cognitive aspects of our engagement with Plato.

§3. From Authorial Intent to Readerly Response

In the preceding sections, I argued that both (1) the historical resonance account and (2) the argumentative touchstone account are reductionistic. Indeed, Plato is markedly influential in the history of philosophy, but what about his present-day appeal? Sure, Plato's dialogues give us much to interpret, "but what about love?", we might ask. "Or: "Where is your theory of attachment?" (Felski 2015, 17).[4] The upshot of our inquiry up to now has been that understanding Plato's appeal requires an analysis of the affective responses involved in reading his dialogues. In this section, I will take a first step in this direction, by drawing on Hösle's aesthetic analysis of the Platonic dialogues to elicit and explain such readerly responses. My hypothesis is that it is *because* of its literary qualities – use of characters, setting, style, etc. – that Plato's oeuvre is so successful in creating attachments in present-day readers, and academics in particular.

First of all, *what is* attachment? Felski provides a bridge between the previous section and this one when she connects the supposed *detachment*

4 Felski raises these questions in the context of her polemic against engagements with literature that focus on "agon (conflict and domination) at the expense of eros (love and connection)," such as, for example, postcolonial-feminist critics. Here, I oppose them to the supposed detachment of interpretation.

of the academic world with a definition of attachment. "In its most obvious sense," Felski writes, "attachment denotes an emotional tie: whether passions and obsessions or low-key moods and lukewarm likes." A little later, she adds: "Against the usual portrayal of academia as an affect-free zone, I would venture that affective ties are often stronger in academia than elsewhere" (Felski 2020, 28). Against this background, let us now consider the case of Hösle's study of the Platonic dialogues in a little more detail, since he holds an ambivalent position with regard to the affective power of Plato's writings.

In his capacity as reader, Hösle is clearly affected, inspired, or energized by the dialogues of Plato. He uses words like "overwhelming," "fascinating," and "astonishing," to describe the experience of reading Plato, which seem to designate not just a cognitive tie, but also an emotional or affective one. And Hösle makes no secret of his appreciation of Plato when he writes about the *Charmides* and *Euthydemus* that "they are so perfect that one is sometimes astonished that a human being was able to compose them" (Hösle 2012, 432). However, in his capacity as a scholar, Hösle does not account for this aesthetic experience. Most of the book is devoted to a formal analysis of the dialogues and their relation to the intentions of the composer (Plato). Thus, it treats the relation between the dialogues and *their effect on the reader* only indirectly, while from a Felskian perspective, affective readerly responses trigger such formal analyses of authorial intent in the first place: they are its unacknowledged condition of possibility.

It is about time, then, that we shift the center of gravity from authorial intent to readerly response; from aesthetic qualities to aesthetic *experience*. In doing so, we must not dwell on the cognitive dimensions of this experience. Admittedly, Plato's dialogues incite us to think; they provide us with an indispensable philosophical vocabulary, but they also make us feel; they speak to our senses. Therefore, a *comprehensive* account of why we still read Plato today should "begin to engage the affective and absorptive, the sensuous and somatic qualities of aesthetic experience" (Felski 2011, 76). In the remainder of this section, I will therefore single out three types of textual engagement with Plato, combining the work of Hösle and Felski: (1) identification, (2) enchantment, and (3) shock. We might also call these aesthetic responses *uses of dialogue*.[5]

(1) Plato's dialogues enable readers to *identify* with its characters. Though many of Plato's characters were real historical persons, their

5 "Use" should be understood here in a broad sense, as having to do with the value of, in this case, philosophical dialogues for individual readers (which is my focus here) or society as a whole. Cf. Felski (2011), 7-8.

realism is not a precondition for identification. "The draw of character," Felski (2020, 80) notes, "has far less to do with realism than with qualities of vividness and distinctiveness," and Plato is very good at staging both vivid and distinctive characters. Consider, for example, the speakers in Plato's Symposium: Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, Socrates, and Alcibiades. Each of them gives not just a distinctive speech about eros, but also has some character quirks of its own: standing still at

It is about time that we shift the center of gravity from authorial intent to readerly response; from aesthetic qualities to aesthetic experience.

random times (Socrates), being a weak (Eryximachus) or a strong drinker (Aristophanes), hitting on Socrates (Alcibiades), etc. It is precisely because of such literary descriptions that Plato's writings are able to forge affective ties, from scholars identifying with Socrates' lofty philosophical character to feeling compassion for Phaedo, Crito, or Apollodorus, when they are unable to restrain their tears at the moment this same character is forced to drink his cup of poison. Yet another example would be the famous part of the *Meno* where Socrates guides an enslaved boy in solving a geometry problem to show that learning is merely recollection. Socrates' step-by-step instruction invites the reader to identify with this enslaved boy, thus making it easier to be convinced by Plato's arguments for the immortality of the soul. Plato's use of the literary genre of the philosophical dialogue is indispensable for rendering such forms of identification possible. While in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (and many other works of philosophy for that matter), there is little to identify with, Plato's dialogues offer a wide range of possibilities for identification.

(2) Plato's dialogues also have a distinctive capacity to *enchant* their readers. "Immersed in the virtual reality of a fictional text, a reader feels herself to be transported, caught up, or swept away" (Felski 2011, 34-5). In just a few paragraphs, Plato takes us to the Greek wrestling school (*Lysis*), Socrates' death cell (*Phaedo*), the Athenian countryside (*Phaedrus*), or a formal drinking party (*Symposium*), offering us – for the time of reading – an escape to another world. Noteworthy, too, is the setting of the *Laws*, where the dialogue takes place during a pilgrimage from the city of Knossos to the temple of Zeus on Mount Ida, and that of the *Protagoras*. Before going to the home of Callias, where the great sophist Protagoras is staying, Socrates first needs to calm down his younger friend Hippocrates, who knocked on his door in the middle of the night to go and see Protagoras. During this

initial discussion, it is difficult not to be affected by Hippocrates' excessive excitement about Protagoras being in town. Interestingly enough, Hösle often invokes this "use" of the Platonic dialogues, such as when he remarks, though in passing, that Plato's *Symposium* "still enchants us almost 2,400 years later" (Hösle 2012, 461). Another example can be found in his discussion of the *Phaedrus* in the chapter devoted to "The Space of Conversation." In this dialogue, Hösle (2012) claims – again in passing –, "Plato offers one of the most *enchanting* descriptions of a landscape in all of Greek literature, which appeals in a few lines to the senses of sight, smell, taste, and hearing" (224). Here, it is Plato's use of setting, which is a stylistic or literary device, that evokes the (sensuous) readerly response of enchantment.

(3) Plato's dialogues, however, can also trigger aesthetic responses that are less pleasant: they can disturb or even *shock* us. Such responses can result from the extremity of positions defended by some of Plato's characters, such as Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and Callicles in the *Gorgias*, who forcefully argue for the reason of the strongest. Or, they may be triggered by certain performative contradictions, such as when Socrates condemns writing at the end of the *Phaedrus*, while the reader has approximately 35 dialogues at their disposal that were written by Plato. Furthermore, disturbance or shock can also be the result of a clash between our current ethical milieu and the one in which the dialogue we are reading is embedded. Examples that come to mind are the references to enslaved people in Plato's dialogues, and his treatment of the task and place of woman in the *Republic*, where Plato's

Plato's dialogues deserve to be studied and taught, not because of their canonical status, but because they make us think and feel differently; because they cause perceptual changes and elicit our emotions; because they create affective ties and incite attachments.

Socrates argues that they must be the joint property of the guardians (not to mention Socrates' ideas about state-regulated human reproduction). Yet, as Hösle remarks, Plato's position as an author may very well be ambiguous in such cases, as an initial disturbance or shock can be followed by a moment of critical reflection. "Plato doubtless considered the institution of slavery justified," he writes, "but by showing that the slave in the *Meno* is capable of anamnesis, he unintentionally forces the reflective reader to ask why some people may be held as slaves, even if their intellectual gifts are not essenti-

ally different from those of free persons" (Hösle 2012, 461). This is an excellent example of how *affective* and *cognitive* responses; feeling and thought can become intertwined in the aesthetic experience of reading Plato's dialogues.

In fact, Felski is well-aware that neatly separating different aesthetic responses or textual engagements fails to do justice to their relatedness and complexity. "I venture that aesthetic value is inseparable from use," she notes at the beginning of *Uses of Literature*, "but also that our engagements with texts are extraordinarily varied, complex, and often unpredictable in kind" (Felski 2011, 8). The three responses I discussed should therefore be elaborated and expanded upon, in order to provide a more comprehensive account of how Plato captures, enchants, shocks, interests, entertains, arouses, surprises, moves, and obsesses us – or at least many of us.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have mobilized the work of literary scholar Rita Felski to argue that both the historical resonance account and the argumentative touchstone account are deficient in their answer to the question why we still read Plato today. Furthermore, I have developed a more comprehensive justification for why Plato features so prominently in philosophical research and study programs. According to the historical resonance account, we still read Plato today because of the decisive mark he left on the further course of the history of philosophy. This answer is reductionistic, in that it fails to account for why Plato appeals to us in the present.

According to the argumentative touchstone account, we continue to study Plato because his arguments remain for us an indispensable point of reference. This response is reductionistic as well, in at least two respects. First, in that it reduces the dialogues to their argumentative content, thus leaving their aesthetic features and appeal unaccounted for. Second, in that it reduces our textual engagement with Plato's dialogues to one of theoretical interpretation. Hence, it fails to account for our affective rather than cognitive ties to the writings of Plato.

Vittorio Hösle's study of the literary genre of the philosophical dialogue turned out to be a necessary, but insufficient condition for explaining Plato's present-day appeal. Necessary, because he goes beyond the historical resonance account and the argumentative touchstone account in focusing on the *form* rather than the *content* of the Platonic dialogues. Insufficient, because he connects the aesthetic features of the dialogues solely to authorial intent. That is, according to Hösle, we still read Plato today because he is such a magnificent writer. In the end, this answer is reductionistic as well, because it fails to account for the relation between the literary character

of Plato's work and the affective responses it triggers in the reader. My hypothesis was that it is *because* of its literary qualities – use of characters, setting, style, etc. – that Plato's oeuvre is so successful in creating various attachments in present-day readers.

To put this hypothesis to the test, I isolated three *uses of dialogue*; three aesthetic responses involved in reading Plato's dialogues: identification, enchantment, and shock. Establishing a connection between the aesthetic value of the dialogues and their use, I argued, is the first step towards a more comprehensive account of why we still read Plato today. The Felskian perspective I adopted in this paper allows us to see that Plato's present-day appeal does not lie in his historical importance or the contemporary relevance of his arguments. Rather, it lies in the fact that we can *identify* with Plato's characters; that we can become *enchanted* by the settings of Plato's dialogues; and that we can be *shocked* by the customs and values we encounter there. We still read Plato today because of the affective and absorptive experience he provides us.

In fact, a Felskian account is preferable, because it can incorporate the historical resonance account and the argumentative touchstone account, whilst having an additional advantage. First, it can incorporate and explain Plato's transgression of temporal boundaries, by means of its methodological embracement of Actor-Network Theory, and its attribution of agency to texts in particular. That Plato has been markedly influential in the history of philosophy, is – from Felski's point of view – because his dialogues have a distinctive capacity to attach themselves to other actors, such as readers and writers, copyists and publishers, translators and parodists. Second, a Felskian reply is able to incorporate and explain the argumentative touchstone account, by acknowledging that theoretical interpretation is one of our textual engagements with Plato, alongside many others. However, it also draws our attention to the affective ties underlying such analyses: that we continue to refer to Plato's arguments, we might say, has much to do with the literary worlds in which they appear.

Besides its explanatory potential, a Felskian account also has an additional advantage, in that it enables us to answer the question with which we started this paper. Why do we love Plato? The historical resonance- and argumentative touchstone account are hard-pressed to provide an answer to such a question, consequently rendering the question itself misplaced. From a Felskian perspective, however, this question is only logical, while its answer is easy: we do not love Plato because of his influence or his arguments, but because of his vivid and distinctive characters with which we can identify. We love Plato, because his dialogues offer us an escape from our everyday reality and an acquaintance with a long-gone past. We love

Plato, because after almost 2,400 years, his works have lost none of their capacity to enchant, amuse, disturb, or shock us. We love Plato, because his use of stylistic devices still *hooks* us.

In short, Plato's dialogues deserve to be studied and taught, not because of their canonical status, but because they make us think and feel differently; because they cause perceptual changes and elicit our emotions; because they create affective ties and incite attachments. Their value lies not just their *content* or *form*, I contend, but also in their *use* – which is vital but understudied. My hope is that transposing Felski's project within philosophy enables us to fill this lacuna.

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In Conversation with Professor Marjolein Oele

Laura Schranz

Marjolein Oele is Professor of Philosophy of the Humanities. The new Chair position she occupies is aimed at building bridges between the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies and the Faculty of Arts. Oele's research intertwines Ancient Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, and Environmental Philosophy. She is the author of *E-Co-Affectivity: Exploring Pathos at Life's Material Interfaces* (SUNY, 2020) and co-editor of *Ontologies of Nature: Continental Perspectives and Environmental Reorientations* (Springer, 2017). Her most recent book project thematizes a sense of loss in the relationship to our world, and is entitled *Elemental Loss: Shifting Constellations of Water, Fire, Air and Earth*. Her articles have been published in a wide range of journals, including *Ancient Philosophy, Configurations, Environmental Philosophy, Epochê, Radical Philosophy Review*, and *Research in Phenomenology*. She is also teaching the course *Critique of Green Ideology* in the Philosophy, Politics and Society (PPS) *Ecology and Sustainability* module. I, Laura Schranz, had the pleasure to interview her for Splijtstof magazine.

Laura: Thank you, Prof Oele! You have a very interesting and niche field of research, at least I have not heard of this way of doing philosophy before meeting you. Could you maybe give me an introduction to it?

Prof Oele: I have a few research fields that I'm interested in, the broader one being this question of affect and affectivity, how we're being moved by other people, by the world as such, by other living beings, by our own bodies, our own thoughts, our own emotions. This question of how we come to become ourselves, or how the world comes to be itself in relationship to all those things. I've tried to unravel this bigger question with regard to a number of other big themes. One of them is climate change and the ecological crisis, because I think it is the predominant ethical question of our time. So, I have found it very important as a philosopher to use some of the philosophical concepts that I've been trained in, for instance through Aristotle or through Heidegger, and make them applicable towards this question. I also philosophize about pregnancy and embodiment as a part of that constellation, insofar as how we come to be.

Laura: In the course you teach to me and other PPS students, you indeed mentioned that you are very interested in incorporating pregnancy into your philosophy. In terms of how we come to be, that seems a very literal form of becoming, then.

Prof Oele: Indeed, I have written about the question of embodiment in pregnancy. I've explored that by using, for instance, Plato's *Republic*; thinking through how we may come to be who we are. A big part of my research on pregnancy has been devoted to the placenta, an organ of the in-between which I think of as installing a pregnant city. What happens if we think about pregnancy in terms of the messy material of being, the emergence of community out of a space of the in-between rather than just being informed by individual beings? Beyond the obvious exchange of nutrients and other factors taking place in and through the placenta, when I looked at the placenta, there's current research investigating the exchange of cells that are from siblings or even (miscarried) previous children. Maternal cells are also being transferred across the placenta. This "microchimerism" as it is called offers access to a community that is much bigger than that contemporaneous community of cells that's there in the placenta.

The mutual exchange happening is also cross-intersected with lots of environmental factors that are seeping through, for instance toxins. Further, the traces of what happens in that community are being transported into the future. For instance, foetal cells will remain even if the pregnancy is interrupted. Microchimerism carries forward into the future in many unpredictable ways, insofar as bodies will retain those communities within them.

"What happens if we think about pregnancy in terms of the messy material of being, the emergence of community out of a space of the in-between rather than just being informed by individual beings?"

Laura: You mentioned that you are interested in this messy material of being. The image of the pregnant city in the placenta very well fits that, do you like to think about the environment in such a way?

Prof Oele: I do! I also work with soil, which is also very messy. Oftentimes, we romanticise it and talk about Earth and its power, but I like to dig into the dirty, messy stuff of life. There is this new group of philosophers called the "new materialists" that draw attention to this notion of matter. I have found

real inspiration in that, especially in combination with my background in medical school. There is this tendency in modern culture to sterilise life, to use sterile concepts, and I think it's a uniquely challenging thought to dig into the messiness of life, for instance into soil and into organs such as the placenta. So yes, I like to think about these messy interfaces, as I call them, or "e-co-affective interfaces", as my book has it. And to make them philosophically appealing and interesting and complex.

Laura: That is such an intriguing way of looking at it! You have also mentioned this term of the "pregnant city". And you write about loss, too, both in the contexts of pregnancy and environmental loss. How does this go together with the community you are describing?

"I think it's a uniquely challenging thought to dig into the messiness of life, for instance into soil and into organs such as the placenta."

Prof Oele: Oftentimes we think about pregnancy as a one-way street towards birth, which is very much a misconception. 70% of conceptions, so it's estimated, do not continue. This is a discourse that's often forgotten, due to the teleology that exists around pregnancy. To philosophically thematize pregnancy and loss has recently been on the upswing, with a few publications coming out on miscarriage and stillbirth from a philosophical perspective. I find it important to write about this, as it is key to undo the silencing around these topics and use philosophy as a way to transform discourses, and, possibly, aid those suffering from such losses.

Another topic that I feel very dear about is to think about questions of loss that don't just have to do with the loss of a particular being, but with the loss of a certain kind of constellation. There is an intersection here. Both with environmental loss and with pregnancy loss (which I have named the loss of the pregnant city), you lose a certain kind of constellation, a world, and a certain kind of future. I am intrigued by what it means to be confronted with a world that shrinks or transforms, that is never ever going to be the same as what we had expected or hoped for earlier on. Moreover, what does it mean to mourn when you don't exactly know what it is that you are mourning, since there is no one particular "thing" that you lose?

These are losses that speak to a transformed world, and, at least in my experience, pregnancy loss involves such a transformation of world. I see a connection there to a world of climate change. We may mourn the loss of

certain species, but we may be more affected by this larger question of a transformed world where we find less and less hope for places of refuge, of trust, of rebirth, where the world can reconstitute itself.

Laura: That really resonates with me, these different facets of loss that climate change imposes on us. It reminds me of texts I have read on the way environmental grief is experienced differently, depending on your cultural relationship to nature and the world. What you say speaks of a deep relationality between us, each other and the world in all its forms.

Prof Oele: Right, I am after all a philosopher of affect. As Butler would say it, we are always originally composed of relationality, yes. And so, when we experience loss, we actually lose ourselves, since we're always relational. This notion of grief gets us into this sense of relationality that underlies us very deeply in a fundamental way, and can thereby make us a bit more aware of how we are connected to each other. If we would see ourselves as much more relational, also in terms of climate change, experiences of loss that we currently may have could possibly afford us a way forward. We become much more aware of the fact that the world as we had imagined it to be isn't just our own mirror, but that we have always been part of this environmental ecological system. Much of the meaning of who we experience ourselves to be is dependent upon that larger network.

I lived in the United States, California specifically, for a long time. We know how many of the indigenous populations have been uprooted or unsettled, long before climate change, due to the colonial settlers. These indigenous populations have already experienced loss for a long time. If we are

"I do think that given the current crisis within which we are, suffering could instil transformation."

now confronted by climate change and mention this loss as sudden, those indigenous populations would say "what event are you talking about now?" When I talked earlier about grief, how it may connect us and make us more sensitive towards the world, in some sense maybe our own climate grief now can also make us more sensitive towards the grief that others around the globe have felt regarding lifestyles and colonialism that we have imposed upon them. Therefore, it may not just make us more empathetic or sympathetic, but make us form alliances.

And of course, I don't want to say that suffering is a precondition for having a different kind of relationship to the world. But I do think that given

the current crisis within which we are, suffering *could* instil transformation. Not just one-on-one, but also through creating different kinds of affective-sensitive dispositions and transforming political economic policies. In this regard, affective dispositional changes can transform societies.

Laura: I think those are some beautiful words to end with. Thank you very much for the conversation!


DO NOT BE
HASTY IN
THE LAYING
ON
OF HANDS.

The Fall of Western Puritanical Morality as a Descriptor of Cultural Variation

Sophie Ingle

Introduction

Cultural evolution is a notion that describes social practices and beliefs as continually changing. While humans are in a continuous process of biological evolution, their sociocultural practices are also transforming. Particularly, practices of puritanical morality are changing due to cultural evolution. These are practices whereby one's actions align with cultural standards of what is considered pure. Puritanical morality can be understood as a double-sided coin, with ideas about what is pure and good on one side, and ideas about what is disgusting and bad on the flip side. This paper will focus on the impact cultural evolution has on puritanical morality while also acknowledging variations in the way it manifests in different cultures across the globe. This is a topic of interest in contemporary society because it entails discussions about how different societies have different practices and why those who are not a member of a society may not understand the purpose of these practices.

A notable change to puritanical morality is the decline of its presence in Western societies. Cultural evolutionary theorists like Fitouchi, André and Baumard have proposed possible explanations for why Western practices are no longer, or significantly less, puritanical. However, in their explanation, the three co-authors propose that Western societies no longer need puritanical morality to remain orderly. They present the argument that Western culture has evolved, changing individuals' psychologies to the extent that they are more disciplined than those of other societies. Consequently, this paper will argue that their approach towards non-Western societies is needlessly ethnocentric[1]. In doing so, an alternative approach will be formulated, conceptualising puritanical morality as a form of conventionality and, therefore, a single descriptor of cultural variation that does not make any society more advanced than another.

Therefore, this paper will begin with an examination of Fitouchi, André and Baumard's approach to the fall of Western puritanical morality. In analysing the implicit assumptions made by these theorists, criticism of

1 Defined by Merriam-Webster as "characterized by or based on the attitude that one's own group is superior" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

their argumentation will be formulated. Next, this paper will consider what exactly is meant by "puritanical morality", resulting in the claim that it is a form of conventionality consisting of social norms. After establishing that puritanical morality practices are (often) not moral in an objective, righteous sense, this paper will explore the alternative account of declining Western puritanical morality. This exploration will include an explanation of why this approach overcomes the issues raised about Fitouchi, André and Baumard's view, ultimately leading to the conclusion that cultural evolution has brought differing norms and practices to all societies, whereby neither can be considered better than others.

The Fall of Puritanical Morality in the West

In order to investigate the perceived fall of puritanical morality practices in Western societies, one may consider the explanation proposed by Fitouchi, André and Baumard in their 2022 paper addressing the topic. Their publication, "Moral disciplining: The cognitive and evolutionary foundations of puritanical morality" (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022), reflects on the function of puritanical values in contemporary societies. They consider the extent of this function to vary from one society to another over time, resulting in the argument that specifically Western societies no longer need puritanical morality.

Cultural evolution has brought differing norms and practices to all societies, whereby neither can be considered better than others.

Nonetheless, before an accurate analysis of Fitouchi, André and Baumard's explanation can be formulated, one must first examine what they consider to be puritanical morality. In the aforementioned paper, they describe puritanism as moral concerns "governing domains as various as sex, food, clothing, self-discipline, entertainments, and ritual observance" (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 6). In this sense, one's mode of living may be significantly affected by the puritanical values upheld in the societal context in which they are situated. They also define puritanical morality as a strict, self-disciplinary "moralization of apparently victimless pleasures that humans crave" (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 4). Hence, people may desire to partake in some behaviours but abstain because the behaviour runs contrary to a moral sense of righteousness or purity.

Though, it is important to note that the rejection of many supposed cravings is historically present in most societies. Despite the seemingly

negligible overlap in domains such as food and clothing, Fitouchi, André and Baumard refer to studies suggesting that over 80% of the world's population adheres to the same puritanical values (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 6). This statistic is demonstrated by the use of religious and spiritual communities as examples. These are considered contexts where many puritanical values co-occur despite the domains in which they govern having little to no compositional overlap. Meanwhile, research conducted by Curry, Mullins and Whitehouse implies that seven values are believed to be morally good worldwide. They propose that some well-established, universal forms of cooperation result in these seven morals: family values, group loyalty, reciprocity, bravery, respect, fairness, and property rights (Curry, Mullins, and Whitehouse 2019, 48). Their research further supports the claim that moral values and judgement thereof can transcend sociocultural contexts, at least to an extent. Therefore, Fitouchi, André and Baumard illustrate that puritanical morality entails many human societies adhering to a set of seemingly unrelated values. The fact that a significant portion of the world's population historically agrees that some practices are inherently wrong is a crucial element of this paper since, as these authors note, puritanical morality seems to be related to cultural evolution.

Nonetheless, the cultural evolutionary approach in Fitouchi, André and Baumard's paper attempts to explain the decline of puritanical morality in specifically Western societies. They borrow the term "WEIRD societies" from Henrich, referring to "Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies" (Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan 2010, 1). From this point onwards, this paper will also borrow Henrich's term. Before applying their explanation to WEIRD societies, Fitouchi, André and Baumard lay the groundwork for their argument. They claim that practising puritanical morality increases self-control because it allows people to "remain peaceful neighbors, faithful husbands and wives, industrious workers" (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 9). Consequently, the practices condemned by puritanical morality beliefs are perceived as socially harmful. Thus, at the core of their argument lies the notion that puritanical morality prevents social harm caused by people who otherwise lack self-control.

Next, Fitouchi, André and Baumard apply this principle to the declining puritanical morality practised in WEIRD societies. They claim that puritanical morality is costly, restricting some pleasures and imposing "effortful disciplinary activities" (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 35). Therefore, puritanical norms should only be warranted when the result is worth the cost. As such, the argument follows that the cost is appropriate in situations where "spontaneous self-control" is not enough to "ensure social order and acceptable levels of cooperation" (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard

2022, 35). Meanwhile, in what they describe as "rich environments" such as WEIRD societies, people generally have "more inherently self-controlled psychologies", "invest more in extended prosociality", "are less susceptible to impulsive defection or retaliation", and "have higher trust in others" (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 35-36). In terms of cultural evolution, this argumentation implies that WEIRD people's individual psychologies have progressed beyond the need for puritanical practices, as this decline is noticed in changing alcohol consumption patterns over the course of the past millennium (Vallee 1998, 80). In this particular example, alcohol use has rapidly transformed from a type of medicine to an indispensable source of calories, and, today, a regularly relied-upon "social lubricant" (Vallee 1998, 80-81).

Meanwhile, in formulating their argument, Fitouchi, André and Baumard refer to Michael Walzer's publication, "Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology" (1963). He analyses a variety of case studies in which puritanical morality was considered helpful in maintaining social order. One particular study follows the punishment of poorly-behaved children who were believed to be deviating from puritanical norms. Although it is important to recognise that Walzer's article is approximately sixty years old, he suggests that a father embodies the role of governing a family and disciplining the children. He argues that this role is due to an "extraordinary fear of disorder and anarchy" (Walzer 1963, 85). Fitouchi, André and Baumard apply their argumentation to Walzer's analysis of this case by suggesting that weak-

Members of these rich environments - hence, WEIRD societies - are believed to have started viewing each other as instinctively self-controlled and trustworthy.

willed individuals who are "perpetually tempted by selfishness" (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 35) must rely on puritanical morality in order for their societies to function. They begin with the idea that (Western) authoritarian punishment, such as the father disciplining his children in Walzer's case, leads to rich environments where people "view others as spontaneously cooperative" (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 35). Therefore, members of these rich environments - hence, WEIRD societies - are believed to have started viewing each other as instinctively self-controlled and trustworthy.

Thus, Fitouchi, André and Baumard suggest that a fear of social disorder led to stricter disciplining of individuals who deviated from puritanical norms. The argument follows that this discipline and punishment has played a key role in WEIRD cultural evolution whereby individuals became

inherently more self-controlled and trusting of others. Consequently, the three thinkers propose their explanation of the declining puritanical morality in the West on this basis.

Issues with Fitouchi, André and Baumard's Account

Despite recognising cultural differences in puritanical morality today, Fitouchi, André and Baumard's argumentation has considerable cultural evolutionary consequences. Particularly, in suggesting that WEIRD societies are more self-controlled, disciplined and trustworthy than non-WEIRD societies, they maintain a needlessly ethnocentric approach. Their argumentation leads to the implication that non-WEIRD people are less psychologically advanced and that they are falling behind WEIRD people in terms of cultural evolution. While it is the case that each society and culture has evolved in a unique way, Fitouchi, André and Baumard's suggestion that individuals in WEIRD societies have evolved to better embody attributes such as trustworthiness and self-discipline appears to be implicitly biased.

The three authors are themselves situated in a WEIRD sociocultural context, meaning that they are accustomed to Western values and acquainted with Western development. Particularly, Western economic and industrial development has resulted in "living in highly dense urban population centres" (Heigham 2019). Although the emergence of densely populated areas is not a uniquely Western phenomenon, further research indicates that WEIRD people have relatively high expectations in problem-solving due to the abundance and wide accessibility of technology. Ecologist Steve Heigham suggests that Western individuals in close proximity to each other may be more compelled to adhere to social norms due to these high expectations (Heigham 2019). Fitouchi, André and Baumard appear to take this approach, too, in suggesting that WEIRD people have become more trusting of others to adhere to these norms.

However, this approach to cultural evolution is disputable because the question of how much researchers' experiences and personal sociocultural contexts influence their arguments remains unanswered. Undeniably, WEIRD people are more acquainted with WEIRD societal practices and behaviours. As Henrich explains in *The Secret of Our Success* (2016), some practices can only be understood at the group level. This means that often, one cannot know the function or meaning of a cultural practice unless one is a member of the group in which it is practised. The implication of these "causally opaque" (Henrich 2016, 68) practices is that Western authors like Fitouchi, André and Baumard can only understand the function and meaning behind Western practices, in the same way that Heigham explains the relation between norm adherence and technology reliance in problem-

solving expectations. The mistake these approaches make is found in their comparisons to non-WEIRD societies because Western researchers can only make assumptions, usually laced with implicit ethnocentric bias, about practices outside of their own sociocultural context.

Hence, it follows that Fitouchi, André and Baumard attempt to explain the perceived fall of puritanical morality practices in WEIRD societies by comparing them to non-WEIRD societies whose practices cannot be understood by outsiders. Their bias may be unintentional, but since these authors are situated in a WEIRD sociocultural context, they are accustomed to and aware of specific changes in WEIRD norms. This paper is not necessarily claiming that these authors are uneducated or ignorant of changes in non-WEIRD cultural values. Instead, the aim here is to argue for an alternative explanation of the perceived fall of puritanism in WEIRD societies that is not needlessly ethnocentric. Thus, in the sections that follow, this paper will expand upon a cultural evolutionary approach that considers sociocultural norm variation while also acknowledging the significant co-occurrence of some moral values (Curry, Mullins, and Whitehouse 2019, 48).

Their bias may be unintentional, but since these authors are situated in a WEIRD sociocultural context, they are accustomed to and aware of specific changes in WEIRD norms.

Are Puritanical "Morality" Practices Actually Related to Morality?

In order to conceptualise an alternative account of the supposed fall of puritanical morality in WEIRD societies, one may consider the extent to which puritanical behaviours are actually related to morality. This can be done through an analysis of moral disgust, the idea that humans feel revulsed at another human's action that fails to "uphold the group or relationship norms" (Nabi 2010, 695-96). Furthermore, an ongoing discussion in several psychological and philosophy of mind domains concerns whether moral disgust is actually related to morality and ethics at all. This discussion plays a key role in discerning the "moral" aspect of puritanical morality since the public response to deviating from puritanical practices is a form of moral disgust. Examples of moral disgust in puritanical practices are seen in negative attitudes towards clothing considered too revealing and excessive alcohol consumption in public spaces. While this relatively short

paper cannot divulge all aspects of the moral disgust debate, it will adopt the position that disgust is a matter of convention and use it as a starting point for an alternative account of Western puritanism, or lack thereof.

First, it is important to consider the core of the moral disgust debate. Like many researchers, Royzman and Kurzman conclude that moral disgust is "elusive" (Royzman and Kurzman 2011, 270). In analysing a series of experiments, these researchers investigated the expression of moral dyspepsia - a feeling of sickness or disgust at another person's behaviour. They aimed to analyse the hypothesis that feeling disgusted at someone else's behaviour is the same kind of disgust induced by the sight of vomit and faeces, for example. While the results were inconclusive, several of the studies examined by Royzman and Kurzman demonstrate that when exposed to bad smells or tastes, the participants generally made more discernible facial expressions when they were aware of being observed (Royzman and Kurzman 2011, 269-70). This suggests that the expression of disgust may function as a strategic signal. This is relevant to the moral disgust debate because moral disgust may also function as a strategic signal to in-group members, especially in children's acquisition of social norms.

Moreover, in discussing the moral reasoning of WEIRD societies, Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan consider the ways in which children develop moral values. Using the Kohlberg model, they illustrate that WEIRD children develop their moral reasoning in three stages: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional (Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan 2010, 13). During the pre-conventional stage, these children distinguish between right and wrong based on internal standards and consequences - e.g., it is wrong to do something that causes pain. Next, in the conventional stage, morality is based on external standards that maintain the social order of the group - such as the father in Walzer's case study that disciplined his disorderly children (Walzer 1963, 85). Lastly, WEIRD children enter the post-conventional stage where they no longer rely on another person to teach them how to behave. In this stage, they refer to "abstract ethical principles regarding justice and individual rights – the moral code inherent in most Western constitutions" (Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan 2010, 13). Though, it is essential to note that this moral code should also be considered a form of conventionality since it is a set of rules comprised of generally accepted standards or social norms.

In terms of the Kohlberg model, puritanical morality can also be considered part of the conventional and post-conventional stages. Despite governing domains that have seemingly little overlap (i.e., food, clothing, sex), puritanical morality functions as a set of generally accepted standards or norms. Puritanical practices may be adopted in the conventional stage,

whereby the external standards of respected individuals influence children. Meanwhile, during the post-conventional stage, puritanical practices and values may be present if they play a significant role in the child's sociocultural context and moral code. For example, Jonathan Haidt analyses puritanical practices in the Hebrew Bible containing "rules about food, menstruation, sex, skin, and the handling of corpses" (Haidt 2012, 25). Although some may argue that the Hebrew Bible does not play as big of a role in the moral code of many Western societies today, it has significantly influenced this moral code historically. The puritanical morality found in the Hebrew Bible follows a logic of remaining "pure" because purity is associated with God, whereas impurity or dirtiness is associated with animals (Haidt 2012, 110). Haidt notes that disgust may also influence the logic of puritanism since there is often an emotional dimension seen in rules about eating "things that swarm upon the earth" (Haidt 2012, 25). In this analysis, Haidt asks his reader to consider the emotional dimension in this logic by imagining a swarm of mice rather than a singular mouse, suggesting that induced feelings of disgust towards the possibility of certain actions (i.e., eating mice in this

When a child successfully discerns a signal of disgust, especially displayed by respected and influential group members, they may also start using this signal.

example) have been introduced and maintained by puritanical thinking.

Despite the Kohlberg model focussing on WEIRD children specifically, it can function as one possible description of the ways in which puritanical morality is a form of conventionality. Specifically, it is a useful description of how WEIRD societies maintained puritanical practices historically while allowing room for changes to normative sources such as external influences and moral codes. Meanwhile, the notion that moral disgust may be a form of strategic signalling is also useful in reconceptualising puritanical morality as conventionality. It can account for at least one aspect of introducing societal norms to children in any sociocultural context, alongside maintaining these norms. When a child successfully discerns a signal of disgust, especially displayed by respected and influential group members, they may also start using this signal. If this is the case for most people in a society, displaying disgust towards a certain behaviour becomes conventional. Therefore, applications of the Kohlberg model and disgust signalling can function as valuable descriptions of puritanical morality as conventionality.

Hence, the extent to which puritanical morality practices can really be considered a form of morality depends on a society's conventions constituting what is believed to be moral. These practices are not moral insofar that they maintain behaviours necessarily and objectively right while condemning those necessarily and objectively wrong. Many people worldwide would disagree that wearing clothing made from two (or more) different fibres is necessarily wrong. Nevertheless, it is believed to be wrong by those in the sociocultural context whereby this clothing practice is condemned. This is an appropriate moment to reiterate Henrich's claim that some practices are "causally opaque" (Henrich 2016, 68), meaning that unless a practice is conventional in one's own society, one may not understand its meaning or function. In this sense, puritanical morality is understood as a form of group-level conventionality whereby the righteousness of its practices is subjective to its context.

An Alternative Account of the Declining Puritanical Morality in the West

Thus far, this paper has argued that puritanical morality is not declining in WEIRD societies due to WEIRD people having more self-control and being more trusting of others. There must be another reason for this decline. It has also been argued that puritanical morality is a form of group-level conventionality rather than objective moral righteousness. Consequently, the next appropriate point of analysis entails an alternative account of the declining puritanical morality in the West that acknowledges it as a form of conventionality comprised of social norms. This alternative account begins by returning, again, to Henrich's "causally opaque" practices (Henrich 2016, 68).

In chapter seven of *The Secret of Our Success*, Henrich uses the processing technique of Tukanoan manioc in Amazonia as an example of a causally opaque practice (Henrich 2016, 97-101). In this particular case, it is difficult to grow other crops, meaning that manioc is a large part of the Tukanoan people's diet. Since consuming the roots of the plant can cause cyanide poisoning, it is important that children learn how to process it correctly. In this case, the young Tukanoan people learn how to process the roots from the previous generation, who had learnt from the generation of people before them, and so forth. Henrich illustrates that because these techniques work, those preparing the manioc are unaware that it can cause cyanide poisoning (Henrich 2016, 98). Instead, they may believe that they are preparing it in a way that removes the bitter taste and reduces the likelihood of reactions like diarrhoea.

Moreover, the preparation process is rigorous and takes multiple days to complete. Therefore, Henrich asks his reader to imagine someone realising

that one of the steps - boiling the manioc - is sufficient in only removing the bitter taste and possible reactions (Henrich 2016, 99). Since they would be unaware that manioc consumption can cause cyanide poisoning, anyone who eats the food they prepare would eventually develop symptoms of such. However, despite the possibility that Tukanoan people could start experimenting with removing steps from this time-consuming process, they continue to use the techniques passed on for generations. While removing seemingly pointless steps may be the most commonsensical thing to do, the Tukanoan people have faith in the traditional processing method. For Henrich, this notion sits at the core of causally opaque practices because someone who is not a part of the group "cannot readily infer their functions, interrelationships, or importance" (Henrich 2016, 99). Consequently, some cultural evolution practices can only be understood at the group level.

Henrich's understanding of causally opaque practices in cultural evolution can be applied to puritanical morality practices. For instance, Haidt describes a US "virginity pledge movement" during the 1990s (Haidt 2012, 156), whereby group members vowed to remain celibate until marriage. For individuals who were not part of this movement, it may be unclear why a vow of celibacy is important to the group. In this sense, someone with no affiliation to the group can only make assumptions about why vowing to remain celibate is important to its members. They may assume it is important in upholding religious values. In contrast, someone who is unfamiliar with references to celibacy in the Bible, for example, may assume it is important for another reason.

Meanwhile, Henrich's notion is instrumental in formulating an explanation of the declining puritanical morality in WEIRD societies without ethnocentric undertones. The previous explanation examined in this paper is that of Fitouchi, André and Baumard, who claim that WEIRD people have culturally evolved to be more trusting of others and self-controlled, among other things (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 35-36). While it is likely that cultural evolution is responsible for the fall of Western puritanism, these authors make the mistake of comparing changes in Western cultural practices to non-Western cultural practices - often incomprehensible to those outside of their specific sociocultural context. Since Fitouchi, André and Baumard are WEIRD people, the argument that puritanical morality is present in non-WEIRD societies because their members are not disciplined enough to uphold social order without it is merely an assumption. Their argument fails to recognise that a (non-WEIRD) society may maintain a puritanical practice for causally opaque reasons.

Furthermore, Fitouchi, André and Baumard take an individualist approach to cultural evolution by focusing on one's psychology in discus-

sions surrounding discipline and impulsiveness. A key issue with this approach is its implication that WEIRD individuals have evolved to transcend the need for puritanical morality. This implication falls dangerously close to suggesting that WEIRD societies are comprised of individuals with a superior psychological makeup because they no longer need to rely on puritanical practices to function. However, Henrich provides a group-level analysis of cultural variation that accounts for the fact that many societies have at least some values in common. This alternative approach does not maintain a needlessly ethnocentric attitude because it suggests that the fall

Their argument fails to recognise that a (non-WEIRD) society may maintain a puritanical practice for causally opaque reasons.

of Western puritanism is simply one descriptor of cultural variation and adaptation. It maintains that every society is culturally varied from another in some way, while neither is comprised of more psychologically developed individuals than another.

A critical aspect of Henrich's understanding of cultural evolution is that young learners and even adults "unconsciously attend to and preferentially learn from others" they consider successful, respected and prestigious members of their society (Henrich 2016, 4). In this view, one's values and behaviours stem from people they consider role models. This approach is highly compatible with the notion that puritanical morality is a form of conventionality because it is a set of social norms generally agreed upon within a society. Individuals adhere to these norms because the associated behaviours are learnt from respected members of one's own group. Earlier in this paper, moral disgust is evaluated as a strategic signal, suggesting that it can account for introducing and maintaining societal norms in their particular sociocultural contexts. Therefore, moral disgust can be considered a feature of cultural evolution insofar as individuals discern and then replicate the signals of prestigious group members.

Similarly, the maintenance of particular sociocultural norms can be considered a form of overimitation in cultural variation. When exploring features of social learning, researchers Berl and Hewlett consider the function of overimitation. They begin their analysis by defining overimitation as "the high-fidelity copying of causally irrelevant actions in the presence of clear causal information." (Berl and Hewlett 2015, 2). Therefore, overimitating is the act of copying all of another's actions exactly despite knowing that one or more of their actions is unnecessary. A simple example

of overimitation is when two people buy bottled smoothies. The first person may shake their smoothie bottle five times in an up-and-down motion. When the second person observes this behaviour and also shakes their smoothie bottle five times in an up-and-down motion, they are overimitating. The second person did not necessarily need to mirror the first person's actions, as shaking four times from left to right would have been adequate too. While overimitation is not confirmed as a universal social learning feature in every society, it has been observed in a range of societies (Berl and Hewlett 2015, 4). Hence, overimitation appears to play a role in introducing and maintaining norm-adhering behaviours in at least some WEIRD and non-WEIRD societies.

In addition, puritanical morality practices can be considered a form of overimitation. This paper has established that puritanical morality may be considered a set of norms that govern seemingly unrelated domains like food and clothing. However, despite these domains having little to no overlap in their content, Fitouchi, André and Baumard illustrate that many societies adhere to the same set of norms (Fitouchi, André, and Baumard 2022, 6). In this sense, it can be argued that individuals in certain sociocultural contexts overimitate when they practise puritanical morality. The reason why some people from various cultures consider both excessive public alcohol consumption and short skirts disgusting is unclear. Nonetheless, it is still the case that lots of different people from different societies agree with these same values. Hence, the practice of puritanical morality can be considered the overimitation of respected group members over generations. Following Henrich's cultural evolution, one can consider the centuries-long,

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if not longer, overimitation of the same puritanical norms as other groups in terms of the formation of populations and new societies. Henrich explains that social institutions "integrated local groups into larger regional populations" (Henrich 2016, 221). Therefore, cultures began to evolve in a new way when smaller groups joined to make larger societies. The social institutions he mentions play an important role because they are responsible for both the moral code seen in WEIRD children's post-conventional stage of moral

reasoning and the causally opaque practices seen in manioc preparation. Thus, despite the relatedness of puritanical norms being causally opaque, they appear to be overimitated as the prestigious members of some societies have upheld these values by learning from those prestigious in the generation before them, and so forth.

Next, one is left with the final question of how puritanism is falling in WEIRD societies if it continues to be overimitated in (some) other societies. To propose an answer to this question, one can return to the notion of social learning by observing and reproducing the behaviours of respected group members. In WEIRD societies today, many people respect and learn from influencers or celebrities (Heigham 2019). These celebrities' behaviours are also imitated, from eating at restaurants they recommend to buying articles of clothing they are seen wearing – perhaps even in the same colour. Like puritanical practices, the relatedness of specific restaurants and specific items of clothing is causally opaque. In both WEIRD societies and societies that practice puritanical morality, the only observable aspect of this relatedness to those who are not a member of the group is the fact that successful and well-respected members also have these practices.

Therefore, when puritanical morality is understood as a form of conventionality rather than associating it with objective righteousness, a society may stop practising it, or some aspects of it, because it no longer plays a significant role in social norms. Consequently, this has led to an alternative account of declining puritanical morality in WEIRD societies that understands it as cultural evolution. In this sense, the presence of puritanical practices in a society is simply one descriptor of cultural variation and adaptation. This approach allows for a non-ethnocentric account of changing WEIRD practices. It argues that the respected members of WEIRD societies whose behaviours are overimitated simply behave differently from those in other societies. Hence, WEIRD people are not necessarily more disciplined and less impulsive; they have different, and not better, causally opaque practices.

Conclusion

Overall, this paper has criticised Fitouchi, André and Baumard's explanation of declining puritanical morality in WEIRD societies and provided a non-ethnocentric alternative. The three authors demonstrate that although the domains of puritanical morality, such as clothing and food, are seemingly unrelated, a significant number of the world's population practice these beliefs. They argue that puritanical morality is necessary for upholding social order because it makes individuals more self-controlled and disciplined. Without it, they suggest, a society's social order is at risk because people may be tempted to pursue selfish pleasures such as adultery (Fitouchi,

André, and Baumard 2022, 9). Hence, they believe that a WEIRD fear of social disorder caused stricter disciplining of individuals, which ultimately led to the redundancy and decline of puritanical morality.

However, this paper has argued that Fitouchi, André and Baumard's explanation of the phenomenon is problematic. Their argumentation leads to the implication that non-WEIRD people have somewhat fallen behind WEIRD people in cultural evolution. Their approach is ethnocentric, especially since these authors are WEIRD. They cannot know the importance, meaning, or interrelationships of some non-WEIRD practices because they are not members of those groups. Hence, they appear to have an implicit bias in attempting to compare their understanding and experience of WEIRD practices to non-WEIRD practices that they cannot fully understand.

Consequently, this paper proposes an alternative account of declining puritanical practices in WEIRD societies. Starting from a conceptualisation of puritanical morality as a form of group-level conventionality, it has been argued that such practices are a set of societal norms rather than objective moral righteousness. Therefore, in applying Henrich's ideas on cultural variation, this paper suggests that people acquire norms and practices via social learning. Causally opaque practices (Henrich 2016, 68) are learnt from prestigious and respected group members and may be passed on for generations, as seen in the preparation of Tukanoan manioc. This notion can be applied to puritanical morality since someone who is not a group member can only make assumptions about the group's practices. Thus, Fitouchi, André and Baumard make the mistake of comparing WEIRD practices, of which they are a group member, to the assumptions they make about non-WEIRD practices.

The presence of puritanical morality practices in a society is simply one descriptor of cultural variation and adaptation, whereby a WEIRD society simply overimitates and expresses different behaviours than a non-WEIRD society.

The proposed alternative explanation understands the fall of puritanical morality in WEIRD societies as a matter of cultural variation. It argues that the presence of puritanical morality practices in a society is simply one descriptor of cultural variation and adaptation, whereby a WEIRD society simply overimitates and expresses different behaviours than a non-WEIRD society. Ultimately, this approach concludes that the cultural evolution of WEIRD societies has merely led to different, and not better, practices.

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Into the Black Hole with Jonathan Zackor

A (Now Retrospective) Interview

Charlie Chowdhry

The Valkhof Museum's exhibition Into the Black Hole opened in October of 2023, to much fanfare. Students from Radboud University (such as our very own Laura Schranz!) participated as 'public-in-residence' to co-design the exhibition alongside the Valkhof museum. I decided to interview Jonathan Zackor, a Master's student in Tourism and Culture at Radboud, who was part of the core group of students working on the exhibition. I had a strategic advantage in scheduling an interview with him, owing to the fact that we have been boyfriends for almost two years.

I decide to spring a surprise interview on Jonathan during his shift at the coffee corner in the main University Library. He is wearing his black work polo shirt and a pair of comfortable-looking jeans, but his individuality is still obvious even through his uniform: his split-dyed hair (currently half-brown, half-orange), the tattoos on his arm and his nose piercings make him easy to spot. He is softly spoken, switching between English and Dutch to take people's coffee orders, and apologetically defaulting back to English with a smile if someone tries to order using unfamiliar Dutch slang. In a quiet moment, I ask my first question:

For the uninitiated, who are you, and what was your role in the Valkhof Museum exhibition 'Into the Black Hole'?

"I'm Jonathan Zackor, I'm an international student from Germany who is doing his Master's in Tourism and Culture. While I was working at the Valkhof Museum, I was still doing my Bachelor's degree in Arts and Culture Studies, so my Master's orientation coincided with the work I was doing at Valkhof. I was hired by the Valkhof Museum, as a Radboud student, particularly as a student who could participate in giving a unique perspective on the collaboration between art and science."

He leans over to look at what I have written down so far, then asks, "Could you add that I was selected to be a member of the core group, not the senate?"

On the topic of unique perspectives, I ask him if he noticed a difference in approach or mindset between him and students from different faculties. He begins to answer, but is interrupted by an influx of customers to the coffee corner. He diligently switches to taking people's orders, and once the rush dies down, he returns.

"A difference? Well, yes... I think a difference was already reflected in my motivation when I applied for this position. They were asking what our opinion about the black hole was, what initial thoughts we had about it. I told them that I wanted to become an academic researcher, that I've done some independent research on it already, and that I've done some independent research on Affect studies – with an A!"

At this point, something shifts: Jonathan is no longer just chatting during his work shift, cleaning Billie cups and keeping an eye out for customers – he embodies an academic, a professor giving a lecture on cultural studies (one I am struggling to capture the true depth of in my hastily-typed notes).

"In my opinion, the phenomenon of the black hole is extremely challenging to grasp, so I attached some thoughts to it that were inspired by my previous research, such as imagining the black hole as a void with all emotions absent, with all humanness absent. So I was considering the black hole from a Culture-studies' perspective. I was not the only person working on the exhibition from the Faculty of Arts, obviously, but I was very willing to stand in for the initial idea that I had."

"They were asking what our opinion about the black hole was, what initial thoughts we had about it. I told them that I wanted to become an academic researcher, that I've done some independent research on it already, and that I've done some independent research on Affect studies – with an A!"

"I think the perspective I have is also important for people who don't know anything about black holes. Like, I didn't know anything about the scientific side, I think most people probably don't. In antiquity, people came up with Greek gods to try to understand the phenomena around themselves that were beyond understanding, and I think the black hole represents something similar."

"In my studies, we are taught to be extremely critical. Our study is very theoretical, so I thought it was very different..."

Jonathan dashes away for a moment to retrieve some returned Billie cups from customers, puts them in the sink, then makes his way back over to me.

"...I feel like other studies from the Faculty of Arts might have more practical applications, like studying languages, but with Arts and Culture Studies, it may be a stereotype, but you can't really do anything with it if you don't have more education, like in a job. You know what I mean?"

I am a PPS student; naturally, I do.

So, being an Arts and Culture student, you're used to having to deal with more abstract ideas that aren't tangible. You're used to studying things that can't necessarily be understood, like a black hole.

"Oh... you put that much better than I did." Jonathan half-sighs, half-chuckles.

What does the exhibition mean to you, firstly as Jonathan the Arts and Culture scholar, and secondly as Jonathan the individual?

"As a scholar, it means a successful combination of art and science perspectives." He doesn't elaborate, so I nudge him:

And what about Jonathan, the individual?

He smiles, this question is more difficult. After thinking for a moment, he says: "I think one major component of the exhibition was that it was co-designed with students my age, and I think it's quite an honour to be part of this. I think that the exhibition really thrives off of that as well, because you can hear the contemporary voices. That's very cool. Like it's very... in the moment, completely recent. It speaks for our generation."

You were talking about Affect earlier; how do you feel when you're in the exhibition?

"I feel fascinated by all of the voices that come together. It's a very overwhelming experience. It leaves me in awe. It makes you wonder why museums don't work with students more often."

What do you think a student from the FFTR could learn from a visit to the exhibition?

"People can have different conceptions, theories, "scientific theories"..." (Jonathan mimes the quotation marks for "scientific theories" with his hands, half-mockingly, with the air of someone who has several strong opinions on the separation of scientific theory from cultural theory), "...but they can express them in artworks as opposed to in writing. In philosophy, I feel as though writing is the primary way of expressing and learning ideas and theories. In the exhibition, philosophy students could try to retrace the

objects, and try to see what theories the objects might incorporate or represent. Obviously the written descriptions of the artworks on the plaques help people to interpret the work…"

Jonathan hesitates for a moment to gather his thoughts, then confides in me: "If the museum wants to work with students and take them seriously, I think a point of improvement in the future would be for them not to pick and choose from our ideas as it suits them or the status quo."

I detect some frustration and, in the spirit of journalism, I resolve to delve deeper, devising a new question while Jonathan finishes his shift.

"I feel fascinated by all of the voices that come together. It leaves me in awe. It makes you wonder why museums don't work with students more often."

Were there things that the senate or the core group had suggested, but weren't able to implement in the final exhibition?

"Since I was a member of the core group, we weren't part of a lot of conversations that the senate had. So I can't really say anything about that. But we, as a core group, were each given additional specific focuses. One idea we had was contrary to what museums usually do – we wanted to not print dates on objects we were exhibiting. There are a lot of objects in the vitrines and exhibition space such as the mobile telephone, prints, books from Radboud's special collection… Using these objects, we wanted to give a comprehensive overview of people from different cultures and different time periods gazing into the stars and making art about it, or wanting to explore what's waiting for them in the universe, and inventing technologies to do so. This is a cross-cultural thing, and we wanted the visitor to think for themselves about what connects different cultures, in spite of temporal differences. So we were thinking about just completely removing the data and locations of objects from the objects themselves, to not have the dates printed in the object descriptions."

"We wanted to do away with museum traditions. The students had visions for how we could change things, and this was brought up in conversation. But I think this, and other ideas, were sometimes too progressive, I guess, in the museum's eyes. 'This is not how we do it here', basically. So those ideas from the students were put to the side, I feel, because they were so out of the way of traditions. But we weren't really told that this was something we couldn't give input on."

"There was also an issue with language. We were a mix of Dutch and international students, and one of the museum's missions with the exhibition was to attract more students, which was why they wanted to have our perspective as students. We basically told them: 'to be inclusive, it would be best to have English as the main language of communication'. But then there is also the tradition of the Valkhof museum to cooperate with German partners and visitors, so in their tradition, the main language of communication is Dutch, followed by German and English (or English and German). We wanted the main language to be English, not only for the big texts, but also for the videos, to make it more attractive to the general student population. But the museum reverted back to what they were used to. It was a very small thing, but I think we could have spent our time better if we had known there were certain things we couldn't have changed, and we could have dedicated our energy elsewhere, towards things that were possible to change. The boundaries were sometimes a bit blurred."

"Basically, how museums usually work, they work with internal and external stakeholders. That makes sense for the museum. We as a core group were basically put in charge of the exhibition concept, or so we were told, which included the upcoming written narrative – the story we wanted to tell to the visitors – and we had a lot of ideas. Each of us in the core group prepared little powerpoints, presented what we thought about black holes, our study

"We could have spent our time better if we had known there were certain things we couldn't have changed, and we could have dedicated our energy elsewhere, towards things that were possible to change."

backgrounds, and we really connected with each other. From those conversations, we came up with a 'master narrative' which included the narrative, but also how to set it up in reality, spatial design, colour coding. One member had a really cool idea for making a vintage space poster, like Star Wars."

"And once we were told there were also external stakeholders involved, like a design team, we were excited to work together with them, we spent a lot of time on it, which says a lot, as students. We had multiple meetings. But what we weren't really told – and I'm just saying that this should have been made clear upfront, to make sure we spent our time properly – was that the design team were the ones in charge because they had a lot of practical experience. We could give them our plans, but they would then tell us what they could do with that. And once they got back to us, I think all of us were

shocked because the plan was completely different from what we had in mind with the story we wanted to tell. It was very different. We all really had to get warmed up to the idea. This is not to say that I don't like the exhibition space as it is now, but we really had to get used to the idea because, at first, we didn't know how this was going to go. And I think we would have done things differently if there had been transparent communication. I don't want to sound too critical, but I remember everyone having a moment of silence when the plans were presented in front of us. We were like: 'Huh? How did they come up with that?' It was a surprise."

Did you learn anything about philosophy, politics or religion while you were working on the exhibition?

"Well, I did learn a lot, of course, because another member of the core group is literally studying PPS, and she was very inspiring in her talks. I feel like she had a very personal stake in it. I love learning from other people as well. We had a lot of different backgrounds in the core group, and, of course, in the senate, but we didn't collaborate as much with the senate as with the

"The exhibition united students of all disciplines in thinking about black holes, and this unitedness is one of the goals of the exhibition itself."

other core group members. I like to just listen to the very amazing ideas people have around me, obviously there is a reason why the collaboration wanted to have a philosophy student, and I think it was a great mix."

"The connection emphasised to me that mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion are all around us. People look up at the same night sky, as part of this imaginary of people thinking about the universe – we are all part of this. But there are still structural things in place that means that this togetherness is obstructed. We set others apart – we obstruct this togetherness. We create Otherness, we perpetuate ideas of cultural supremacy, we try to separate art and science."

"In my studies this is very much a point of attention, but to also see these ideas and points of attention emphasised in the work we were doing together, across studies and faculties, was really nice. The exhibition united students of all disciplines in thinking about black holes, and this unitedness is one of the goals of the exhibition itself."

"I like that the exhibition shows that people always have been, and always will be, curious about the world around them. I really like that."

The location and the exhibition itself describes itself as "accessible to wheelchair users and the disabled" on the website. Do you think this is the case?

"It is now! For people with physical disabilities. So basically, when the initial design plans were shown to us, and we had a discussion about it, people were wondering, 'is it accessible for people who use wheelchairs?', because the initial plan had obstructed the wheelchair ramp with walls. This was rectified, so now it is accessible for people with a wheelchair."

"But for some exhibition pieces, specifically ones that use a lot of light and noise, I would have appreciated a warning for people who are sensitive to flashing lights or intense sensory input in general. I don't think there's a warning in place right now, and that might limit accessibility for some people. But for the videos, for example, the education videos, there was a lot of conversation about how to deal with the sound. So we finally decided on 'sound showers', which I really like. Sound showers come from a source in

"Imagine you are being sucked into a black hole and into a different dimension, and you have to leave something behind. What is it?"

the ceiling, and you have to stand under it, literally like a shower head but for sound. If you're not under it, you don't hear it. So that is good for people who would be overwhelmed by a lot of different sounds in the same room."

"And I also remember when we first went into the building on the Keizer Karelplein before the exhibition was set up. A lot of people from our group felt that the physical space of the building was very disorienting, challenging, and we kind of wanted it to not be overwhelming. There are a lot of colours, weirdly-shaped pillars, and we just wanted to create a coherent environment. When we were walking through the building at first, we felt quite uncomfortable. We felt we really had to work with the space and we didn't want it to be too overwhelming for visitors. I think the exhibition itself is quite a lot, you know, it's a bit overwhelming in terms of the content and the fact that it makes you feel like a little thing in the universe, it's quite existential. This is making me think about Camus. May I refer to Camus?"

You may.

"I think Camus would have liked this exhibition a lot. You see yourself as this tiny thing, right in front of a black hole, and you think 'Yes, it exists, you can

ask a lot of questions and learn about it, but you can't escape it, so you just have to face it'... I do like Camus." Jonathan laughs a little at his own admiration for Camus.

I recall that the students involved in the exhibition were each asked to devise a question for the visitors to consider as they walked around the exhibition. Your question was along the lines of: "Imagine you are being sucked into a black hole and into a different dimension, and you have to leave something behind. What is it?". What would you leave behind as you went Into the Black Hole?

"I asked this question because I didn't know, and I didn't want to answer the question. I think that everyone does want to leave something negative behind, maybe they feel that it isn't a part of their story. So I feel like it's, again, a very existential question. Usually, I tend to want to think about it, not just give a funny answer. I guess I would want to leave behind the feeling that I don't deserve good things. Because I do, and everyone else also does. I don't like it when people question their worth."

Speaking of worth, and as a way to round off the interview, what do you think makes the 'Into the Black Hole' exhibition worth experiencing?

"I think the fact that it encourages people to experience curiosity, in the face of their fear. People look at black holes and think: 'this is scary, but I'm going to study it anyway'. This is very human. I think the exhibition is a testament to human beings doing things both because of, and in spite of, existential fear or dread. Students, artists, scientists, everyone."

Towards a Decolonial Ecology

Indigenous Conceptualizations of, and Cosmological Relationships to, the Natural World

Ilse Meijer

> Like Creation stories everywhere, cosmologies are a source of identity and orientation to the world. We are inevitably shaped by them no matter how distant they may be from our consciousness. One story leads to the generous embrace of the living world, the other to banishment. One woman is our ancestral gardener, a cocreator of the good green world that would be the home of her descendants. The other was an exile, just passing through an alien world on a rough road to her real home in heaven. And then they met – the offspring of Skywoman and the children of Eve – and the land around us bears the scars of that meeting. (Kimmerer 2020, 7)

In the first chapter of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, Wall Kimmerer (2020), an Anishinabekwe[1] plant scientist from Eastern Canada, tells the Creation story that is shared by the Original Peoples throughout the Great Lakes in present day North America. In the story a woman falls from the skies and is caught by geese. Animals then provide her with mud, and a turtle lends his back for land to be cultivated on. The 'Skywoman' gifts a handful of fruits, plants, and seeds for the mud to grow into land. This is how Turtle Island is born. As the quote above shows, the story of Skywoman expresses a very different cosmology than the Christian Creation story.

Creation stories express cosmologies in which history, identity, language, land base, and beliefs all connect, secure, and regulate one's orientation to the natural world (Salmón 2000, 1327-1332). Humans' orientation to the natural world is of particular importance when looking at the ecological crisis. The ecological crisis has not been caused by all humans, but by certain exploitative and oppressive systems in which humans relate to the natural world in a certain way. As an alternative to this exploitative

1 Anishinaabe is a collective term for the Ojibway (Chippewas), Potawatomi, and Odawa nations who share similar cultures and language. Some sources suggest other groups such as the Ottawa, Algonquin, Slateaux, Mississauga, Nipissing, and Oji-Cree communities to be included in this collective term. The Anishinaabe territory spans from Southern Ontario, the Northern States, Northern Ontaria, and Manitoba, and includes a diverse landscape (Cutting 2021, 10-11). The Anishinaabe speak Anishinaabemowin with around 36.000 speakers today (Cutting 2021).

and oppressive relation, this paper seeks to connect the wider decolonial project to ecological and environmentalist discourses by looking at different conceptualizations of, and cosmological relationships to, the natural world as reflected in Indigenous languages.

Humans' orientation to the natural world is of particular importance when looking at the ecological crisis.

First, I will discuss the conceptualization of the natural world that is expressed in the Christian cosmological orientation to the world, that has resulted in the ecological crisis. Then, I will discuss various Indigenous conceptualizations of, and cosmological relationships to the natural world. As a non-Indigenous student, raised and educated in a Western (ontological, linguistic, and epistemic) frame of reference, and without prior long-term fieldwork experience with the Peoples discussed in this paper, I am aware of my limitation in understanding, translating, and interpreting Indigenous knowledges, sciences, and wisdoms. Therefore, I will closely follow the interpretations, formulations, and translations of the discussed authors. Moreover, I am careful not to generalize Indigenous languages as I am aware of the vast variety of Indigenous languages that express different cosmologies. However, this paper does build on the premise that Indigenous languages express abstract concepts related to the land and natural world differently than does the English language, thereby following (amongst others) Rarámuri scholar Enrique Salmón (2002). In recognition of the importance of place, I have added footnotes displaying some brief information on the Indigenous Peoples I discuss.

1: The Epistemic Decolonial Turn

Contrary to what the term Anthropocene suggests, the ecological crisis is not caused by a universal Human, but rather by certain humans behaving within oppressive and exploitative systems, such as capitalism, colonialism, racism, and the patriarchy (Di Chiro 2017, Patel & Moore 2017). These systems are founded on an ontological, epistemic, and linguistic framework that divides the world in hierarchically opposing concepts, including the dichotomies culture/nature, man/woman, colonizer/colonized, and human/nonhuman (Descola 2013, Patel & Moore 2017). Characteristic of these dichotomies is the hierarchical power relation between its counterparts in which one side is active, dominant, and highly valued, whereas the other is passive, to be subjugated, and lower valued (or not at all). Alluding to the social and the

natural realm, Braidotti (2022, 75) states that whereas the former has rights and agency, the latter has none, and is accessible and disposable. Indeed, decolonial, Indigenous, and ecofeminist scholarship recognizes the entanglement of oppressive and exploitative systems, and hierarchical dichotomous thinking (*cf.* Merchant 1990, Di Chiro 2017). More specifically, some scholars show how these systems are entangled with a Christian orientation to the world. Ferdinand (2022, 42) recognizes the influence of Christianity on the justification of colonialism, and refers to 'Christian colonial inhabitation', and Patel and Moore (2017) make explicit the link between enslaved labor, capitalism and the Church.

Following social- and political ecology, and ecofeminism, Malcolm Ferdinand (2020) argues that environmental destruction is inseparable from racial and colonial domination and stems from the settler colonialist's sense of entitlement in appropriating the planet. In his book *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, Ferdinand (2022, 42) further argues that colonial inhabitation was presented as the will of God, and that, after the genocide of the Indigenous Peoples, lands of the Americas were reduced to (exploitable) resources. Hence, the exploitative and oppressive systems can be considered expressions of a Christian cosmology in which history, identity, language, land base, and beliefs connect, secure, and regulate how people within these systems relate to the natural world. As such the oppressive and exploitative systems that have caused the ecological crisis are radically different from how Indigenous Peoples relate to the world.

Notably, the Christian cosmology is the same ontological, epistemic, and linguistic framework that historically dominates academia, as has been recognized by decolonial- (Ferdinand 2020; Grosfoguel 2007, 217), and Indigenous scholars (Wall Kimmerer 2020). Although Wall Kimmerer has written the Creation story of Skywoman in English, the original is told across

Environmental destruction is inseparable from racial and colonial domination and stems from the settler colonialist's sense of entitlement in appropriating the planet.

various Anishinabee languages. The differences between them are significant. Where English consists for 70% of nouns, Potawami consists of only 30% nouns, the rest is verbs; in Potawami nouns and verbs are animate and inanimate; and whereas European languages often assign gender to nouns,

Potawami does not gender the world. In Potawami, one for example does not say 'hill,' as in English, but 'to be a hill' instead. Rocks, mountains, water and places are all animate, only human made 'things' are not (ibid., 53).

Such linguistic differences express and influence one's orientation to the world (ibid., 58; Salmón 2000; Flaherty 2001). Moreover, each language contains cosmology-specific concepts that are often difficult to translate, as I will further discuss in section two. Grosfoguel (2007) has therefore coined the term 'epistemic decolonial turn,' to call for a broader canon of thought than the Western canon; critical dialogue in what is recognized as a pluriversal world; and taking seriously epistemic cosmologies from (formerly) colonized bodies. The radically different cosmologies, and consequently ways of interacting with the natural world of Indigenous Peoples, that I will discuss in the second part of this essay, are situated within this epistemic decolonial turn.

2: Indigenous Conceptualizations of, and Cosmological Relationships to, the Natural World

Challenging western dichotomous thinking, posthuman feminism, Indigenous and decolonial feminists are sharing philosophies that emphasize a reciprocal relationship with land and nature that is centralized around care (Braidotti 2022). This reciprocal relationship is already present in various Indigenous conceptualizations of the natural world. The Yoeme of Sonora, Mexico, and southern Arizona[2] use the term *huya ania* to describe natural areas outside of their villages (Evers and Molina 1987 in Salmón 2000), which roughly means 'nurturing life'. The Rarámuri[3] refer to their homeland as *gawi wachi*, 'the Place of Nurturing'. The Hawaiian[4] concept *ʻĀina*, commonly

2 The Yoeme, or Yaqui or Hiaki, live in Sonora, Mexico, and southern Arizona. Their homelands include the Río Yaqui valley in Sonora, Mexico, southern Arizona in the United States, and they have communities in Chihuahua and Durango, Mexico. They speak a Uto-Aztecan language. Using their intimate knowledge of the Sonoran Desert landscape, the Yoeme cultivated a variety of crops, including maize (corn), various bean and squash varieties, cotton, wheat, and more. More information can be found on the website of the National Park Service (2023).

3 The Rarámuri, also known as Tarahumara, occupy one of the most biologically diverse regions in the world. The homeland, *Gawi Wachi*, is located in the eastern Sierra Madres of Chihuahua, Mexico. Approximately 60.000 Rarámuri continue to live a traditional lifestyle of horticulture, gathering, and agroforestry (Salmón 2001, 1327-1332).

4 The Archipelago of Hawaiʻi consists of eight main islands (Niʻihau, Hawaiʻi, Oʻahu, Maui, Molokaʻi, Lānaʻi, and Kahoʻolawe) and the uninhabited 124 Northwest Hawaiian Islands situated above Kauaʻi, situated in the North Pacific Ocean. The Hawaiian is

translated as 'land,' literally means "that which feeds" (Beamer 2021, 350). Despite these conceptual similarities, among Indigenous Peoples, relationships to land and place are diverse, specific, ungeneralizable, and based on long histories (Lowan 2009, 47).

This relationality is further reflected in Indigenous scholarship on Land pedagogy. Styres and Zinga (2013) purposefully distinguish 'Land' (capitalized), which extends beyond a material fixed space, from 'land,' which refers to landscapes as a fixed geographical and physical space including earth, rocks, and waterways. Like Lowan (2009, 47), they explain that "Land is a spiritually infused place grounded in interconnected and interdependent relationships, cultural positioning, and is highly contextualized" (2013, 300-301). For Kimmerer (2020, 124-125), this is a relationship of love:

> Knowing that you love the earth changes you, cultivates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond.

Similarly, Innuit[5] have "powerful, intimate, and spiritual connections to country that center love and mutual respect." Hence, for them, "the land is alive and 'nature' is like another person" (Lobo 2019, 395). In these Indigenous cosmologies relationality to the natural world extends beyond relationality to Land. For Shawn Wilson, an Opaskwayak Cree from Canada[6], for example, relationships extend to interaction with all creation, meaning that relatedness transcends human beings, and is extended to Land, including animals, plants, waters, the sky and spirits (Vásquez-Fernández and Ahenakew pii tai poo taa 2020, 67).

For many Indigenous Peoples land and elements within the natural world are recognized as animate persons or relationships of kin (Salmón 2001, 1327-1332). Whitehouse et al. (2014, 59), for example, note that for

originally a spoken language, and can be written with Latin/Roman letters since it was first written down by American missionaries. Due to a ban on teaching or speaking Hawaiian language in schools, only around 24.000 people, including self-identified speakers, currently speak Hawaiian.

5 The study that is being referred to here was done with the Inuit populations in Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, Labrador, Canada. See Willox et al. (2013) for further information.

6 Opaskwayak Cree Nation has over 6000 people, most of whom live on the 15.000 acres of Opaskqayak Cree Nation land which is located in Manitoba, Canada. More information can be found on the Opaskwayak website (2023).

Peoples on the Torres Strait Islands within Australia[7], "Land, water and sky become animate through relationships – to ancestors, to plants and animals, and to clouds, hills, rocks and mineral forms." Knowledge is thus considered 'living knowledge'. Similarly, Hawaiian scholar Manulani Aluli Meyer (2008, 219 as cited in Tuck et al. 2014, 9) writes:

> Land is our mother. *This is not a metaphor.* For the Native Hawaiians speaking of knowledge, land was the central theme that drew forth all others. You came from a place. You grew in a place and you had a relationship with a place. This is an *epistemological idea* [...] One does not simply learn about land, we learn best *from* land.

Such Indigenous conceptualizations of land and the natural world as persons or kindred relationships not only imply that humans are at an equal standing with the rest of the natural world and land, but it also implies that humans have a certain responsibility (Salmón 2001, 1327-1332). This is also present in Indigenous conceptualizations of sovereignty. In 1977, Hawaiian George Helm, whose words became the philosophical essence of the *Aloha ʻĀina* movement that challenges American capitalism, exploitation, and misuse of the Hawaiian Islands, notes:

> The truth is, there is man and there is environment, one does not supersede the other. The breath in man is the breath of Papa (the earth). Man is merely the caretaker of the land that maintains his life and nourishes his soul. Therefore, ʻāina is sacred. ... My duty is to protect Mother Earth, who gave me life. And to give thanks with humility as well as ask for forgiveness for the arrogance and insensitivity of man. (Beamer 2021, 359)

Similarly, Mohawk[8] scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2005, 45) points out that having "a spiritual connection with the land established by the Creator gives human beings special responsibilities within the areas they occupy, linking them in

7 Whitehouse et al. (2014) focus on various Peoples living on the Torres Strait Islands in the Coral Sea at the far north of tip of Cape York, Australia. They also discuss policies that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories.

8 The Mohawk people are the most eastern nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, or Iroquois Confederacy. Their original homeland is the north eastern region of New York State extending into southern Canada and Vermont. They speak Iroquoian. More information can be found on the website of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (2023).

a natural and sacred way to their territories [...]." Such relations and responsibilities are thus very different from the hierarchical dichotomies from the Christian cosmology.

Leanne Betaamosake Simpson, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe[9] scholar, writer, poet, and musician, connects several of the aforementioned points when she argues that through giving more than what we take from *aki* (the land), intimate webs of relationships between plants, animals, rivers, lakes, and the cosmos will flourish. In 'Land As Pedagogy,' she tells the story of Binoojiinh (meaning 'child'), a nonbinary child, who learns how to extract maple syrup water by looking at a "Ajidamoo" suck from the tree "Ninaatigoog" (Simpson 2017, 146-149). Similarly to both Wall Kimmerer and Manulani Aluli Meyer, the story revolves around the Nishnaabeg values of love, compassion,

Such Indigenous conceptualizations of land and the natural world as persons or kindred relationships not only imply that humans are at an equal standing with the rest of the natural world and land, but it also implies that humans have a certain responsibility.

and understanding, and portrays a relationship to land in which humans "learn both *from* the land and *with* the land" (ibid., 150). Although there is a wide variety of Indigenous stories and cosmologies, the examples of Indigenous conceptualizations of, and cosmological relationships with, the natural world and land discussed above have important similarities that distinguish them from the western dichotomous thinking in the Christian cosmology.

Conclusion

This paper sought to connect the wider decolonial project to ecological and environmentalist discourses by looking at different conceptualizations of, and cosmological relationships to, the natural world as reflected in Indigenous languages. I have discussed decolonial and Indigenous scholarship - much of which argues that Western science has historically been dominated with an

9 Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg territory is along the north shore of Chi'Niibish, or Lake Ontario. Chi'Niibish literally means 'big water,' and this lake is shared with the Roinonhseshá:ka with whom they have good relationships. The Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe are travelers, meaning they move through their lands rather than settling one place. They are the eastern doorway of the Nishnaabeg nation (Simpson 2021, 2).

ontological, epistemic, and linguistic framework that stems from a Christian cosmology. These frameworks consist of a hierarchical dichotomous thinking that separates and elevates humans from the natural world. As noted by decolonial, Indigenous, and ecofeminist scholarship, these are the same frameworks that have fueled the oppressive and exploitative systems of capitalism, colonialism, racism, and the patriarchy which, in turn, have caused the exploitation of the natural world that has resulted in the ecological crisis.

In order to further decolonize Western academia, two steps need to be taken. First, there needs to be a more widespread awareness of the influence of the Christian cosmology on (a misleadingly assumed secular) academia. This influence is for example visible in conceptualizations of the natural world and humans' relations to the natural world that remain unquestioned, with exceptions of decolonial and Indigenous scholars, ecofeminists, posthuman- and queer theorists. Second, more space needs to be created for Indigenous cosmologies that have been historically erased, oppressed, or disregarded within academia. Doing so requires the consideration of linguistic differences, and the risk of losing Indigenous cosmological understandings of the natural world when translating. Finally, following Wall Kimmerer (2020), different cosmologies and knowledges should be negotiated without prioritizing either one.

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Op zoek naar de verhalen van de FFTR

Een interview met drs. Ignace de Haes over het boek *Denkers en duiders: Een eeuw Nijmeegse filosofie, theologie en religiewetenschappen in honderd verhalen*

Mirte Debats

"Heb je al gehoord…", "Wat er gister toch is gebeurd…", "Wat ik nu toch weer heb meegemaakt…": deze en soortgelijke zinnen hoor je de hele dag door. Mensen vertellen elkaar continu verhalen. Verhalen over de man in de bus die zijn nagels zat te knippen, over de docent die op blote voeten college stond te geven, over de medestudent die een diepe zucht slaakte bij het horen van de naam 'Plato'. Iedere gebeurtenis, iedere ervaring, alles wat we meemaken, het zijn allemaal verhalen. We vertellen, we luisteren en we vertellen verder. Alles wat we doen, wat we denken, wat we voelen, de keuzes die we maken, het draagt allemaal bij aan het verhaal dat we over onszelf, over onze omgeving vertellen, want wat is het leven als het geen verhaal is?

Iedereen werkt dag in dag uit aan diens eigen narratief. Die verhalen komen bij elkaar, tijdens ontmoetingen tussen mensen. Op één dag lopen er al honderden, duizenden mensen op de campus rond, die allemaal hun eigen narratief met zich meedragen. Moet je nagaan hoeveel verhalen zich door de jaren heen hebben verzameld, hoeveel er op je liggen te wachten als je de moeite neemt om te zoeken, te luisteren, hoeveel er voor altijd verborgen zullen blijven om nooit meer gevonden te worden. Al honderd jaar bruisen de gebouwen van de Radboud Universiteit van de verhalen. Je zult ze misschien niet iedere dag bewust zien, maar ze zijn er wel degelijk.

Een faculteit vol verhalen

Hoe bijzonder is het dan om bewust op zoek te gaan naar deze verhalen, om te vragen, om nieuwsgierig te zijn, om interesse te tonen, om te luisteren. Dit is wat drs. Ignace de Haes, twee jaar geleden, besloot te doen. Ter ere van het honderdjarig bestaan van de Radboud Universiteit, besloot hij om een zoektocht te starten naar de verhalen van de FFTR, want, zoals hij zelf zegt: "We zijn een faculteit van grote verhalen, zowel bij de theologie als bij de filosofie. Met dit project wilde ik op zoek gaan naar de kleine verhalen, dat zijn verhalen die in principe subjectief zijn. Bij dat soort verhalen ga je uit van iemands ervaringen en herinneringen." Ignace is twee jaar lang op zoek geweest naar die kleine verhalen. Steeds meer mensen sloten zich bij de zoektocht aan. Een jaar geleden, kwam ook ik het team versterken: ik ben in de archieven gedoken, ik ben met mensen gaan praten, ik ben gaan zoeken, gaan luisteren, om deze verhalen te verzamelen.

Nu, een jaar later, hebben we met zijn allen maar liefst honderd verhalen bij elkaar gesprokkeld en gebundeld in het boek *Denkers en duiders: Een eeuw Nijmeegse filosofie, theologie en religiewetenschappen in honderd verhalen*. Na het meewerken aan de zoektocht naar de verhalen van het verleden van de faculteit, ben ik benieuwd naar nog één laatste verhaal, het verhaal dat achter dit boek schuilgaat. Ik heb aan Ignace gevraagd of hij mij dat verhaal wil vertellen.

In het begin sch...

Ignace is twee jaar geleden begonnen met het verzamelen van de kleine verhalen van de FFTR. Hij wilde zowel verhalen over de theologie als de filosofie vertellen, omdat dat de twee grote, oude pilaren zijn, waar de faculteit op steunt. Zijn idee was om honderd verhalen te gaan schrijven: één verhaal over ieder jaar dat zowel de universiteit als de studies filosofie en theologie bestaan. Poëtisch genoeg was het eerste verhaal dat hij schreef, het verhaal over het begin, over de schepping van hemel en aarde, of ten minste het ontstaan daarvan.

Het is namelijk nog maar de vraag of hemel en aarde überhaupt geschapen zijn. Dit ontdekte Ellen van Wolde tijdens haar onderzoek naar de Hebreeuwse grondteksten van de Bijbel. Ze kwam erachter dat het Hebreeuwse woord bara, in de Bijbel vertaald is als scheppen, terwijl het eerder scheiden betekent. Op het eerste gezicht lijkt dit geen indrukwekkende bevinding, het is slechts één woordje, hoe kan de vertaling van één simpel woordje nou een impact hebben op een verhaal, laat staan op een boek zo dik als de Bijbel? Toch wekte deze bevinding een stortvloed aan reacties op, allerlei deskundigen en gelovigen reageerden op en maakten zich druk om deze bevinding. Waarom? Daarvoor moeten we terug naar het begin, naar de eerste zin van de Bijbel, want “In het begin schiep God hemel en aarde” (Genesis 1:1) wordt dan: “In het begin scheidde God hemel en aarde.” Zo kan één woordje, één klein woordje, het hele verhaal van de wereld, het hele wereldbeeld van gelovigen op losse schroeven zetten. Wat betekent het als God niet de wereld uit het niets schiep, maar de wereld al bestond voordat God deze scheidde? Bestond er dan al iets voordat God bestond? En wat betekent dat voor het geloof? Wat betekent dat voor het scheppingsverhaal? Is dit een bedreigende vondst, of juist een verrijkende?

Ellen van Wolde zette mensen aan het denken, aan het reflecteren met haar vertaling van één simpel, klein woordje. Bij het opnieuw vertellen van dit verhaal, grinnikt Ignace tevreden: “Ik vind het zo geweldig. Die eerste zin van de Bijbel bestaat al 2000 jaar en dan komt er een wetenschapper die

zegt: 'Ja, die eerste zin, die klopt niet, die is verkeerd vertaald.' Eén woord anders maakt een compleet ander wereldbeeld, dat het wereldbeeld van het Christendom in elkaar laat storten. Nou, dat vind ik prachtig."

Diversiteit

Ignace heeft niet alle honderd verhalen alleen hoeven schrijven. Dat zou onmogelijk in twee jaar tijd zijn gelukt. Sowieso paste dat ook niet bij de visie die hij voor het project had. Zoals ik al eerder heb gezegd, wilde hij namelijk op zoek naar de kleine verhalen van de faculteit, de subjectieve verhalen, de anekdotes, verhalen die in een hoekje liggen te wachten om ontdekt te worden, verhalen die al heel lang in het geheugen van verschillende mensen opgeslagen liggen, maar gewoon nooit of nauwelijks verteld zijn geweest. Ignace beschrijft zijn visie als volgt: "We hebben al genoeg wetenschappelijke boeken, dus het mogen verhalen zijn van alumni, van medewerkers, van anderen die iets observeren. Daarnaast mag het over alles gaan." Hij wilde zoveel mogelijk mensen bij het project betrekken. Als je naar de laatste pagina's van het boek bladert, kun je aan de auteurslijst, die maar liefst twee hele pagina's beslaat met in totaal 48 namen, zien dat dit zeker gelukt is.

"Eén woord anders maakt een compleet ander wereldbeeld."

Op deze auteurslijst staan namen van mensen die Ignace zelf heeft benaderd en gevraagd om een verhaal te schrijven, zoals prof. dr. Peter Nissen en prof. dr. Christoph Lüthy, die samen met Ignace de redactie van het project vormden. Veel mensen hebben zich ook via mond-tot-mond reclame als een soort sneeuwbaleffect bij het project aangesloten, zo heeft dr. Willem van der Kuijlen voor het verhaal van 1988 getiteld *Filosofische stratenmakers*, de vier filosofen: Pieter van Diesen, Theo Theunissen, Zafer Aydogdu en Henk Hoogervorst gevraagd om een verhaal voor het project te schrijven. Dankzij de veelzijdigheid van de redactie zelf en van alle mensen die hebben meegewerkt is er een boek ontstaan met een grote diversiteit aan schrijvers, stijlen en verhalen. Sommige verhalen zijn meer historisch, andere juist anekdotisch. Er zijn interviews, prozateksten, beschrijvende verhalen, en stukjes uit archieven in het boek te vinden. Sommige verhalen zijn grappig, andere zijn emotioneel, sommige zijn kritisch, andere zijn lovend, sommige gaan over gebeurtenissen in de geschiedenis die in de archieven verstopt liggen, andere gaan over wat recentere en meer bekende ervaringen. Al met al is het volgens Ignace "een kleurrijk, divers pallet van verhalen van vroeger tot nu" geworden.

Favoriete verhaal van Ignace

Uit dit pallet wil Ignace eigenlijk geen favoriet kiezen, want het zijn nu eenmaal honderd prachtige verhalen geworden, die allemaal hun eigen charmes hebben en allemaal op hun eigen manier iets toevoegen aan het geheel. Toch is er één verhaal dat voor hem een speciaal plekje heeft. Dit is het verhaal van 2021 over Justine Borkes, een mevrouw die een vaste bezoekster was van de koffiehoek op de 15e verdieping. Iedereen kende haar, maar niemand scheen precies te weten wat ze daar nu eigenlijk deed. Ignace was nieuwsgierig naar haar verhaal en heeft haar gecontacteerd om te vragen of hij haar mocht interviewen. Dat mocht en het verborgen verhaal van de onbekende dame in de koffiehoek werd aan het licht gebracht. Tijdens het gesprek, kwam Ignace erachter dat Justine dichteres was en filosofie had gestudeerd. Ze wilde heel graag promoveren, maar dat is haar uiteindelijk niet gelukt. Toch bleef ze naar de koffiehoek op de 15e verdieping komen,

"Dit heeft mij geleerd dat er achter iedereen een verhaal zit."

want, zoals ze zelf in het interview zegt: "Filosofie is voor mij meer dan alleen de teksten van filosofen. Filosofie heeft voor mij alles te maken met ruimte en thuiskomen. Dat is de reden dat ik de ruimte opzoek waar filosofie bedreven wordt. Door die ruimte laat ik me inspireren, ook in mijn gedichten. [...] De koffiehoek op de vijftiende verdieping was mijn thuis, mijn huiskamer, omdat juist die ruimte voor mij gelijk staat met filosofie en gastvrijheid" (De Haes, Lüthy & Nissen 2023, 13).

Wat begon als een gesprek uit Ignace zijn interesse in en nieuwsgierigheid naar het verhaal van Justine, werd een afscheidsinterview. Toen Ignace haar interviewde, lag Justine al in het ziekenhuis. Nog geen twee weken later, is Justine overleden. Deze ervaring heeft veel indruk gemaakt op Ignace: "Dit heeft mij geleerd dat er achter iedereen een verhaal zit, alleen je moet er wel nieuwsgierig naar zijn, dan zul je zien dat iedereen bewonderingswaardige verhalen te vertellen heeft."

De verhalen gaan verder

Iedereen heeft een verhaal en die verhalen stoppen niet simpelweg met bestaan als je ze hebt opgeschreven en gebundeld in een boek, ze worden doorverteld, ze gaan verder, er komt altijd een vervolg. Wanneer mensen overlijden, overleven hun verhalen. Wie zouden we nog zijn en wat zouden we nog doen op de Faculteit der Filosofie, Theologie en Religiewetenschappen als we niet meer zouden putten uit de verhalen van het verleden? Als we niet meer vol verwondering en nieuwsgierigheid om ons heen zouden kijken? Als

we het gedachtegoed en de levensverhalen van mensen, filosofen, theologen en schrijvers met hen zouden begraven om hun verhalen door ruimte en tijd te laten afbreken, vergaan? Zou er dan nog iets als literatuur bestaan? Nog iets als Theologie? Religie? Filosofie? Waarop zouden we bouwen als we geen verhalen meer hadden? Wat zou dan ons fundament nog zijn? Ons uitgangspunt? Ons bestaansrecht?

We werken iedere dag met verhalen, of ze nu literair en poëtisch zijn of wetenschappelijk en feitelijk, of de filosofie in het wit tussen de woorden te vinden is, of op een zilveren dienblaadje aan ons wordt geserveerd. We zijn altijd op zoek naar de verhalen van het verleden en naar hoe we daarop kunnen voortborduren in het hier en nu, hoe de verhalen verder gaan, nooit af zijn.

Denkers en duiders: een eeuw Nijmeegse filosofie, theologie en religiewetenschappen in honderd verhalen

Dit boek is dan ook een momentopname, een barometer, een peiling. Honderd bewonderingswaardige gebeurtenissen zijn door de medewerkers en medewerksters van dit project verzameld en opschreven. Door dit boek zijn mijn ogen geopend en ben ik ze gaan zien. Tijdens het zoeken en schrijven, heb ik de universiteit en de FTR-Faculteit zelf op een hele andere manier leren kennen. Natuurlijk vraagt iedere student zich wel eens af, als ze weer eens in de overvolle bus 10 hutjemutje op elkaar gepropt zitten, waarom de campus niet gewoon in het centrum is, dat is toch veel makkelijker? Ook heb ik het wel eens vreemd gevonden dat we hier überhaupt de FTR-faculteit kennen en niet, zoals bij veel andere universiteiten, een Faculteit der Letteren en Wijsbegeerte. Pas als je de geschiedenis induikt ga je hiervoor de antwoorden vinden, vallen dingen op hun plek en ga je op een andere manier om je heen kijken, ga je andere dingen zien.

Zoals Ignace het omschrijft: “Je leert iets over de geschiedenis aan de hand van subjectieve verhalen en als je al die verhalen doorleest krijg je een rode draad van de geschiedenis te pakken. Dit boek geeft een mooi beeld van een eeuw Nijmeegse filosofie, theologie en religiewetenschappen in honderd verhalen. Nu ben ik natuurlijk heel benieuwd hoe de aankomende honderd jaar gaan verlopen.” De Radboud blijft bruisen. En wie weet, misschien komt er over honderd jaar weer een boek vol met de verhalen, die vandaag beginnen en die we samen mogen gaan beleven, samen mogen gaan schrijven, iedere dag weer.

Weggeefactie

Dit prachtige boek vol verhalen, die inzicht geven in honderd jaar geschiedenis filosofie, theologie en religiewetenschappen aan de Radboud Univer-

siteit, is niet alleen verkrijgbaar in de boekhandel, er worden binnenkort ook 3 exemplaren verloot! Op het Instagram-account van *Splijtstof* zal een post geplaatst worden waarop je kunt reageren om kans te maken op een exemplaar. Uit de reacties zullen drie gelukkige winnaars worden geloot. Houd je ogen en oren dus goed open. Wie weet staat *Denkers en duiders* binnenkort bij jou op de boekenplank te schitteren en kun jij je verdiepen in de verhalen van het verleden.

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