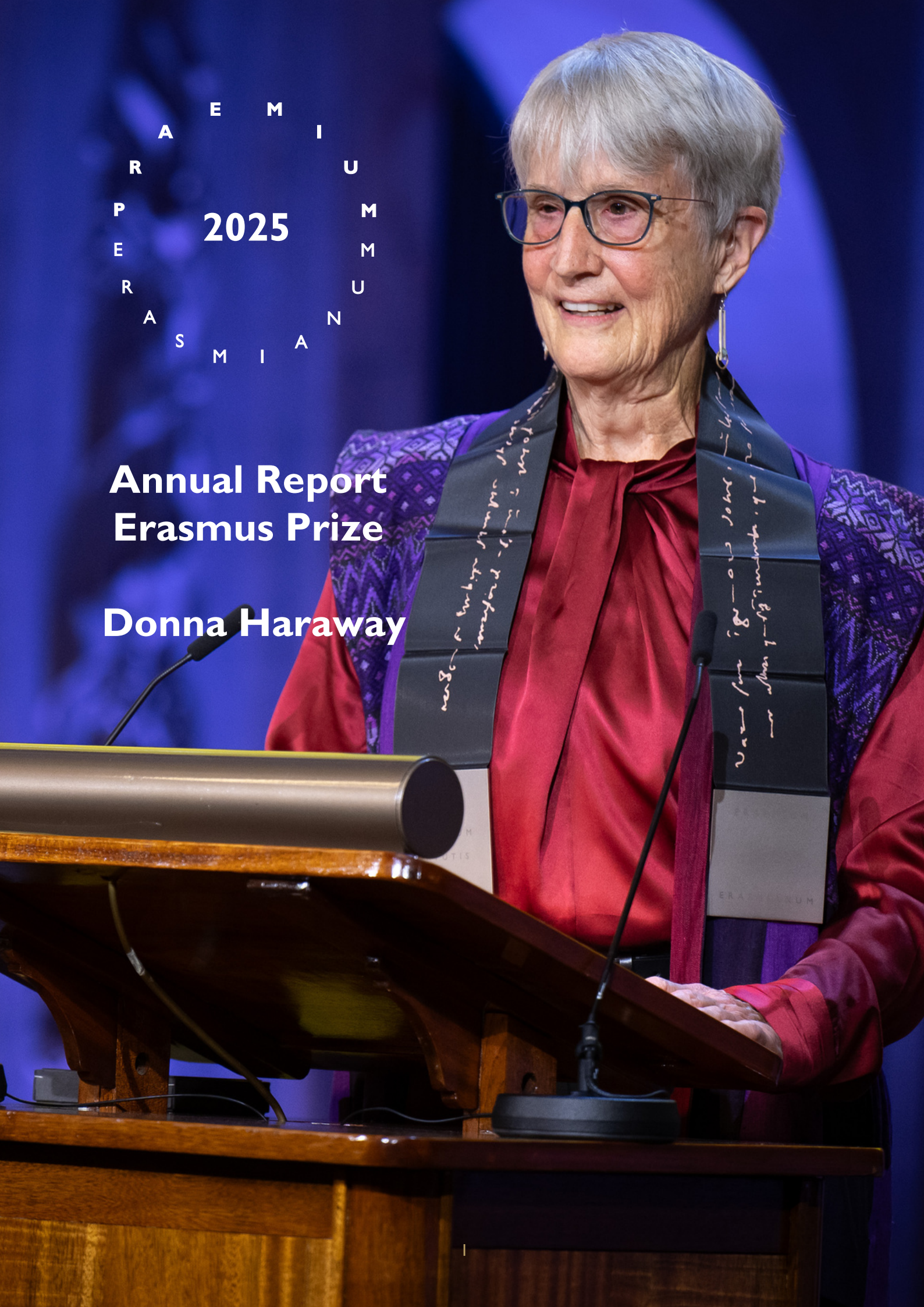


ERASMUS
PER
ANNUM
2025

Annual Report Erasmus Prize

Donna Haraway



Annual Report Erasmus Prize 2025

The Pursuit
of what
Binds us



Credits

Erasmus Prize Annual Report
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Photography

Frank van Beek, Catharina Gerritsen, Nick Bookelaar,
Florien van Rees

Text

Stichting Praemium Erasmianum, Donna Haraway

Published by

Stichting Praemium Erasmianum
Maliebaan 104
3581 CZ Utrecht
E spe@erasmusprijs.org
www.erasmusprijs.org

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Foreword

His Majesty the King, Patron of the Foundation, presented the Erasmus Prize to Donna Haraway on 25 November 2025 at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam, during a festive ceremony in the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix. Reinier Baas and Ben van Gelder performed the musical intermezzo.

Prior to the award ceremony, the foundation organized various events with Donna Haraway. On Thursday, November 20, she visited het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, where she alongside close friend and writer, Anna Tsing, kick off the opening of the exhibition FUNGI: Anarchist Designers. On Friday 21 November, Harway was interviewed by philosopher Stine Jensen at the Next Nature Museum in Eindhoven, with an introduction by Marli Huijer and a presentation by Smartphone Orchestra.

The award of the Erasmus Prize to Donna Haraway did not go unnoticed in the media. Interviews with Haraway appeared in Dutch media following her visit.

In addition to the Erasmus Prize, the Foundation also awarded its annual Dissertation Prizes in 2025 to five young doctoral candidates who, in the jury's view, completed an outstanding dissertation. The award ceremony took place on 6 June 2025 at Paushuize Utrecht.

This annual report includes a brief account of all these activities. We would like to thank all our partners who were so enthusiastically involved: het Nieuwe Instituut Amsterdam and Next Nature Museum.

The Erasmus Prize 2025 was awarded to American Philosopher and Historian of Science Donna Haraway. The theme of the prize this year was 'the pursuit of what binds us'. Few thinkers have explored the relationship between humans, animals, machines and the surrounding world as deeply as American philosopher and historian of science, Donna Haraway. Haraway is an altruistic thinker who's work advocates for greater equality and openness.

She gained worldwide renown with her *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), already distinguished as a feminist classic upon its release. Haraway uses the cyborg—a fusion of human and machine—to rethink oppositions such as male and female, human and machine, nature and culture. The way we imagine the natural world is deeply intertwined with issues of race and gender. For instance, the language used by primatologists reinforces culturally constructed gender differences. In more recent works like *When Species Meet* (2007) and *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), she explores how we can coexist with other organisms in a world facing ecological crisis.

Haraway's influence extends far beyond the academic realm. By introducing new concepts and metaphors, Haraway offers an innovative, creative, and critical perspective on contemporary crises. Her work has inspired several generations of philosophers, scientists, and artists engaged in the fight against sexism, racism, and speciesism.

Citation 2025

Donna Haraway

'Article 2 of the Constitution of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation reads as follows:

Within the context of the cultural traditions of Europe in general and the ideas of Erasmus in particular, the aim of the Foundation is to enhance the position of the humanities, the social sciences and the arts. The emphasis lies on tolerance, cultural diversity and non-dogmatic, critical thinking. A financial prize is awarded under the name of "Erasmus Prize".'

In accordance with this article, the Board of the Foundation has decided to award the Erasmus Prize 2025 to the American philosopher Donna Haraway.

The prize is awarded on the following grounds:

The theme of this year's prize is "the pursuit of what binds us." Many scholars and scientists are driven by the conscious or unconscious desire to uncover what separates humans from other living beings. Donna Haraway is in pursuit of precisely the opposite. She was one of the first scholars – and certainly one of the most adamant – to draw our attention to the false nature of oppositions such as nature versus culture, or human versus animal. If today we no longer take such oppositions for granted, it is to a large extent thanks to the work of Donna Haraway. From her earliest publications onwards, Haraway has indeed been a pioneer.

Few scholars possess such a wide intellectual reach as Donna Haraway. The jury praises her exploration of an extraordinarily broad range of themes, ranging from the shapes of embryos to living with a dog. In her writing, she carefully weaves stories from diverse mediums, such as: dreams, scientific advances, history, science fiction, advertising, and her own personal experiences.

In doing so, Haraway demonstrates a profound capacity to speak to audiences far beyond the confines of her own discipline. By introducing new concepts and metaphors, she offers an innovative, creative, and critical perspective on contemporary crises. Her work has inspired several generations of philosophers, scientists, and artists engaged in the struggle against sexism, racism, and speciesism. As a result, Haraway is regarded as one of the most influential voices in philosophy and in the contemporary art world.

Donna Haraway is a deeply generous and altruistic thinker. What makes her altruism so remarkable is that she does not reserve it for the human animal alone, but explicitly extends it to all other beings, living and non-living alike. Thus, the jury concludes that Haraway moves 'in the spirit of Erasmus, beyond Erasmus.'

Read by Geertjan de Vugt, director

Haraway demonstrates a profound capacity to speak to audiences far beyond the confines of her own discipline.



Director Geertjan de Vugt reads the Citation.



Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix, Donna Harway, and His Majesty the King.

Laudatio

Your Majesty, Royal Highness, Excellencies, invited guests,

For a very long time, human beings have been accustomed to seeing the world in terms of oppositions. Today, for instance, many politicians across the globe, act as if gender is solely a matter of two biologically defined possibilities. If we were to do Donna Haraway's rich and wide-ranging oeuvre injustice and reduce it to a single theme, then a good candidate would be her radical critique of binary oppositions.

The male/female opposition, and related dichotomies like human/animal, organism/machine, material/non-material, nature/culture, primitive/civilized, public/private, fact/fiction, and good/evil, are picked up by Haraway, held up to the light, carefully criticized and deconstructed, opening new connections and possibilities. Haraway gained international fame with her *Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Social-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*. In this visionary essay, she focuses on the impact invasive technologies have on the lives of women. In doing so, she criticizes male dominance in science and shows how the production of knowledge reflects a white, male, heterosexual ideology.

However, she does not stop there. Branches of feminism that remain stuck in binary oppositions are scrutinized by her, too. Solely reversing existing hierarchical orderings would lead to nowhere, as one would remain stuck in a form of identity politics, based on essentialist identities. In the *Manifesto* the cyborg plays a triple role. First, 'cyborg' refers to fictional characters in contemporary science-fiction novels and films, such as *Blade Runner* and *Terminator*. Second, Haraway uses this figure to show how the integration of humans and machines has become reality.

Now, forty years after the publication of the *Cyborg Manifesto*, we experience this daily: when we use a smartphone to organize our lives, when we see how BigTech uses our thoughts and actions as input for data-mining AIs, or when human-drone cyborgs sow death and destruction in Ukraine, Gaza and many other battlefields across the world. Third, the cyborg functions as a metaphor for all hybrids that destabilize the aforementioned rigid oppositions and dichotomies. As both organism and machine, fact as well as fiction, good as well as evil, the cyborg is post-gender. As such, the cyborg also creates new connections between previously marginalized positions and makes room for multiple views of reality.

Hybridity also characterizes Haraway's interdisciplinary method. She connects history, philosophy of science and technology with feminism, science fiction and personal experience. Her work is characterized by a joyful ironic and humorous style, making her books and essays, as well as her lectures, talks and workshops, events in and of themselves. Wit is a powerful weapon. Wit mobilizes. Haraway has inspired generations of scholars, students, artists, activists and designers with her wit. Haraway, who triple-majored in philosophy, literature and zoology, and who holds a doctoral degree in cell biology, teaches us that scientific knowledge is always connected to the social, cultural, political, and historical and bodily context of the person who produces knowledge. That, however, does not mean that she is a relativist claiming that all knowledge has the same truth-value. There is a real world out there which we can know, but our knowledge of it is always situated.

Haraway doesn't deny that there are real existing oppositions in thinking and in acting. What she denies is that they are permanent. They are contingent, historical, and ambiguous. That is to say: possible, but not necessary, real but not fixed, and having multiple often contradicting connotations. This creates space for political action. Real objectivity, she maintains, is not achieved by pretending to be neutral, but by acknowledging one's own position and limitations and being accountable for them. With the turn of the millennium, her field of inquiry expanded even further. In books such as *The Companion Species Manifesto*, *When Species Meet*, and *Staying with the Trouble*, Haraway broadens her focus from cyborgs to all relationships between humans and other non-human beings. We are all living, becoming and creating together in various forms of symbiosis and sympoiesis.

No species, including human beings, live in isolation from other beings. Like all other species, human beings are part of the holobiont we call Earth. Human beings are in no way exceptional, unless we want to express that all species are exceptional in their own way. What we have to learn is something we call: response-ability, that is both learning to respond to other living beings and doing this in a responsible way.

Only through multispecies flourishing, we will survive the many ecological troubles we are currently facing, such as global warming, resource depletion, pollution and extinction. It's all about making kin with other species, plants, animals, fungi and bacteria, instead of solely bringing forth babies of our own kind. To paraphrase Lynn Margulis, a predecessor of Haraway, Mother Earth is 'a tough bitch.' Companion species eat and are being eaten. Life becomes about who lives and who dies and in which way, this kinship rather than that one. Try to stay with the trouble, Haraway encourages us. Stay in the here and now, do not look back in nostalgia on a paradise that was never there in the first place. And do not set your hope on future technological fixes. Technology will not create paradise on earth. To stay with the trouble means to go beyond the opposition of blind technological optimism and apocalyptic doom-mongering. Be here, be aware, be responsible.

The Erasmus Prize derives its name from the Dutch humanist scholar Desiderius Erasmus. It is awarded annually to a person or institution that has made an exceptional contribution to the humanities, the social sciences or the arts, in Europe and beyond.

It is without a doubt that Donna Haraway is such a remarkable scholar, someone who has made an exceptional contribution to the humanities and social sciences. That this prize is awarded in the spirit of its namesake, and thus in the spirit of the humanist tradition, may cause some to raise the eyebrows. And it is true that Haraway herself has challenged the idea that in this 'dangerously troubled multispecies world' redemption will come from humanism. But it is equally true that Haraway, contrary to what some of her interpreters have wished to highlight, explicitly claims that she is not a posthumanist.

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But it is equally true that Haraway, contrary to what some of her interpreters have wished to highlight, explicitly claims that she is not a posthumanist.

Here again, Haraway is beyond a simple dichotomy. Neither humanist, nor posthumanist: where then, do we find her? Well, at the table perhaps, together with her companion species, eating bread. Or should we rather say: in her garden? 'I am a compostist, not a posthumanist', she once wrote. We, inhabitants of this terrapolis, are all compost. None of us is posthuman. The very root of the word 'human', Haraway reminds us, runs back to the word *ghem*, meaning earth, humus. We are all rich, full of stories, composting ideas and narratives within us, carrying a well of humus. We are all ripe for storytelling. Human beings are no gods, we're earthly beings. We are not alone; we are one among many. Perhaps that is why Rusten Hogness, Haraway's partner, has once suggested to replace humanities with humusities. Picking up that thread, let us speak of humusism, instead of humanism. After all, creative language is politics by other means.

Dear Donna, in light of our remarkable 'humusist' achievements and your inspiring and encouraging message that it is never too late to make the world a better place, it gives me great pleasure to convey to you, on behalf of the Board of the Erasmus Prize Foundation, our warmest congratulations on being awarded the Erasmus Prize 2025.

Read by Jos de Mul on behalf of the Board



Board member Jos de Mul reads the Laudatio.



Donna Haraway

Acceptance Speech

"I am open and I am willing
To be hopeless would seem so strange
It dishonors those who go before us
So lift me up to the light of change"

Holly Near, 2006

The Erasmus Prize is an honor I never imagined receiving. It is a tremendous pleasure and also a responsibility to his Majesty, King Willem-Alexander; to the scientific committee of the PraemiumErasmianum Foundation and its director Geertjan de Vugt; to the staff, especially Lauren Maxwell; to my husband Rusten and brother and sister-in-law Rick and Roberta; to my family and other-than-biological oddkin; and to my unruly friends, students, teachers, and colleagues.

I am in the wake of previous Erasmus recipients. Remembering the colonial massacre and partial resurgence made palpable here last year by Amitav Ghosh, I bob in the seas off Indonesia's Banda Islands. I am recalled to historical memory by their lingering scent of nutmeg. My task is to cultivate response-ability, the capacity to respond, to be present to what our times and situations demand of us.

This summer, I tripped while picking lemons and fell into the street onto my head. Groggily, I suspected I was auditioning for a role in a murder mystery. Most such shows, in my experience, begin with a woman lying in a pool of her own blood. Instead, I lurched into a months-long whirligig dance of imbalance and doctors' orders to limit such dangerous things as thinking.

These are unbalanced times, and I am a metaphor. Over the tinnitus ringing in my head, I heard Hannah Arendt's injunction "Think we must!"; but I was adrift in mandatory thoughtlessness. I was without orientation, not just in Trump world, but in labyrinths of authoritarianism, genocide, war, and ecocide across the Earth. Humans and more-than-humans thrash in tangles of intensifying catastrophe.

For any Catholic, lapsed or faithful, a metaphor is never just a metaphor, but embodied meaning-making. We inhabit a concussed world; we are concussed and out of balance. We do not know what to think, how to act, how to matter. We care, but we hardly know how to care for worlds in tatters. In times that trash memories and despise history, we risk losing the capacity to remember how to live and die well with each other. Think we must!

I use the trope of string figures to remember, think, and act. The game of string figures is about inheriting, making anew, and passing on vital patterns together. The game cannot be played alone. It requires giving and receiving, moving and holding still. Isabelle Stengers taught me that. A thinking technology, string figuring is a philosophical, political, and personal proposal.

Tonight, in the Netherlands' cultural capital, I play a game of string figures to think about a renewed cosmopolitanism without the pathogens of racist and masculinist capitalism, colonialism, nationalism and cultural/religious self-certainty and intolerance, and—core to all of this—human exceptionalism. Depending on the separation of nature and culture, human exceptionalism presumes that all the world is in the service of humanity. Without irony, I speak under the patronage of the Renaissance Dutch humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, who lay groundwork for critical study of the past. A practitioner of thinking beyond orthodox boundaries, he matters to remembering what our world needs for still possible futures.

*These are unbalanced
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Hannah Arendt's injunction*

"Think we must!"

I remember that the Netherlands has long been among the world's most cosmopolitan countries, joining peoples and cultures in histories of shipping, finance, colonization and decolonization, home-making for native born and immigrant, ecological and urban design, and more. Today, peoples from all over call the Netherlands home. The United States and California, my home, are also fraught cosmopolitan worlds. Violence is never far off. Human and more than human, we must knot vital patterns for belonging with and to each other.

I am committed to multispecies cosmopolitanism, including difficult naturalcultural politics after the demise of human exceptionalism. Thinking for Arendt is "training the mind to go visiting"; that is, cultivating the capacity to live and die well in the world in its fundamental otherness from self. I forgive Arendt and Erasmus their resolute humanism because they teach us to think with and within consequential difference.

Historical memory is infamously repressed in my country, and perhaps in all nations built on conquest and settlement, forced and unequal labor, and the attempted elimination and replacement of indigenous peoples, plants, and animals. A precondition for a new cosmopolitanism is reckoning with these histories. That is precisely why teaching un-sanitized history in the US is under attack by our authoritarian regime. Curricula are destroyed, and professors are disciplined if they anger the fascists. It is why a myriad of books are removed from school libraries, especially books about all women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people. It is why budgets are slashed and professional staff replaced with compliant functionaries. It is why programming in national parks and exhibits in museums are censored; these things make ongoing indigenous presence palpable, or understanding the horror of slavery and its aftermath inescapable, or biodiversity destruction unbearable. It is why funds are eliminated from public media and from evidence-based popular history.

As Rebecca Hall wrote in *Wake: The Hidden History of Women-Led Slave Revolts*, "Black and Indigenous history, which is filled with countless stories of resistance, is erased to control the narrative." Expunging history and care for place—overwriting them with Man-centered patriotism—is necessary to authoritarian dominance.

"But the land remembers its ghosts."

I think too of cyborg apocalypses of censored data, including climate, health, and biodiversity websites. . Challenging these erasures, technologically savvy activists recover information. Meanwhile, energy-guzzling AI data centers remember and think for us (which us?) at unfathomable ecological, social, monetary, and spiritual costs. Still, I affirm liberatory cyborg practices and innumerable acts of scientific resistance. We refuse to forget what we need to know for habitable histories to come.

Cyborg apocalypses bring us to Russian drones raining death in Ukraine. The life-giving potential of drones, for example: for ecological restoration, is swamped by a cyborg arms race. But also, memory of outrages gives strength to resurgent alliances. I embrace my old slogan, 'Cyborgs for Earthly Survival.'

Geospatial remembering turns me toward Israel-Palestine, where endless US weapons enable catastrophe. Pulverizing Gaza, one of the oldest urbanized centers on Earth, has been many things, not least the reduction to dust of the history of a land and its human and more-than-human inhabitants. Genocide, ecocide, and erasure of futures constitute the war and occupation project that imperils all living beings from the river to the sea. But the land remembers its ghosts.



My gyrating memories next spin a speculative fabulation of Greater Mexico, with its diverse humans, insects, mammals, plants, and birds. Latin America is easily forgotten in attention to Gaza, Ukraine, South Sudan, and more. But the Americas are my home, and I invite you to refigure history with me.

What if Mexico had won the war in 1848 against the United States? Asking this question might be critical for demolishing mental and physical border walls for humans and more than humans. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded the vast territory of northern Spanish Mexico, including what is now California. Instead of recognizing that history, the US attempted to erase Mexican and Indigenous past and ongoing presence and exclude living beings from crossing the treaty line. As Texas political scientist José Angel Gutiérrez put it, “We didn’t migrate here or immigrate here voluntarily. The United States came to us in succeeding waves of invasions.” Migrating butterflies, pig-like javelinas, jaguars, and Sonoran pronghorn antelope, as well as Tohono O’odham visiting relatives and the Hispanos of New Mexico, might well say the same thing.

What if I lived today in Greater Mexico instead of the United States, with its official masked thugs disappearing brown-skinned residents into detention camps? Would I face expulsion as an unwanted other taking work and benefits from those who rightfully belong? Of course, these erasures and seizures have been continuously challenged; and longing for a free, conjoined land infuses multi-racial, pro-migrant activism now.

*We seek to remember, and
we find new balance. We
fall out of self-certainties;
we go visiting. We relearn
how to think with each
other, human and more
than human.*

The Texan-Mexican-Californian lesbian feminist theorist and poet Gloria Anzaldúa remembered that borderlands are fertile places of meeting and sharing, even in the teeth of militarized, sterilized frontiers that make going visiting deadly. Migrants depend on healthy habitat along their entire route. From a drone’s-eye view, these zones are a fragmented moonscape. No hungry song bird or thirsty refugee has a chance. But I remember that the 2000-mile borderlands between Mexico and the US remain among the continent’s most diverse naturalcultural worlds, where “going visiting” for living and dying well is at stake for human beings and 700+ species of birds, mammals, and invertebrates. It is past time to reclaim these lands.

Anzaldúa knew storytelling is critical to flourishing. So, I end with a story of feminist science studies, my scholarly home, and the journal *Tupuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society*. The name derives from the Quechuan “tapuy”— “to question, to investigate.” This word ties me to the memory of my friend and colleague Sandra Harding, who died this year. Sandra proposed what she called “strong objectivity” to ground knowledge-making in less biased, more capacious practices. In co-founding the journal, Harding collaborated to build decolonial science studies with scholars like Tania Pérez of Colombia and Leandro Rodríguez of Chile, bringing ignored Latin American approaches to readers globally.

We seek to remember, and we find new balance. We fall out of self-certainties; we go visiting. We relearn how to think with each other, human and more than human. We must be willing to fall, trusting that we will be caught in a web of mutual thought and care. We seek healing from concussion.

As Schutzhund dog training teaches us: Run Fast, Bite Hard!

Recalling “In Praise of Folly,” published in 1511, with its biting satire of human moral delusions, I think Erasmus might approve.





Musical intermezzo by the Reinier Baas and Ben van Gelder



From Left to Right, Rusten Hogness (Spouse of Donna Haraway), Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix, Donna Haraway, His Majesty the King, and Director of the Stichting, Geertjan de Vugt.

Biography of Donna Haraway

Donna Haraway (1944, Denver, Colorado) studied zoology and philosophy at Colorado College. She spent a year in Paris exploring the philosophy of evolution before obtaining her PhD in biology in 1972 at Yale University, later holding academic positions in women's studies and the philosophy of science at the University of Hawaii and Johns Hopkins University. From 1980 until her retirement, she was a Professor of History of Consciousness and of Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Over the years, Haraway has received numerous honors and awards, including the J.D. Bernal Prize in 2000, the highest honor from the Society of Social Studies of Science. In 2020, she was awarded the Nuevo León Alfonso Reyes prize for her ability to weave together biology, economy, politics, culture, science fiction, feminism, and climate change. This year, she has also been honored with the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale.



Activities

Q&A discussion with Donna Haraway alongside Anna Tsing, and hosted by philosopher Rosi Braidotti.

20 November 2025, Het Nieuwe Instituut Rotterdam

Composing for Multispecies Survival in Dark Times

On Thursday 20 November, Donna Haraway visited het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, where a sold out auditorium was filled with mushrooms and humans alike, all waiting to hear *What kind of life is possible in the aftermath of extinctions and other environmental crises?* To kick-off the opening of the exhibition FUNGI: Anarchist Designers, curated by anthropologist Anna Tsing and artist/designer Feifei Zhou, Donna Haraway took part in an in-depth Q&A not as herself, but as something non-human.





Donna Haraway, a lecture, and in conversation with Stine Jensen

21 November, Next Nature Museum, Eindhoven

An evening with Donna Haraway

On Friday 21 November, Donna Haraway gave a lecture at Next Nature Museum in Eindhoven, followed by a Q&A with presenter and philosopher, Stine Jensen. In this sold out evening, Haraway invited us to rethink how we care for and interact with each other in turbulent times on a damaged planet. She illustrated her ideas using examples of primates, cyborgs, dogs, and even octopi.

To kick-off the evening, the Smartphone Orchestra hosted an interactive performance, and then handed it over to Emeritus Professor of Public Philosophy Marli Huijter who gave an inspiring speech about Donna Haraway and her work.



Donna Haraway giving a lecture at Next Nature Museum in Eindhoven.



Q&A with Donna Haraway and Stine Jensen at Next Nature Museum in Eindhoven.

Donna Haraway interviewed by Marijntje Deters
23 November, VPRO tegenlicht

**By seeking out problems, we force progress |
Donna Haraway**

Interview aired on VPRO tegenlicht and premiered at
Pakhuis De Zwijger in Amsterdam.



Op politiek en persoonlijk vlak
kan wanhoop een verleidelijke optie zijn.

Door problemen op te zoeken forceren we vooruitgang | Donna Haraway

Media

Donna Haraway in the media

There was much interest for deep-dive interviews with laureate Donna Haraway. She was first interviewed by Frank Meester in *Filosofie Magazine*, printed on 25 November. On 17 December, *De Groene Amsterdammer* published an extensive interview by **Eva Hoffman**, and the **VPRO Tegenlicht** interview premiered at **Pakhuis de Zwijger**. A major interview with Haraway also appeared in the **Volkskrant** by **Esme Linneman** on **January 22 2026**, showing how interest still lingered even after the **Erasmus Prize Ceremony**.



TEGENLICHT MEET UP 259

Donna Haraway

Wat is de invloed van het gedachtegoed van Donna Haraway op de wetenschap en de maatschappij?

WO 17 DEC 2025, 20.00 STUDIO PDZ • GRATIS

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Mens en natuur

Donna Haraway: 'Problemen moet je niet oplossen, maar uithouden'

Door [Frank Meester](#) op 25 november 2025



de Volkskrant

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Abonneer nu met 53% korting



Voorpagina

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VS INTERVIEW

Bioloog Donna Haraway: 'Vrijheid is geen eindbestemming, maar een voortdurende strijd'

Interview Donna Haraway

'Ik ben open en bereid...'

Hoe we een wereld kunnen bouwen die wel zin geeft? Een vraag die nu het best gesteld kan worden aan de invloedrijke, creatieve Amerikaanse filosoof Donna Haraway. Ze ontving in november de Erasmusprijs.

Eva Hofman

17 december 2025 - verschenen in nr. 51-52

Cadeau geven

Delen

Leeslijst



PAKHUIS DE ZWIJGER

AGENDA

LIVECAST

NIEUWS

VERHUUR

CAFÉ RESTAURANT

OVER ONS



WORD VRIEN

De Amerikaanse denker Donna Haraway nodigt ons in deze Tegenlicht uit om, zoals ze het zelf formuleert, 'bij de problemen te blijven': een alternatief voor zowel het blinde vertrouwen in technologische redding als voor het verlamdende cynisme dat de wereld al verloren verklaart. Samen met de 81-jarige Haraway kijken we naar de wereld van vandaag en morgen, aan de hand van enkele van de ideeën waar ze bekend om werd. Dit jaar won Haraway de prestigieuze Erasmusprijs voor haar oeuvre en de buitengewone bijdrage die zij daarmee leverde aan de wetenschap. Tijdens deze Meet Up gaat de documentaire van Tegenlicht in première. Daarna gaan we in gesprek met kenners van het uitgebreide werk van Donna Haraway over de invloed en bijdrage die zij deed aan verschillende disciplines.

MET IN DIT PROGRAMMA



Marijntje Denters



Lydia Baan Hofman



Marit Hoefsloot

Dissertation Prizes 2025

This year, the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation awarded the Dissertation Prizes for the thirty-sixth time. Five prizes are awarded each year to young academic researchers in the fields of Humanities and Social Science, who have written a PhD dissertation of outstanding quality at a Dutch university. The prize consists of an amount of € 3,000.

The jury assessed the nominations based on criteria such as originality, international significance, transdisciplinary scope, style and readability.

The jury consisted of:

Valika Smeulders
Margriet Schavemaker
Professor Antoine Buyse
Ronald van Raak
Professor Lotte Jensen
Professor Judi Mesman
Professor Jos de Mul
Professor Petra Sijpesteijn

These are the winning dissertations of 2025:

Stephanie Triefus

International Investment Law from Below: Taking Local Community Rights Seriously

Joris Verheijen

Revolutie in de schoolgang: Radicaal-romantische Bildung in en buiten het onderwijs tussen 1789 en nu

Wiebe Hommes

Co-creating European human rights: How the Netherlands received and shaped the European Convention on Human Rights, 1945- 2022

Pauline Dirven

Embodied Performances of Forensic Expertise: Epistemic virtues, gender, and emotions in British forensic culture 1920-1980

Yvette Drissen

When Success Becomes the New Normal: The Competitive Society and its Symptoms



From left: Stephanie Triefus, Joris Verheijen, Wiebe Hommes, Pauline Dirven and Yvette Drissen

Stephanie Triefus

International Investment Law from Below: Taking Local Community Rights Seriously

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. A. Arcuri & Prof. Dr. J.D. Temperman
Nominated by: Erasmus University Rotterdam, Erasmus School of Law

Report by the selection committee

Stephanie Triefus analyses a highly relevant societal question with scientifically rigorous and uniquely multifaceted methods to offer an insightful and urgent conclusion. The jury was especially impressed by the invocative style of International investment law from below; Taking community rights seriously combining clear presentations of complicated legal debates with a plurality of voices of the involved community for an innovative 'law-on-the-ground' approach. While such methods are commonly used in studies of human rights law, the application in the domain of investment law is innovative. This is, however, by far not the only innovative and unique aspect that the jury signalled in the work.

International investment law from below; Taking community rights seriously, exposes the practical and legal tensions between international companies, states and local communities in the extractive industry. Triefus examines how these three parties, based on their respective interests, operate, cooperate and oppose each other in extractive industrial projects. By systematically examining dispute settlements that arise from extractive projects from the point of view of the local communities effected by such activities and by having these local communities commentate through interviews that are included in the book, Triefus offers a unique bottom-up perspective in her research and writing.

Using these two perspectives – an analysis of the legal conditions at play and the practical application on the ground – Triefus shows that participation rights and democratic principles through which local communities' interests have traditionally been channeled and where improvement in taking such interests into account is conventionally sought, cannot prevent the destructive socio-economic effects of extractive industry on local communities. Turning away from better researched examples of extractive projects in the Global South, Triefus presents an extensive case study from Romania. Crucially, Triefus moves beyond the expected observation that socio-politically and economically weak societies are least well able to protect the interests of local communities vis-à-vis international investors, to show that the problem is due to legal restrictions that create two incompatible obligations for states, namely on the one hand honouring companies' interests according to investment law and on the other, citizens' rights based on humanitarian law. Rather than seeking a greater role for local communities' participation within investment law or pointing to socio-political conditions, Triefus concludes that this legal incompatibility needs to be addressed.

Having taken us on a tour via international legal academies and corporate lawyers' offices to Romanian living rooms, Triefus' ambitious conclusion demands action from international law-making institutions to address the persistent ineffectiveness of involving local communities' opinions in extractive industrial projects – a conclusion that is all the more urgent as the world's need for natural resources will lead to an increase of such projects.



Joris Verheijen

Revolutie in de schoolgang: Radicaal-romantische Bildung in en buiten het onderwijs tussen 1789 en nu

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Marli Huijer & Prof. Dr. Jos de Mul
Nominated by: Nominated by Erasmus University Rotterdam, Erasmus School of Philosophy

Report by the selection committee

'I had no idea how many things there are that I don't even think of doing in the hallway anymore.' This is how teacher Joris quotes his pupil — also named Joris — when the latter, in 2015, reflects on the influence of power and discipline on his daily life at school, as part of a lesson on Foucault.

Things were very different in the 1980s and 1990s. Dubious extracurricular activities in the corridor were commonplace. But back then we didn't yet have security cameras, no Magister, and much less pressure to perform. There were suspensions and expulsions and such, but rebellious youngsters pushing boundaries accepted those as part of the deal, an occupational hazard. If we had known the word *Bildung* back then, we probably would have used it to challenge and provoke the teachers even more.

In his dissertation, teacher Joris criticizes the classical humanist and anti-revolutionary ideal of *Bildung*, which presents self-realization exclusively as the result of climbing a linear, predetermined ladder upwards, with no alternative side paths, detours or leaps. He shows how more revolutionary thinkers have been forgotten and presents their work in a clear historical account of various philosophical movements, of which only the winner (Humboldtian *Bildung* thought) remains in public memory. In doing so, Joris brings the more socially critical concept of *Bildung*, as formulated by figures such as Schlegel, Forster and Böhmer, but also Freire and Benjamin, back into the spotlight as a source of inspiration for contemporary education.

The jury was very enthusiastic about this. As one of us wrote: 'freedom instead of limitation; expanding horizons instead of tunnel vision; unexpected unrest instead of predictability; messiness instead of sanitization; contextualization instead of essentialism: YEAH!' Another paid tribute to the inspiring return to allegorical thinking and the search for the rogue who questions and challenges the system. 'Erasmian to the max,' is how that jury member described this perspective in the dissertation.

Joris's dissertation also stands out methodologically for its exemplary historical archival and source research (including excursions into architecture and art), the use of various philosophical theories, and its effective links with educational practice. The dissertation is also written in a highly accessible style, even playful and engaging, so that it is never boring or impenetrable. One jury member wrote: it reads like a book! And that turned out to be true, as a public edition of the dissertation has since been published. Especially useful for those who find the many German-language quotations in the dissertation version somewhat challenging. Hopefully, the book for a general audience will be of benefit to educators in the Netherlands. Among the jury members, it has certainly sparked enthusiasm. We have all become eager to apply the presented theories in our own fields. There was also a call within the jury for an English translation, as the value of this debate is relevant to education worldwide.

At the end of 2024, it was announced that a school in Zeist had, as a trial, stopped using Magister due to the performance pressure pupils experience as a result of the constant surveillance the app makes possible. Children feel as though they are under a magnifying glass, and the app has become a symbol of organized suspicion and meddling, according to the news report. Foucault would have welcomed this experiment. Probably both Jorises too. The trial in Zeist was a success and will be continued there. Unfortunately, a national survey showed that most parents are not enthusiastic about reduced surveillance. But perhaps this outstanding dissertation can at least convince schools that they owe it to the *Bildung* of their pupils to pursue, in the spirit of Paulo Freire, a pedagogy of freedom and to show Magister the door. That would be a true revolution in the virtual school corridor.

Wiebe Hommes

Co-creating European human rights: How the Netherlands received and shaped the European Convention on Human Rights, 1945-2022

Supervisors: Prof. Dr. C. Eckes, Prof. Dr. M. de Wilde
Nominated by: University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Law

Report by the selection committee

The Convention, c'est nous,' writes Wiebe Hommes in his thorough and multifaceted dissertation *Co-creating European human rights: How the Netherlands received and shaped the European Convention on Human Rights*. In doing so, he emphasizes that this major treaty exists and has effect not merely through the efforts of the court, but through those of all of us: from lawyers and administrators to scholars and activists. By examining the formation and implementation of the Convention and the wide range of actors involved, Dr Hommes paints a dynamic picture centred on ongoing co-creation, rather than the reception of established law. By taking many factors into account, the dissertation shows that the current European Convention on Human Rights is not a given – things could have turned out differently. The Convention is the work of human beings.

According to the jury, the dissertation is a welcome addition to the legal and socio-legal literature owing to its choice of a more historical approach. In doing so, it follows the continuous construction of the Convention through successive developments such as European integration, the decolonization of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the end of the Cold War. Through in-depth archival research and the critical confrontation of socio-legal theories about the European Convention on Human Rights, this study makes an innovative contribution to international debates on the handling of human rights within states.

At the same time, it constantly looks beyond national borders, by consciously recognizing that the Kingdom of the Netherlands extends beyond Europe. In the 1960s, the Caribbean part of the Kingdom – the former Netherlands Antilles and Suriname – also came under the protection of the Convention. This changed the character of the Convention from an agreement about European integration to one that included matters concerning individual human rights.

The jury is highly appreciative of the clear language in which the dissertation is written, making the subject matter accessible to a wide group of interested readers. In addition, the jury considers the examination of the canon and the correction of general assumptions to be commendable, as well as the precise method of investigation and substantiation. The dissertation demonstrates a passion for the international legal order and a commitment to society, yet despite the perceived urgency of the subject, it consistently maintains a calm, inquisitive and modest tone. With humanistic values such as tolerance, cultural diversity and non-dogmatic, critical thinking in mind, this book is a well-deserved prize winner.



Pauline Dirven

Embodied Performances of Forensic Expertise: Epistemic virtues, gender, and emotions in British forensic culture 1920-1980

Supervisor: Dr. Willemijn Ruberg
Co-supervisor: Dr. Jochen Hung
Nominated by: University of Utrecht, Faculty of Humanities

Report by the selection committee

Anyone who watches crime dramas knows that forensic experts play a prominent role. After a murder, they appear alongside the police. These days, a forensic pathologist may even become one of the main characters in a series, as is the case in *The Sommerdahl Murders*. The pathologist in this Danish series is a woman, seen both in protective clothing at the autopsy table and in summer dresses during her time off. Occasionally, she even becomes personally involved in solving the case.

This female forensic pathologist bears no resemblance to the stereotypical image of the forensic expert that took shape in British culture between 1920 and 1980. Yet that stereotype is also very familiar to us from the media: men who epitomize objectivity and rationality, often dressed in dark three-piece suits or long white laboratory coats.

In her excellently written dissertation, Pauline Dirven shows how this stereotypical image of the British forensic expert was constructed within the legal system and through public media appearances. She approaches the subject from multiple perspectives. For example, she examines how experts presented themselves in court and in media performances through their clothing and emotional restraint. She also examines the role gender conventions played in this and how the experts dealt with the bodily remains of murder victims.

Dirven's dissertation excels in connecting current theoretical approaches in the fields of emotions, embodiment, virtues and gender with case studies from British legal practice. This perspective leads to an entirely new view of British forensic culture in the twentieth century. The author unpicks step by step how impartiality and objectivity were embodied and cultivated by forensic experts. She also shows how emotional practices contributed to this, such as masking emotions in facial expressions and carefully maintaining a separation between the public and private domain. These practices were embedded in the socio-cultural scripts of the British stiff upper lip.

Also compelling is the analysis of the Ruxton murder case of 1935. In it, Dirven shows how differently experts dealt with body parts. Mechanical objectivity and the task of identifying a victim and connecting them to a deceased person were sometimes at odds with each other.

The jury appreciates not only the excellent combination of theory and historical practice, but also the broader applicability of this research. The methods and insights are also relevant for other geographical and temporal contexts and invite comparative follow-up research. Anyone who has read this dissertation will in any case never look at forensic experts in contemporary crime dramas in the same way again.

Yvette Drissen

When Success Becomes the New Normal: The Competitive Society and its Symptoms

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Wim Dubbink
Co-supervisor: Dr. Bart Engelen
Nominated by: Tilburg University, Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences

Report by the selection committee

Yvette Drissen gave the jury of this dissertation prize much to contemplate. The irony of the situation can hardly have escaped the PhD candidate herself. She took part in a competition for a dissertation prize with a thesis that investigates the very problem of competition. In every part of society – and particularly in academia. Especially the intense competition faced by young PhD researchers. And there we were, as the jury of this dissertation prize, asking ourselves whether we were part of the very problem that Drissen so convincingly outlines in this fine thesis.

In ‘When Success Becomes the New Normal. The Competitive Society and Its Symptoms’, Yvette Drissen shows how relevant philosophy can be in analysing current issues, how accessible philosophical research can be to a wider audience, and how various methods can be combined in a fruitful way. Not a study of a gap in philosophical scholarship, or a technical detail of the discipline, but a fundamental question that touches on the organization of our society and the way people interact with one another – in a living environment that seems to be becoming ever more competitive.

The jury appreciates that Yvette Drissen approached the major question of competition in such a practical way. In an argument that – entirely in the spirit of Erasmus – is very accessible to a broader readership. Drissen does not so much pass judgement on various forms of competition as offer insight into how they function. Her analysis ultimately leads to practical criteria, or to tools that can help us determine in which circumstances competition may be beneficial or desirable. Not least in academia, of which she is now herself a part.

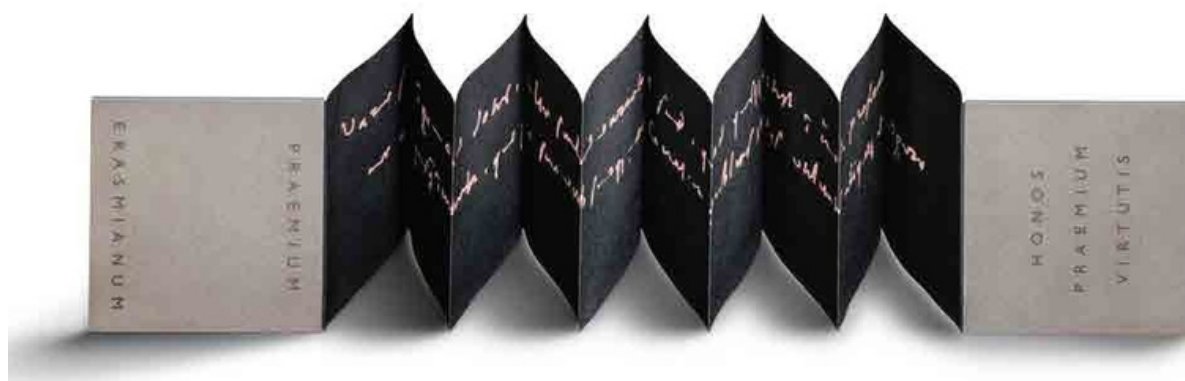
TA competitive world of which this dissertation prize is also a part. The jury will certainly make use of the tools that Yvette Drissen offers in this thesis to reflect on our work at the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation – and we invite Yvette Drissen, as a new expert, to do the same. But whether she wants to or not, whether competition is appropriate in her view or not: she has won this competition. Because Yvette deserves to be praised for this dissertation. In the hope and expectation that she will continue to address major issues in such an original way in the future.



Origin and aim of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation

On 23 June 1958, HKH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands founded the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation. The aim of the organization, as defined in Article 2 of the Statutes, is 'to strengthen the position of the humanities, the social sciences and the arts, in the context of the cultural traditions of Europe in general and the ideas of Erasmus in particular. The emphasis lies on tolerance, cultural diversity and undogmatic critical thinking'.

The prize money of the Erasmus Prize is a sum of €150,000. The Board consists of members of the Dutch cultural, academic and business worlds.



The adornments of the Erasmus Prize were designed in 1995 by Bruno Ninaber van Eyben. They consist of a harmonica-folded ribbon with a titanium plate at both ends. In closed form it is a booklet; when opened a ribbon with a text in the handwriting of Desiderius Erasmus. This text is taken from a letter to Jean de Carondelet (Bazel, 5 January 1523) is characteristic of the thinking of Erasmus:

Diverse are the gifts of men of genius and many are the different kinds of ages. Let each one reveal the scope of his competence and let no one be envious of another, who in keeping with his own ability and style tries to make a useful contribution to the education of all.

Erasmus to Jean de Carondelet
Basel, 5 January 1523

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