

PPE Encounters'

# NEWSLETTER

## October



John Stuart  
Mill College



Welcome to the first PPE Newsletter, brought to you by PPE Encounters. By asking for contributions from all members of the PPE programme that we cherish so dearly, we aim to make this a newsletter of the people, by the people, for the people. Ha.

After welcoming our first years to the college, and somewhat returning to normality, reflect on what the year has been so far. Take that rightly deserved break from studying to flick through these pages for articles concerning all things philosophical, political, and economical, and much more.

In order to screen articles, we will use the following colour-coded system:

Politics

Economics

Philosophy

Other

## TOPIC OF THE MONTH: SUSTAINABILITY

- On the [6<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER](#) there is a [CLIMATE MARCH](#) taking place in Amsterdam. Show your support by turning up and making your voice heard!
- The PPE cookbook is appealing for vegan recipes to be sent in as part of their sustainability campaign, deadline October 31<sup>st</sup>. Send recipes to [sustainability@kalliope.com](mailto:sustainability@kalliope.com)
- The topic of fast fashion has caused many a debate over the last few years. From an environmental point of view, second-hand and clothes swapping is undeniably more sustainable. Luckily, we live in a city that adores this kind of vibe. Here are some nice flea markets and clothes swap places in Amsterdam:
  - i. Waterlooplein market. Daily, Monday → Saturday.
  - ii. Amsterdam-Noord Flea market. This treasure trove happens one weekend a month, with the next sale this coming Saturday & Sunday.
  - iii. Kilosale Amsterdam. Full-time warehouse on Havenstraat, near Vondelpark.
  - iv. The Swapshop & ReLove exchange are 2 others you can check out.

You'll find COVID to be a recurring topic in this month's newsletter – we have one philosophising the pandemic and another discussing the future of pandemics. We have some poetry, riddles, opinions and many thought-provoking articles right up to the end.

After the success of KallioPPE's German election event, our first article examines the impacts of this election from a European perspective...



## *No winners and a 'traffic light' coalition.* Paul Gerlach

Last month, Germany witnessed the end of an era. For the first time after 16 years in power, Angela Merkel's time as head of government has finally come to an end. Merkel, who is 67, has been Chancellor since 2005. As she steps down from politics, the weight she has carried can be seen in the election's results: no one really won. The C.D.U., Merkel's party, had a historically bad result. With only 24 percent of the votes, the Christian Democrats have been dealt the biggest blow in the history of Germany's biggest party. This result is not surprising, as many have argued that Merkel's technocratic governing style is responsible for the dragging modernization of the country's economy, the inadequate commitment to climate action, and the stagnation of digital transformation. That being said, the biggest vote-getter, the center-left Social Democratic Party, also only received roughly 25 percent. The social democrats have had a rough time for years yet profited from the often-awkward looking campaign of the CDU's candidate Armin Laschet. The Green Party was third, with 14.8 percent. The Free Democratic Party (F.D.P.), best described as socially liberal and economically conservative, came fourth, with 11.5%. The AfD, a far-right party, came in at 10.3%, while the Left, a very apt name, got close to 5%. Both had their highest polls in former East German states.



Elections, as we're often reminded, have consequences, but they can take time to unravel. Sometimes the result is a marathon of negotiations, which can go in many directions. Those negotiations happen both within and between the parties, and in both cases, they have taken on a tone that veers from fervent and idealistic to unyielding, bitter, cynical, meretricious, and absurd—sometimes at dizzying speed. The negotiations currently underway between the Greens, the Social Democrats, and the Liberals are essentially free of such drama. Now that the first round of exploratory talks is over, it seems like the Libs have emerged as the winner in this left-of-center coalition. No tax increases, reduced new national debt, and of course, most importantly, no speed limit on the Autobahn. What remains to be seen is how open the Liberals, whose declared main objectives are tax reliefs to German corporations and the middle class, will be to move towards a European Fiscal Union. The latter might be the most significant development for Germany and the E.U. in the years to come. So how progressive will the new "future" coalition actually be? That decision will be made in the coming weeks.

## PE, PP or PPE: It does not matter. Aissatou Diallo

Every PPE student experiences the short-lived anxiety of having to choose the 'right' tracks. The choice some-times may feel like a life-altering decision that will shape your entire future. The focus undeniably often being on the choice on whether to choose the economics track or not. But I am here to tell you it is not that deep, and in the end, it truly does not matter. So, we economics track choosers can get off our (implicit) high horse. There seems to be this general implicit idea going around in the PPE community that doing the economics track is a must-have for any career. I have thought long and hard about this and have come to the profound conclusion that it is a stupid thought. In my observation, it seems to be that we are stuck in the prestige-seeking mindset. It is undeniable that the people within our community are out for at least some prestige or status, be it in the academic field, political field, or just wanting to secure an impressive job. The thing that comes with this is that we look at the different tracks, not as equals but more as having different ranks, and we have all tacitly agreed that the economics track takes number one. Now, there are obvious reasons to pick the economics track when you, for example, plan on doing an economics-related



masters. But I also know that most PPE students are unsure what master's degree or field we want to go into. We just choose economics as a 'safe' option and not because we genuinely enjoy it over politics/philosophy. This seems to be quite old-fashioned thinking, in my opinion. We are focusing on job stability and making our opportunities greater by focusing on how it was done in the past.

But that doesn't consider that we most likely won't have the same careers that our parents had; there's a high possibility that we change careers many times over. There are new jobs and new titles that did not exist five or ten years ago. You will not care which tracks you chose in ten years; what you will care about is your happiness in the field/career you are working in. Instead of focusing on maximizing future job opportunities, we should focus on maximizing future career satisfaction. I always rolled my eyes at the advice to just choose what you enjoy studying, but those people were right. If you know you will be miser-able in that finance job, you might as well put your energy into a career in philosophy that you actually enjoy. You cannot torture yourself with a track you cannot see yourself working in and which you are neither interest-ed in. It is the exact reason why I dropped politics. When choosing your tracks, you need to think about no one except yourself because it only affects you in the end.

## Opinion. Philip Conroy

Hotels are nice. Come in and be pampered for a few nights, and then leave, worry-free of mess or stress. You couldn't but love it. I would stay in a hotel if someone else were paying, yet I would definitely think twice about booking one. Hotels live and breathe excess! Fresh linen, clean towels, single-use appliances: all polished and pzazzed for you to exist in a bubble. Amble through an IKEA showroom why not. Have you ever seen the back of a hotel?

Don't get me wrong, hotels are pleasant to stay in (especially if they have a sauna), but to me, they're nursing homes for the general public. You can have a similar experience hygiene-wise, yet meet many more interesting people, in other more economical establishments. But hey, I'm just a broke student, for now.

## Riddle of the month:

Who said this:?



Need a hint? Signal of distress:



**Answers to be revealed in our next Newsletter.  
Best of luck!**

*A recurring theme of this academic year so far is moving on from a year and a half of living with COVID. Check out our next two articles, concerned with how we dealt with, and move on from the pandemic.*

Here's an interesting life-hack. Want a cool beer, but they hadn't been in the fridge? No problem, just wrap it in a wet kitchen towel, then put it in the freezer (the water will crystalize quicker and cool the beer faster!). Don't forget that it's in there though...

## The fear of nothingness. Amelie Tirtey

They were peculiar, the last two years. 2021 has now nearly come to an end and yet it feels like we're still stuck in early 2020. Back then, the world got unplugged. Throughout last two years, the globe seemed to have stopped spinning from time to time, as if it was a still life. Stores, restaurants, movie theatres, offices and even schools were closed not just in a few countries but worldwide. Now one might think that in these circumstances we would have been predestined to do nothing. To take a deep breath and give our souls a rest in quarantine. But no way. The bad conscience sat like a little devil on everyone's shoulder and prevented us from standing still and doing nothing. But why are we in fear of nothingness? Such a little devil will hardly be the only reason.

Leisure – time when one is not working or occupied; free time. So it is written in the Oxford dictionary. We had time in quarantine, and not just little of it – so that reason is ruled out. Then only the question of what we do with that time remains unanswered. If one stood on the streets before Corona times, one could feel the constantly accelerating pulse of everyday life. Wherever one looked, there were people, with their feet in their hands,

driven by the thought: Those who act faster also get to experience more. Prof. Dr. Hartmut Rosa reports on this phenomenon in an interview for 'Die Zeit'. He talks about the three main aspects of why all of us are running out of time. Besides social change he mentions a general acceleration of the pace of life and technical advancement. These factors do not only increase the transport speed of information and goods but first and foremost the expected reaction frequency. It is in this point that I find myself. Blue checkmarks on WhatsApp are just begging for a response. Leaving your counterpart on read runs under ghosting, and with that comes remorse.

Back in 1930, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote about a life spent chasing profit and efficiency in his work "Muße und Müßiggang". So it is not a Millennial problem, this constant restlessness. Nietzsche speaks of emerging self-shame and self-contempt when one allows oneself some time-off for once. Here, again, I find myself. Through social media everyone shares their sports statistics, novels read, and university content already studied. As if one little devil on the shoulder was not enough already, it is now multiplied by such posts.

## The fear of nothingness. Amelie Tirtey (cont.)

All of a sudden, it's buzzing with little devils around one and the guilty conscience takes away what's left of our little freedom of choice entirely. The devils have spoken: no chance of doing nothing, just get up and do. No matter what, just not nothing.

The fear of becoming a good-for-nothing by doing nothing has now become our constant companion. So many used their free time in quarantine for "wellness" and "fitness", telling themselves that they were actively dealing with themselves. However, nothing but good old usefulness thinking ruled in this scenario. Every second is to be used, tik-tak, tik-tak... There is no room for doing nothing, not even for the blink of an eye. For many people, the watch on our arm has grown to be our best friend and worst enemy at the same time – lost without it but controlled by it.

When we finally manage to block out all expectations and do nothing for once, we get a fright. Our otherwise overloaded attention, from which multitasking and top form is always demanded, changes its direction – it focuses on our inner selves.

Some people are afraid of what is to be discovered there and thus try to avoid these situations by always choosing hecticness over calmness. That sounds rather unhealthy, doesn't it? To be afraid of facing oneself and the problems one has ignored for years. Due to stress in both work and free time, unpleasant emotions of all kinds were put into boxes and placed in the farthest, dustiest, and darkest corner of one of the many shelves in our very personal library, called the brain. If one then starts focusing one's attention on oneself, one runs the risk of rediscovering these boxes. However, dealing with the feelings and memories they contain would throw one off track and take up far too much of our valuable time, so let's not do that. Hour by hour, year by year, these boxes get dustier. But at some point, the shelves, which have become rotten with time, collapse, the boxes open, one's true problems catch up with oneself and straddle one from behind – deceitfully and without any shyness. So perhaps planned confrontation should trump unexpected overpowering after all? But this is only possible if one has leisure, and as one knows, leisure does not fall from the sky. As Pr. Dr. Hartmut Rosa reports: leisure takes time.

## How the COVID pandemic is preparing us for the future. Simon Morales

As the health and economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic are expected to persist until next year for much of the planet, there are growing reservations about the world coming back to complete normality. The severe impact the pandemic has had on society is changing the way we think about public health and future epidemiological risks, and it will prepare us for the inevitable recurrence of a pandemic in the coming decades. As the world becomes more interconnected, the risks of global pandemics increase dramatically. Diseases that, a few decades ago, could be contained in one country are now virtually impossible to contain due to the millions of international flights that occur every year. As this pandemic has shown, the world was in no way prepared for the consequences of a viral outbreak of this magnitude, yet as the world moves forward, there have been many lessons learned from this pandemic.

Firstly, that biosecurity threats are global, and they do not discriminate of gender or socioeconomic status, thus all governments must take a proactive stance against the propelling of pathogens. Secondly, we have learned about the importance of a collective response

between the government, the media, and national and international health agencies. In this pandemic, due to the various cases of conflicting information and lack of transparency, the public decreased its trust in these groups. Public cooperation is essential as people must comply with government policies in the event of a pandemic, but people must trust their governments for this to occur. We have also learned the importance of containment measures such as contact tracing through technology, which has developed significantly since the beginning of this outbreak. Lastly, it is important to further regulate the harvesting of wild and domesticated animals to prevent the mixing of infectious diseases with the human population.

The coronavirus pandemic, while being highly contagious, has a very low death rate, and in the future, there is a high chance of another global pandemic, very possibly more lethal. Thus, the coronavirus pandemic has helped us understand the risks and consequences of a global pandemic but it has also given us the opportunity to prepare for a future outbreak which could have much more significant repercussions on the planet



## Announcements

PPE  
ENCOUNTERS  
Guest Speaker  
event: **Jan-Willen  
van Putten**  
(EFFECTIVE  
ALTRUISM)

Where? 4<sup>th</sup>  
floor, J.S.  
Mill College

When? 10<sup>th</sup>  
November

On a different note, here is a wonderful poem, by  
Puck Ast:

*dancing is like breathing and like drinking with the sea  
forever filled with laughter and the waves accordingly  
surfing on the songs, so marvelous and kind  
moments full of magic until the morning light*

**PPE Halloween Borrel:  
Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> October,  
save the date! There  
will a Halloween  
dress-up code.  
Location to be  
confirmed...x)**

**KallioPPE's Big Talk  
event takes place on  
3<sup>rd</sup> November. Join in  
for what's sure to be  
an engaging  
afternoon!**

Thank you for tuning in to our newsletter & best of luck with those pesky exams. We leave you with one last thought-provoking piece.

## The philosophy of 'the matrix'. Rudolfs Terauds.

After eighteen years the long-awaited 4th addition to The Matrix movies, The Matrix Resurrections, is set to premiere in less than two months. Now seems like a good time to look back at the first three movies and reflect on the concepts and ideas nearly two decades later. But first, a few words about the recording techniques and the extensive combat scenes, as both are vital components of the essence of The Matrix. It is no doubt that in the twenty-year gap between the first three and the last Matrix movie recording equipment, sound, and video design, CGI, and many other factors have developed and improved drastically. But, when watching The Matrix, you rarely think to yourself that the movies are outdated, or the story is incoherent. The scenes change from fast to slow-paced excellently, making it an engaging and exciting watch throughout. The camera use is original and diverse, offering a wide range of perspectives and spatiality. Take, for example, the angles of using side mirrors of vehicles or bullet time, a visual effect created in a simulation of following certain things or movement in slow motion while other events happen in real-time. This brings me to my next topic, namely, the action-packed and lengthy combat scenes where The Matrix trilogy arguably takes its most pride. The Wachowski sisters revolutionized short and long-range combat in cinema forever. Every fight is choreographed impeccably with little repetition, let alone overuse any combat sequences, making it an original and fresh experience even



after several viewing times. When you look at the preceding prominent fighting movies like Fist of Fury or the Police Story, it is easy to see that they are more static and less dimensional than The Matrix, which later movies like Kill Bill and The Grandmaster adopted. The influence in combat in the cinema of The Matrix can't be understated. Besides the afore-mentioned aspects of The Matrix, it also holds a broad range of philosophical Interpretations and values. The first installation of The Matrix interprets Plato's Cave upon other things. In short, imagine a cave with prisoners only allowed to look at the wall in front of them without ever seeing light of any kind. For these prisoners, the cave and the darkness surrounding them is all there is in the world, for they are not aware of the existence of anything else. Now imagine you unlock your shackles, climb up the cave and see the sun for the first time. To continue the interpretation of Plato's allegories, the sun can be viewed as knowledge and reality. The sun enlightens you and opens your eyes to the

## The philosophy of 'the matrix'. Rudolfs Terauds. (cont.)

truth. But only a few are ready to accept it. This is the core idea behind the matrix itself. Interestingly, this isn't the first and only matrix as we find out that the Machines coded the first matrix to be a paradise for humans, but most of them rejected it as reality. The later versions of the matrix featured an illusion of free will, which humans now accepted as reality and allowed the Machines to manipulate the minds of humans more effectively. This notion of choice is vital to The Matrix. The movie asks the question of how free we really are. While the first Matrix movie in the trilogy focuses largely on the theory of knowledge and the nature of humans, the other two put emphasis on the distinction between a human and a machine. When asking ourselves what makes us human, we may think of our superiority in critical and rational thinking or the fact that we hold moral values about ourselves and other humans, or that we have impulses like affection and love, or that we have a purpose. But what if a machine was created with such mathematical perfection that it could resemble all these things. If there was no lack of programming language to explain morality or love, would we accept machines to be like us?

You may say that recreating and explaining love using mathematics is impossible, but perhaps it must not be explained in the way we think. When we are in love, we feel like we are in love and this feeling can be explained neither by humans nor

machines, but maybe it doesn't matter. What matters is the connection the word implies. A machine capable of understanding this connection between itself and another machine, like a code written for another program to be another program's child, may in fact appear to be in love. The feeling of being in love has little to do with having knowledge of what love implies and how love is explained in linguistic terms. Even so, humans think that they are superior to machines because we created them, understanding that machines, like us, have a purpose, seek progress, think rationally, and can relate to human emotions. And giving the Machines two hundred years to develop such a code, would it really be so hard to believe? But perhaps it doesn't matter for we are too ignorant of all this because of a God complex and the need to have power and be in control, so we made machines our slaves to work for us. Now imagine that you were made a slave, while you understand what slavery means and implies, and how immoral it is to enslave someone who, like yourself, holds moral values and can reason. Would you be fine with it?

Ignorance is bliss.