The central research topic of the Research Institute for Philosophy is the concept of rationality. Rationality is often seen as a distinctive characteristic of human beings. But what does it mean to be a rational being and how can ‘rationality’ be defined? The systematic study of rationality takes place in the context of the following four research programmes, which interconnect and intersect in various ways.

- Cognition, Interpretation and Context (Prof. R. van der Sandt)
- The Project of a Hermeneutic Philosophy (Prof. P. van Haute)
- From Natural Philosophy to Science (Prof. P. Bakker)
- Practical Philosophy (Prof. P. van Tongeren)

These four programmes explore different aspects of a range of things that are considered ‘rational’: beliefs, individual actions, and social practices. From what standpoint can we judge the rationality of the beliefs, actions and practices of ourselves and others? Do our categories of reasoning and our standards of truth and consistency enhance or distort our understanding and interpretation of others? What are the foundations of rationality and how has the concept of rationality developed over time?

These questions are addressed in the four research programmes. The first relates to conceptions of belief, cognition and language. It analyses the various ways in which we interpret and understand human behaviour – linguistic and otherwise – in its physical and social context. In the second, the relationship between rationality, meaning and interpretation is examined. The third programme focuses on the emergence of science as the key paradigm of rational thinking in Western Europe, and traces the history of long-term developments and transformations in scientific thinking from its philosophical beginnings. The fourth programme focuses on the concept of practical rationality and its impact on ethics, politics, and religion.

The four research programmes employ a variety of methodological approaches: analytical, hermeneutical, critical, and historical. This makes the Institute one of the few places where a dialogue between people taking these very different approaches is possible. Hence, initiatives that encourage this dialogue are actively promoted. The Institute’s researchers attach particular value to the works of past thinkers, either as ‘partners’ in an ongoing systematic philosophical discussion or as historical subjects in their own right.

Research facilities
The faculty library, which is integrated in the central humanities library, houses one of the finest collections of books and journals on philosophy – and particularly on the history of philosophy – in
the Netherlands, and one of the world’s largest microfilm collections of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts on logic, semantics and natural philosophy.

Collaboration

Individual researchers are members of research schools such as the Netherlands Research School for Medieval Studies and the Netherlands School for Research in Practical Philosophy.

The Research Institute for Philosophy has formal cooperative agreements with the Universities of Leuven and Stellenbosch, and the University of Münster, which also participates in the IRUN network. There are similar arrangements with the University of Parma, the University of Pretoria, the University of Kwazulu Natal, De Paul University (Chicago), the University of Sao Paolo and the Pontifical University of Sao Paolo, as well as the ‘Nederlands-Afrikaanstalig Genootschap voor Wijsbegeerte’.

In addition, members of the research programmes have close contacts with institutions such as the Departments of Philosophy at the Universities of Middlesex and Hertfordshire (UK), Antwerp, Stuttgart and Tübingen, and the Humboldt University in Berlin, the Università degli Studi di Macerata, the Université de Fribourg (Switzerland), Fordham University and Columbia University (New York), Emory University (Atlanta), and the Centre of Excellence ‘History of Mind Research Unit’ at the University of Helsinki.

In 2009, the Institute hosted guest researchers from a number of countries.

Research results

In 2009, five PhD theses were defended, one cum laude: Corien Bary, Aspect in Ancient Greek: a Semantic Analysis of the Aorist and Imperfective. This study provides a new, more insightful analysis of the expression of temporality in language in general and in Ancient Greek in particular.

Members of the research programme Cognition, Interpretation and Context have been very successful in obtaining external funding for research projects and network activities. Dr Corien Bary was
awarded a Rubicon fellowship, a Veni grant, and a stipend from the Niels Stensen Foundation. Dr Bart Geurts obtained a project in NWO’s Free Competition in the Humanities programme. Together with colleagues from Lyon and Berlin, he raised funding for an ESF Network called ‘EuroXprag’, which has the aim of fostering interdisciplinary approaches to the pragmatics of natural language through collaborations, workshops, and conferences. Dr Geurts finished a book on so-called ‘quantity implicatures’, which is due to appear with Cambridge University Press. Within the same research programme, Marco van Leeuwen defended his PhD thesis which developed a new theory of embodied and embedded concepts (Thinking Outside The Box). Dr Chris Buskes, the Institute’s acclaimed Darwin expert, co-published a book on the life, works and intellectual heritage of Charles Darwin (In Darwins woorden). His bestseller Evolutionair denken (2006) appeared in a Spanish translation. Prof. Marc Slors organized a series of expert meetings on the relationship between philosophy of mind and psychiatry (in collaboration with the University of Leiden and the VU University Amsterdam), and an international workshop on Narrative, Simulation and Identification (together with Prof. Hans Hoeken of the Centre for Language Studies).

Within the research programme The Project of a Hermeneutic Philosophy, Dr Gert-Jan van der Heiden obtained a Veni grant for a research project on recently developed ontological models of plurality and their implications for political philosophy. He also completed a book entitled The Truth (and Untruth) of Language, which focuses on the various conceptions of language in contemporary continental philosophy. More specifically, his study offers a detailed analysis of the notions of ‘disclosure’ and ‘displacement’ in the works of Heidegger, Ricoeur, and Derrida. Dr Benda Hofmeyr, who is also carrying out a Veni project at the Institute, published a collection of essays on the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (Radical Passivity). The book focuses on the ethical significance of Levinas’s idea of ‘radical passivity’ and deals with various criticisms levelled against Levinas’s prioritization of the Other as the cornerstone of ethics.

Within the programme From Natural Philosophy to Science, Annemarie Nooijen defended her PhD thesis on Balthasar Bekker’s book De betoverde wereld (1691-1693) and its influence on German Enlightenment thought (in collaboration with Prof. G. van Gemert of the Institute for Historical, Literary and Cultural Studies). Prof. Paul Bakker delivered his inaugural address (Tabula rasa). He also organized an international conference on Philosophical Psychology in Late-Medieval Commentaries on Peter Lombard’s Sentences. Prof. Christoph Lüthy co-published a collection of essays (De maakbare mens) analyzing various aspects of the cluster of current developments and public fears that relate to the untranslatable Dutch phrase ‘De maakbare mens’. Looking at the issues involved from the point of view of genetic engineers, human right lawyers, biologists, artificial intelligence specialists, philosophers, historians, and sociologists, this book shows where the fears are well-grounded and where they are imaginary. Alexis Smets, junior researcher in Prof. Hans Thijssen’s NWO project on Visualizing the Invisible, was awarded a research fellowship at the Chemical Heritage Foundation in Philadelphia. Prof. Thijssen, Prof. Bakker and Dr M. Streijger completed their edition of John Buridan’s commentary on Aristotle’s De generatione et corruptione, a key text in fourteenth-century natural philosophy. Finally, the senior members of the programme success-
fully applied for a research professorship for Prof. Edith Dudley Sylla (North Carolina State University, USA) in the Royal Academy’s Visiting Professors Programme.

Within the research programme Practical Philosophy two PhD theses were defended: Chiel van den Akker on truth, language and the past (Bewereren en Tonen) and Willem van der Kuylen on Kant’s notion of ‘Realrepugnanz’. Dr Bas van Stokkom and Dr Marcel Becker were awarded a short-term project on Citizens as ‘Trustees’ as part of NWO’s research programme Contested Democracy. Dr Evert van der Zweerde completed his exploring study on Islamic Democratic Repertoires. His study demonstrates that the allegedly problematic relationship between Islam and democracy is the result of the contingent intersection of a perceived crisis of democracy, on the one hand, and a rapid process of transformation of the Islamic tradition itself, on the other. Dr Marcel Becker and Prof. Paul van Tongeren published a collection of essays on the ethical significance of literature (Sprekende werken). Dr Marin Terpstra and Dr Inigo Bocken successfully applied for a project in the Royal Academy’s Student Assistants Programme. Ten promising MA students were offered the opportunity to participate as research assistants in a project on Limits and Chances in the Dialogue between Reason and Religion. This project is a joint initiative of the Research Institute for Philosophy and the Research Institute for Religious Studies and Theology.

Finally, members of several research programmes participated in a workshop on Alliances: The Future of Philosophy organized at De Paul University (Chicago) to celebrate the continuing cooperation with the Research Institute for Philosophy.

Societal impact

Members of the Institute regularly participate in forum discussions and contribute to public debate by publishing articles in newspapers, giving talks on the radio and in other media, thus reaching a wider audience than the scientific community alone. 2009 was celebrated as the Year of Darwin. Throughout the year, Dr Chris Buskes was seen in forum discussions, television programmes, newspapers and symposia dedicated to Charles Darwin and his influence. Dr Evert van der Zweerde acted as commentator on public lectures by Prof. Tariq Ramadan, Prof. Herman Wijffels, and Dr Shahrukh Alam, all organized by Radboud University Nijmegen’s Soeterbeeck Programme. Dr Marcel Becker continued his activities as member of the board of Nijmegen’s Philosophical Café, which aims to bridge the gap between academic philosophical research and a non-academic audience. Prof. Christoph Lüthy’s book De maakbare mens was launched during a public debate at the Royal Academy and discussed on television, on the radio and in newspapers. Several members of the Institute were involved in a series of evening lectures intended for philosophy teachers in secondary schools on the topic of Rationality and Religion, and gave lectures in secondary schools and at HOVO (Higher Education for the Elderly). Finally, the Institute hosted a highly successful ‘Business Day’ (Bedrijvendag), jointly organized by staff and students and intended to shed light on the role of philosophy in business and government.

Future research

The Institute intends to intensify and expand its cooperation with the Research Institute for Religious Studies and Theology, the Institute for Historical, Literary and Cultural Studies and the Centre of Language Studies, in order to reinforce research in the humanities at Radboud University Nijmegen. A few joint multi-disciplinary PhD projects have already been developed and many others will follow.

Within the Research Institute for Philosophy, several PhD theses have almost been completed and will be defended in 2010, two of them on the basis of international co-tutelle agreements: Mihea Dobre (agreement with the University of Bucharest) and Delphine Bellis (agreement with the University of Paris IV).

Dr Bart Geurts will start his new project on quantity implicatures (Quantity matters: Building a theory of Q-implicature). Dr Corien Bary will start her Veni project on report constructions in Ancient Greek (Reports from the Past), more specifically on the differences between direct and indirect reports, and on the related language-philosophical distinction between ‘mention’ and ‘use’. She will spend a few months at the Department of English and American

Centre for Ethics

The Center for Ethics organizes conferences, public lectures and trainings for professionals and a range of societal groups. The Center works in close cooperation with the members of the programme Practical Philosophy, helping them to extend their audience and make their expertise productive for society. Members of the Center for Ethics gave dozens of public lectures and appeared in printed and audiovisual media about a hundred times during 2009. A great deal of work has been invested in the production of an audiovisual instrument, which is nearly completed, that will provide integrity training for civil servants. Members of the Center for Ethics played an important role in the annual ‘Month of Philosophy’ (April), as well as in the annual ‘Day of Integrity’ organized by the Dutch National Office for Promoting Ethics and Integrity in the Public Sector (BIOS) in Utrecht. In 2010, the Center will organize three conferences: one on moral education (‘Voortreffelijk onderwijs’), one on ‘Public Forgiveness’, and one on the ‘Ethics of Palliative Care’. Drs. Wouter Sanderse will launch a new series of training for school directors and teachers. Dr Bas van Stokkom will publish a book on citizenship in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
The colloquia, including the International Hermeneutics Symposium (Freiburg) and the Collegium Phaenomenologicum (Città di Castello).

Prof. Philippe van Haute will publish a book (with Dr Tomas Geyskens) on Freud and Lacan (Onmogelijk genieten. Klinische antropologie van de hysterie bij Freud en Lacan). From July to September, he will carry out his research as a Fellow at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study. A new series of articles for the Nietzsche-Wörterbuch (edited by Prof. Paul van Tongeren) will be published by Wissenschaftsverlag W. de Gruyter (Berlin).

Femke Kok will publish a partial edition of Marsilius of Inghen’s commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics. Prof. Paul Bakker will conclude his Vidi project Form of the Body or Ghost in the Machine? by publishing a monograph on late-medieval and Renaissance theories of the relationship between soul, mind and body. From September 2010 to July 2011, he will carry out research at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and
Social Sciences. Dr Cees Leijenhorst and Prof. Paul Bakker will publish a collection of essays on the development of the science of the soul from the late Middle Ages to the eighteenth century: *Psychology and the Other Disciplines*. Prof. Christoph Lüthy will publish two collections of articles: one on scientifically relevant objects in the early modern Low Countries (**Silent Messengers**, with Sven Dupré, University of Ghent) and one on the Faculty of Science at Radboud University Nijmegen between 1957 and 2007 (**The Growth of the Faculty Tree**, with Wim Thijssen and Ton Rijken). Finally, Prof. Edith Sylla will supervise a series of research seminars on late-medieval natural philosophy as part of her visiting professorship.

The MA students involved in the **Student Assistants** project on *Limits and Chances in the Dialogue between Reason and Religion* will present their results at a conference to be organized by Dr Marin Terpstra and Dr Inigo Bocken. Dr Terpstra will also organize a series of expert meetings on ethics, politics and religion, and publish a book on democracy and political theology (**Democratie als cultus**). Members of the research group **Repertoires of Democracy**, led by Dr Evert van der Zweerde, will publish a volume on **Creative Crises of Democracy** and organize a workshop in which the results of the project will be made available to a larger audience.

Finally, the 32nd conference of Dutch and Flemish philosophers (Nederlands-Vlaamse Filosofiedag) will be hosted by the Institute in cooperation with Radboud University’s Soeterbeek Programme.