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The Psychologists Dilemma Game: The implicit vs the explicit is not a zero sum game

René van Hezewijk¹ and Henderikus Stam²

“The only thing then is to use as much sagacity as you can possess, and to be as candid as you can.” (James, 1890, p. 194).

This paper is about Johannes Linschoten, and the intriguing question why, in 1964 – in the eyes of some beholders – he left phenomenological psychology and exchanged it for a positivistic version of psychology³. This *is* a key question for us in trying to complete the biography of Linschoten. In this paper, we argue that it is not an “either-or” choice, as some would suggest, and that Linschoten did not in fact abandon phenomenology.

Arguing that there must be a choice between being a phenomenologist or a positivist constructs Psychology as a zero-sum game. But is it?

Let us explain. We start with the possible psychologists positions, and next we consider the possible positions that are granted the subject or participants or client or whatever one likes to call the person who’s behaviour a psychologist wants to explain or understand. Then we come to the dilemma Linschoten found himself in, and how he found a soul mate in William James. We conclude with a tentative answer to the question referred to above.

The psychologist’s position

Among the recurrent cleavages that define 20th century psychology is the deep division between psychologies that distance the psychologist from the phenomenon under investigation from those that engage the question under investigation without distancing themselves from their own experience with the phenomenon.

Both psychologists, of course, adhere to a form of empiricism, radical or not. So, for the sake, of the argument, let’s call the first type of psychologist the *intuitive psychologist*, and the second type the *rationalistic psychologist*.

Intuitive psychologists explicitly utilize the reflexive capacities they have as human beings and/or their membership in a specific culture as a foundation for their psychology. The most obvious example is phenomenology. Focusing on psychology it sought to provide an alternative formulation of interiority that Husserl claimed was the transcendental science of pure consciousness, what he called in 1913 still the “science of essential Being”(Husserl, 1962 (1913)).

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³ We reported earlier of our enterprise in several of the ESHHS conferences and in a number of published articles (Stam & Van Hezewijk, 2004, 2007; Van Hezewijk & Stam, 2007, 2008; Van Hezewijk, Stam, & Panhuysen, 2001, 2002a, 2002b).

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Interestingly Husserl tried to find ways to distinguish, if not separate, idiosyncratic judgments from *pure* experiences of things; that is, experiences in which the idiosyncratic judgment is eidetically suspended and that reflect things as they are things of experience. The natural standpoint makes us see the natural world, the phenomenological standpoint will lead us to the phenomenological world. This presupposes a phenomenological analysis of pure consciousness, of the essence of being conscious of something, of things. Only then it "...becomes evident that every experience in the stream which our reflexion can lay hold on has *its own essence open to intuition*, a "content" which can be considered in its *singularity in and for itself*. We shall be concerned to grasp this individual content of the *cogitatio* in its *pure* singularity, and to describe it in its general features, excluding everything which is not to be found in the *cogitatio* [a conscious experience] as it is in itself. We must likewise describe the *unity of consciousness* which is demanded by the *intrinsic nature of the cogitationes*, and so necessarily demanded that they could not be without this unity" (Husserl, 1962 (1913), p. 116).

"Thus we fix our eyes steadily upon the sphere of Consciousness and study what it is that we find immanent in *it*. At first, without having yet carried out the phenomenological suspensions of the element of judgment, we subject this sphere of Consciousness in its essential nature to a systematic though in no sense exhaustive analysis. What we lack above all is a certain general insight into the essence of *consciousness in general*, and quite specially also of consciousness, so far as in and through its essential Being, the "natural" fact-world comes to be known. In these studies we go so far as is needed to furnish the full insight at which we have been aiming, to wit, *that Consciousness in itself has a being of its own which in its absolute uniqueness of nature remains unaffected by the phenomenological disconnexion*. It therefore remains over as a "*phenomenological residuum*", as a region of Being which is in principle unique, and can become in fact the field of a new science-the science of Phenomenology" (Husserl, 1962 (1913), p. 113).

Whereas *all physical knowledge serves accordingly, and in the reverse sense, as an indicator of the course of possible experiences with the sensory things found in them and the occurrences in which they figure* [thus] helps us to find our way about in the world of actual experience in which we all live and act (Husserl, 1962 (1913), p. 129), phenomenological insight is concerned with what it is to be in a "cogatio" relation to things of the world. That is, a relation that explicitly includes the fact that we perceive, remember, experience, think about things. 'Propositional attitudes', as much later they were referred to (Quine, 1956).

However, it was not Husserl who succeeded in creating a phenomenological *psychology* but a number of his followers who revised phenomenology so that it would provide the justification for a categorization of experience. Although the label "phenomenological psychology" is now widely and loosely applied to a range of methods that bear little resemblance to the debates of the early 20th century, the mid-20th century attempt to

create a unique phenomenological psychology was successful in establishing an alternative position, albeit ever so briefly. Nevertheless, the later incarnations of humanistic psychologies and social constructionisms owe their initial form to this debate.

So on the one hand, intuitive psychologists are supposed to be *incapable* of understanding and explaining the behavior of a person without using knowledge of the meanings all persons employ, including themselves as psychologists. On the other hand, rationalistic psychologists suppose that they *are* capable of recreating from scratch the determinants governing the behavior of persons without ever involving the background or tacit knowledge of the recreating psychologist him or herself.

The rationalistic psychologist is not – or does not want to be – aware of the implicit knowledge they need themselves for understanding behavior. The intuitive psychologist implies that indeed, as Husserl already observed, when we see the world there is at least as much taken for granted about *seeing*, as is taken for granted about the *world*. “Understanding behaviour” must – as it were – imply understanding of ‘understanding’ in order to even be able to *distinguish* behaviour from non-behaviour, behavior x from behavior y, action from non-action; let alone understand intentional actions (if any). The rationalistic psychologist argues that the “understanding psychologist” (the intuitive psychologist), however, is susceptible to the fads and fallacies to which every human being in every culture is susceptible. And, there are undoubtedly many fads and fallacies to which we are all susceptible.

An easy and admittedly simple example makes this clear. If it is only natural to present a guest with one (1) biscuit together with a cup of coffee, and present a guest only two cups of coffee per visit, a psychologist like this will understand the coffee ritual as natural, without saying so, if and only if he or she is a member of Dutch culture. Beyond the borders of the Netherlands, it is not natural to do so, and it is even considered – perhaps – as deviant behaviour. Thus, where in the Netherlands it hardly counts as intentional behaviour, it needs an understanding as maladjusted, if not deviant, in – say – Belgium. Or if in – say – Vietnam, after a few hours, the host says that “of course you can stay overnight and sleep in my home”, you must understand that it is time to go. Don’t say “no, thank you, that won’t be necessary” and remain seated.

In South East Asian countries a Dutch psychologist will realize he is much closer to the first type of psychologist (the external observing one) than when he is at home where it is only natural to present one biscuit and close the biscuit tin.

The subject’s position

North American psychology after World War II took its purpose clearly to be the psychology that was capable at every turn of demonstrating the limits of human subjectivity, both of the psychologist and of the subject. Both behaviorism and cognitive

psychology were premised on the thesis that behavioral continuities could provide the mechanism by which one might articulate the features of the behavioral or cognitive system. There is now substantial and converging evidence that we cannot always be right in what introspection has to offer with respect to insight into the motives or determinants for behaviour. Both from neuropsychological evidence⁴, research using primes and masking⁵, brain research⁶, neurophysiology⁷ and psychology itself,⁸ it has become clear that we often are both witness and victim of processes beyond our own control. But how often do we wittingly engage in actions? Seldom, they claim, are we the suspects of our behaviour. Social psychology demonstrated that human beings are fallible and incapable of cognizing the determinants of their own actions. Thus, from their objective knowledge of the world these psychologists claimed to know that, judged by the behavior of their participants, the subjective knowledge of these participants was wrong. We are telling more than we can know (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).

So, not too surprisingly, the rationalistic psychologists consider their subjects not as understanding subjects, although the subjects will claim to fully understand what they are doing, and why. Of course, these subjects can be convinced to a certain degree at least, that they err and are only under the illusion of perfectly knowing and consciously willing what they do. But there will not be many persons who would fully acknowledge that their behaviour is never fully under their control.

Interestingly, we now find psychologists of the second type that meet the boundaries of their rationalism when they find that some of the alleged fads and fallacies are very clever after all. Survival seems more successful if we ignore the explicit knowledge that one's behavior is fallacy-bound. For instance, Gerd Gigerenzer claims that fallacies are not always fallacious after all; they are fallacies only in the light of theories claiming truth or justice or rightness in situations that are ecologically irrational (Bargh, et al., 2001; Gigerenzer, 2007; Wegner, 2002).

Even more interesting is the question how subjects (also known as "participants" in psychological laboratories and experiments) think they arrive at certain actions. It is well known, by now, that people can give good reasons for at least a substantial number of their actions. Especially after the fact, and when explicitly asked, most people have brilliant introspective gifts and come up with excellent explanations, even if they are

⁴ (Libet, 1985, 1996; Libet, Wright, & Gleason, 1982)

⁵ (e.g. Bargh, 1992, 1994, 1997; Bargh, Chaiken, Govender, & Pratto, 1992; Bargh, Chaiken, Raymond, & Hymes, 1996; Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Trötschel, 2001; Marcel, 1980, 1983a, 1983b; Marcel & Bisiach, 1988; Shallice, 1988)

⁶ (e.g. Lashley, 1958; Marcel, 1982; Weiskrantz, 1990, 1996)

⁷ (Bogen, 1969, 1995a, 1995b)

⁸ (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982; Tversky, 1972; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973, 1974)

known to be impossible for the psychologist that designed the experimental setting. But ironically, one has to be very good in understanding what reasons you *can* have at all to give, even if they are only post hoc judgements! Surveys and questionnaires profit abundantly from these introspective gifts. In fact, they are the modern version of introspection that only differs in the number of subjects and the statistical techniques used.

So, to conclude this section on the subject's position, there are two kinds of subjects: those who "know" what and why she is doing something, and those who do not.

But beware, this is still seen from the psychologist's viewpoint. What is really at stake here is how subjects see themselves as understanding their own behaviour, or not. The latter position, of course, is the odd one. Most of us think of ourselves as brilliant intuitive psychologists where our own behaviour and much of the behaviour of others are concerned.

Linschoten on James

Much of the evidence related to the debates we've just mentioned is *recent* history. Linschoten, however, died on the 17th of March 1964. He would have been unaware of this history. Nevertheless the conclusions he drew from Darwin, perhaps Husserl, Festinger (1957)⁹, and especially William James all pointed to what Libet, Tversky, Kahneman, Marcel and others concluded, much later, from their experiments. In the words of Max Scheler in 1910, in his essay on "Idols of self-knowledge" — the essay from which Linschoten borrowed his idea for his monograph "*Idols of the psychologist*":

Indeed, where rationalistic philosophy tried to reduce all illusions to errors of judgement and inference, and even tried, finally, to reduce the essence of illusion to that of error, intuitive philosophy will show that all errors are based on illusions. (Scheler, 1973, p. 4)

Scheler here refers to *rationalistic philosophy*, but rationalistic psychology claims that all cognitive illusions are errors against some rational rule or principle.

We prefer the right-most nylon pantyhose or nightgown demonstrating a preference for the right (nothing more). Yet, when questioned the effect of position is denied and subjects suggest it is their quality. Of course this illusion is based on an error of judgment, simply because all four garments were from the same brand and production cycle. We err in that we do not acknowledge the biases we have, and we err in that we do not properly observe their quality (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Next, we experience cognitive dissonance when we hear the stockings are all the same, and reduce the dissonance by ... etc etc.

⁹ Linschoten had a copy of *A theory of cognitive dissonance*, and quoted it.

Linschoten agreed with Scheler. Linschoten started as a psychologist with an *intuitive philosophy of psychology*¹⁰. But he never avoided thinking about and discussing experimental or rationalistic psychology. We remind you of his dissertation, which included 130 different experiments, on the structural analysis of binocular depth perception (Linschoten, 1956a; Van Hezewijk & Stam, 2007).

Perhaps because it was published in German it escaped the attention of many a phenomenologist in the Anglo-Saxon world.

As everything, Linschoten took his teaching duties very, very seriously. His lectures were prepared meticulously. We possess the photocopies of the stencil hand-outs of his lectures on Husserl (1958, about 175 pages), on William James (1957, about 250 pages, later published as books in Dutch, German and English (Linschoten, 1959b, 1961a, 1968)), and other subjects (psycholinguistics in 1960; levels of organization in 1959; basic concepts of phenomenology, 1958).

Linschoten lectured for years on Husserl for “candidates” and on William James (for “pre-candidates”)¹¹. At first Linschoten saw in William James a precursor of Husserl. Later he develops the hypothesis that Husserl was influenced by James. This is not the place to, once again, start the discussion on the nature of James’ psychology. However, James inspired Linschoten, like he did many others.

In James he found a soul mate. Linschoten’s book on William James (Linschoten, 1959b, 1961a, 1968) resulted from the lectures he started on the 14th of October 1957¹². The text of the lectures brings Linschoten’s personal view a bit more to the foreground than in the book. Linschoten clearly admires the way William James tried to find a deeper ground for James’s own psychology. So much so, that James came to doubt whether it was a science after all: “This is not a science. It is a hope of a science”. As Linschoten

¹⁰ As we discussed elsewhere (Van Hezewijk & Stam, 2008) Linschoten succeeded Frederic Buytendijk as a phenomenological psychologist (Stam & Van Hezewijk, 2004, 2007) who was considered to be the headmaster of the Utrecht School (Van Hezewijk, et al., 2002a, 2002b). Although he wrote many articles expressing the inevitability of a phenomenological philosophy in psychology (Linschoten, 1954, 1959a, 1961a, 1961b, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971), and published a number of phenomenological studies of subjects like perceived movement and falling asleep (Linschoten, 1949, 1950, 1955, 1956b),

¹¹ Those were the days that it took more than five years to get a doctoral in psychology. After one year there was a propaedeutic exam; two programmed years later the candidate exam, and then – again two years later the doctoral exam. The doctorandus could then go for a Ph.D. (doctorate) for at least another four years (generally). Linschoten, by the way, was much faster. He was a doctorandus within 3 ½ years. His 575 pages dissertation took him about four years, after a false start in the phenomenological direction that Buytendijk disapproved of.

¹² The first hour of the lectures in this series was about a systematic subject, e.g. localisation problems (now often to be found in lectures and books on experimental, cognitive neuroscience). In the second hour he discussed his reading of William James.

read more of James, he believed James to be gradually approaching similar conclusions to Husserl's. Husserl's concept of intentionality is reflected in James's observation that consciousness as such is not a thing that exists. James called it the stream of consciousness, but Linschoten made it clear to his students, and later to his readers that James had come to the same conclusion as Husserl:

“there is no thought-stuff different from thing-stuff... the same identical piece of ‘pure experience’... can stand alternately for a ‘fact of consciousness’ and for physical reality” (William James in *Essays in radical empiricism*, p. 137, as quoted in Linschoten, 1959b, p. 185).

Linschoten also observes that James was often seen as the precursor of behaviorism, if not its founder. And yet Linschoten sees him as a thinker “on the way to a phenomenological psychology”. James found a solution for this dilemma in the complementarity principle, borrowed from Niels Bohr¹³.

But it becomes clear that Linschoten wanted to go a step further than James. Linschoten fully accepts the dangers that James met in his enterprise, one of which is the famous “psychologists’ fallacy”,

“... the confusion of [the psychologist’s] own standpoint with that of the mental fact about which he is making his report....” (James, 1890, pp. 181-182). So how did Linschoten do it? Did *he* succeed?

The psychologist’s dilemma game -- played

In earlier presentations and publications we pointed out the paradox surrounding the perception of Linschoten¹⁴. For a small number of North American psychologists Linschoten is a phenomenologist; for a few German perception psychologists he is a fundamental experimentalist and theoretical analyst on binocular depth perception; and for many Dutch colleagues he is the phenomenologist who converted to positivism. The first two interpretations make sense given that not all material is available to the German and North American readers. The Dutch position is *understandable* as well: “*Idols of the psychologists*” was his last and posthumously published book and was taken to be the final statement on his position.

¹³ Linschoten uses one page to explain to the reader what Bohr meant by that. In brief: “under certain conditions (physical) events en relations found in two experiments must be described by two different models and theories, each of which is valid for one of the experiments, but that contradict each other.” (Linschoten, 1959b, p. 184). Once again think of what James said, to wit that “there is no thought-stuff different from thing-stuff” (see quote above).

¹⁴ See note 3

Understandable, perhaps, but not rational. There are some anomalies. First there is an intriguing remark by Amedeo Giorgi.

In an interview with him he told us that when he was visiting Utrecht in the early 1960s in order to study with Linschoten, Linschoten was very friendly but secretive about "Idols", which he was preparing to be published. The rumour had spread that Linschoten was critical of phenomenology in his new book, and when Giorgi asked Linschoten about this, Linschoten answered: "don't worry, my next book will be phenomenology again" (Giorgi, 1999a, 1999b).

Another anomaly: Idols was published in 1964; however, at about the same time Linschoten published a serious study on the "inevitability of phenomenology" in a Dutch philosophy journal and, in German, in an annual review for psychology and psychotherapy (Linschoten, 1962, 1963).

A third anomaly is that the translation of his study on James in German, and the preparation of a translation in English, continued¹⁵ (Linschoten, 1961b, 1968).

Fourth, Ep Köster, one of L's assistants at the time, explicitly said that Idols was written by a phenomenologist. 'Nothing in it says that it would be the end of phenomenology for Linschoten'. On his view, Linschoten was always busy trying to unite phenomenology and experimentation.

Fifth, Langeveld in his *In Memoriam*, explicitly mentions that before he died Linschoten reassured him that he had not abandoned phenomenology (Langeveld, 1964).

Perhaps most illuminating, though cryptic, is what Linschoten himself wrote on the dust cover. Some quotes: "If the psychologist wants to be scientific, he should behave accordingly. That is, to observe the rules of the game. ... Identify hidden assumptions. ... Are human beings so exceptional that they can only be compared with themselves? Or should science observe them objectively, like any other object? The book [Idols] gives an affirmative answer to the latter question. ...It wants to enliven the discussion. There are oppositions and counter positions. It was written in the opinion that science is serious business, but also a game; the game should not only be played in a white coat and a bow tie, but also in a party hat (niet alleen met witte jas en hoge hoed, maar ook wel met een feestneus)".

Conclusion and consequences

¹⁵ Amedeo Giorgi translated 'Op weg...' in English, and was helped by Father Van der Velde. Linschoten was asked to translate it himself but he agreed for Giorgi to take care of that "because otherwise he would be rewriting it" (Giorgi, personal communication)

James's Psychologists' Fallacy as the "confusion of his own standpoint with that of the mental fact about which he is making his report" could be read as a critique of introspection, and James meant it as such in part. But it is also a critique of the failure to recognize the reflexive nature of psychologists' claims. Linschoten came to the same conclusion as William James.

Interestingly, while James appears to come to his conclusion starting from a rationalistic position and physiological training, Linschoten came from the opposite side, from an intuitive psychology and phenomenological training.

James however did not ignore the philosophical side, nor did Linschoten neglect the value of experimentation. Both concluded that the psychologist had two options that were not mutually exclusive. They also agreed that these two psychologies were complementary.

But how, my dear Watson, can they be united? For the psychologist, that seemed to them the ultimate question.

James recognized that he never succeeded in uniting them. Ever dissatisfied with the inconclusiveness of experiments and ever discontented with the indecisiveness of philosophical argumentation, he remained undecided.

Linschoten, not averse to humour, tried to solve the dilemma in play. Eidetically reducing psychology to its core he discovered that the idols of psychologists (psychologists!) coincide with the idols of all human beings. Idolatry is abundantly present, due to language, common sense, religion and other sources of fallacies and false appearances. Psychology is a self-committed science. So what could be better than playing the game of the objective scientist if one wants to do thorough, fundamental phenomenology about psychology? What better mirror for phenomenologists than doing objective psychology written by a well-known and well-informed phenomenologist? Linschoten's irony however appears to have been lost on his audience, given the reception of his book as anti-phenomenological.

Metaphorically speaking, where the psychologist writing as a novelist (William James) still had his brother Henry James (the novelist writing as a psychologist), Hans Linschoten simply held up the mirror himself¹⁶.

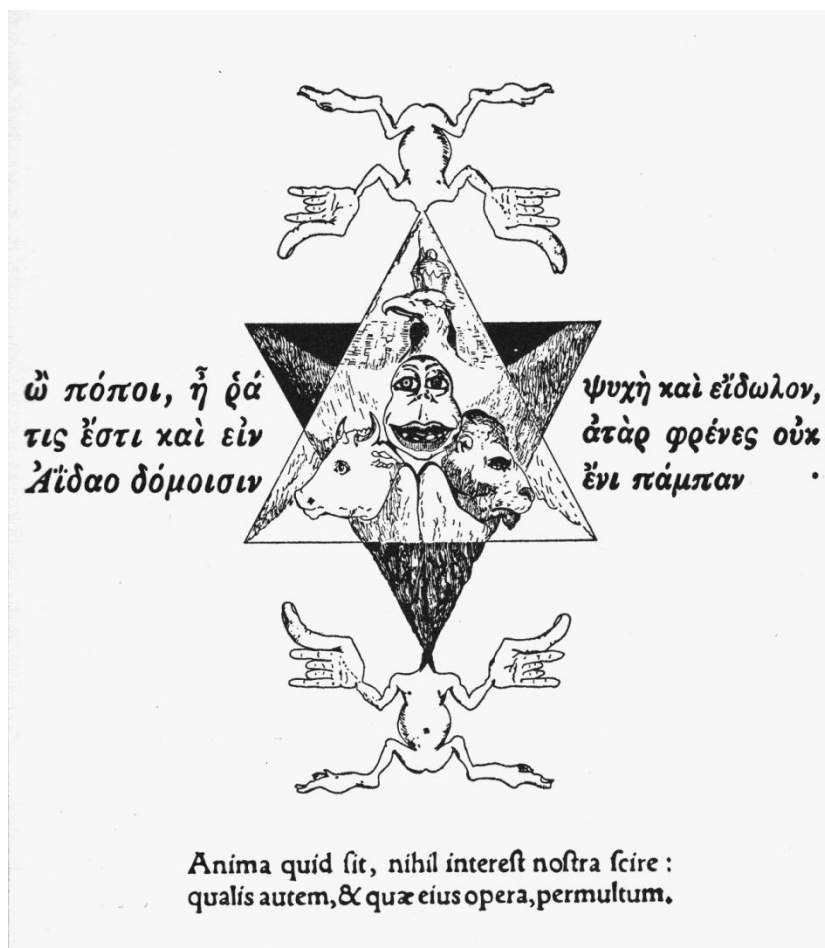
Paraphrasing Linschoten here¹⁷: the opponents of psychoanalysis often point out that Freud's psychoanalysis is a form of projection or other kind of sublimation of Freud's deeper desires; and the adversaries of phenomenology will point to the fact that Husserl

¹⁶ Remember, by the way, he wrote poetry as well. See our forthcoming biography, and

¹⁷ Idols pp. 53-54

needed experiences to study experience. Seldom have the protagonists of a knowledge system acknowledged that their privileged position is at the same time a disadvantage. Darwin was one of the few to realize this – says Linschoten – and was excused because his conclusion (that humans are not privileged in evolution and are no better than other animals, Charles Darwin included) resulted from a theory that was as self-involved as psychoanalysis or phenomenology. And in his autobiography he demonstrated his remarkable honesty about this: the grounds for judgments can be different from the reasons given for them. These judgments function as prejudices. They can be true or useful, but they must be revealed and tested. If not they will turn out to be idols, the *idola tribus*, *idola specus*, the *idola fori*, and the *idola theatric*. In other words the prejudices resulting from being human, from one's personal history, from culture and from old theories and authorities.

The drawing Linschoten included in his *Idols* as a frontispiece is illuminating, although, ironically, you need some intuitive psychology to understand it.



The drawing is Linschoten's . We see the four evangelists represented by the eagle (John), the lion (Mark), the bull (Luke) and the angel, Matthew. The angel is pictured as the homunculus, the representation in the cortex of the sensitive areas of the human body. The Greek text is from Homer's Iliad, and it reads: 'Damn! Then there still is a soul in the underworld in the form of a shadow; but it has no idea at all'. The Latin text is taken from Vives' *De anima et vita*, 1538: 'Whatever the soul is, is not important for us, but highly interesting are her properties and activities (or actions). '

Fundamentally, the psychologist has two choices. The dilemma is that one must take into account the fact that the subject, his antagonist, is in the same position. The subject can be respectful of the real grounds for her judgments and behavior (scientifically determined); or she can suggest that the reasons *she* gives are the true reasons for her judgements and behaviour. Research we have referred to earlier ¹⁸ has shown how wrong we can be about our true motives.

Metaphorically, we can illustrate this using a prisoner's dilemma game with two participants. The results of a prisoner's dilemma game depends not on one but on both participants' choices. So it is for the psychologist and the psychologist's subject. *Psychology is the result of the interdependencies of the way a psychologist approaches his or her subject and the way the subject approaches the psychologist.* To find out about the interdependencies, all you can do is play the game. But don't pretend to be scientific when you ignore the results of science. In his book, Linschoten played the version in which there is a soul in the underworld, in the form of a shadow; but it has no idea. So, for those who thought Linschoten had changed his mind (from phenomenology to positivism), we think he was only playing the psychologist's dilemma game.

Regrettably, the game was over before the book was published. Linschoten died in 1964, when the manuscript was nearly finished. Game over.

¹⁸ (Bargh, Libet, Marcel, Wegner, Gigerenzer, Nisbett, Ross, Tversky, Kahneman)

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