

Harry Hab Says:

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't Hooft discusses another person who went off the rails whilst pursuing a PhD. This was Marcoen Cabbolet and his "Elementary Process Theory" claiming that linguistic axiomatic logic is a gateway to new insights in physics. In Holland you need a full professor to vouch for your work, and no Dutch physicist would touch the work (score one for the good guys!).

Cabbolet found a "promotor" in the field of philosophical logic, one Harrie de Swart. Another Dutch quirk is that a "reading committee" has to evaluate the thesis. Instead of one external examiner you deal with about eight of them. (CPW will be aware of the UK habit of picking a "mate" as external for your dodgy student...) One member of this committee, Stefan Hartmann, duly shot the work out of the water.

Cabbolet and de Swart tried again at a different Dutch uni, but the Dean of Maths, Kees van Hee, smelled a rat: strike two. Third time a charm: Cabbolet tried again in Brussels, under the auspices of a local full professor, the tenured crank Jean Paul van Bendegem. He obtained his PhD summa cum laude in 2011. This time the philosophers conspired to keep the affair well hidden from the physicists at the same uni. Cabbolet subsequently took up a career writing papers about the suppression of science (his).

The quality of this new physics is apparent from its key prediction that anti-matter anti-gravitates (i.e. "falls upwards"), because (i) if a coin has fallen down from one's hand onto a table, then in opposite time-direction an anticon has fallen upwards from the antitable into the antihand; (ii) this tendency to 'fall upwards' is preserved in antimatter that exists in 'our' time-direction. The quality of contemporary academic analytical philosophy is apparent from the fact that this rubbish got published.