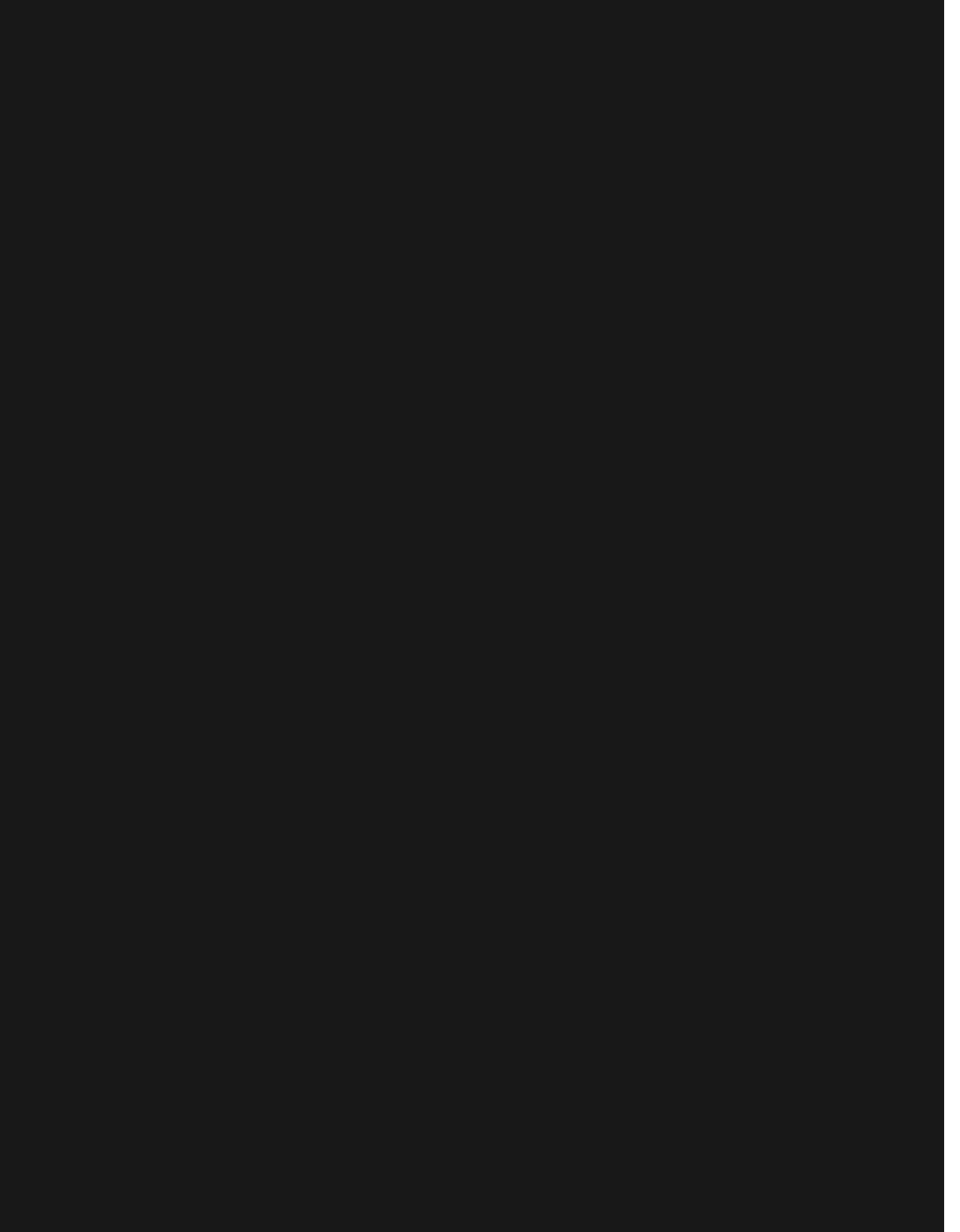


ASKING QUESTIONS
ABOUT ASKING
QUESTIONS
ON THE ANTHROPOCENE

AN INTERSCHOOL SYMPOSIUM



ASKING QUESTIONS
ABOUT ASKING
QUESTIONS
ON THE ANTHROPOCENE

AN INTERSCHOOL SYMPOSIUM

Edited by

Karim Schelkens & Arnold Smeets

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.	
Asking Questions as a Means to (Re)Connect the Dots of Scholarship <i>Karim Schelkens</i>	6
Beyond the Holy Grail of Law. Human Agency and the Anthropocene <i>Han Somsen</i>	12
Orphan Earth <i>Alkeline van Lenning</i>	18
Why Are We Not Making More Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals? <i>Tobias Klein</i>	26
Reflexivity and Its Discontents <i>Peter Achterberg</i>	32
Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems and Social Justice. Theology in the Anthropocene <i>Paul van Geest & Arnold Smeets</i>	40
A Philosophy of Humanity Lost <i>Martine Prange</i>	48
Asking Questions About the Language in which We Ask our Questions <i>Ernst Hirsch Ballin</i>	56
Epilogue. Perhaps Even the Answer Should be a Question <i>Wim van de Donk</i>	64
On the authors	68
Colofon	70

FOREWORD

ASKING QUESTIONS AS A MEANS TO

(RE)CONNECT THE DOTS OF SCHOLARSHIP

Karim Schelkens

What can we say about ecology? In its original sense, this buzzword, used on a daily basis by political leaders, economists, the media, and the leaders of the world's largest religious communities, has a double root. It refers both to the Greek *oikos*, or 'household' and to *logos* – a rather complex and open word with a vast array of meanings, ranging from study or doctrine to philosophically more abstract concepts such as 'sense' or even 'essence'. This hasty etymological survey suffices to raise a series of questions. What or whose household are we referring to? And can some sort of underlying logic or even essence of our household conceivably be defined? Are there any universal principles or regulations that can be detected? And, to take it a step further: how should we cope with the fact that, while *oiko-logia* and *oiko-nomia* share the same original root, today's ecologists and economists often seem to regard one another as antagonists? What does it mean 'to be human' in an era marked by the effects of unbridled consumerism and anthropogenic climate change?

Clearly, there is no shortage of questions, and this foreword cannot aspire to provide full-fledged answers. More relevantly, it wishes to point out that this multitude of question marks is consistent with the attitude of curiosity that lies at the very heart of scholarship and intellectual debate. Underneath today's scattered academia, marked by hyper-diverse research cells, international rankings, impact factors and micro-credentials, pressure on outreach, trainings in skills and practices ... curiosity is what still connects researchers.¹ Even if this interconnectedness is facing ever greater obstacles, it is rediscovered and nurtured time and again. In our age, currents such as Team Science reconnect us with the age-old tradition of arguing and questioning in an atmosphere of dialogue and exchange across disciplinary boundaries. In this sense, the old medieval notion of the university as an 'integral' center of learning, connecting the *universitas scientiarum*, may still inspire us.

This reference to the ancient roots of scientific endeavor is not made randomly, of course. The current book is part of the celebrations marking the fifteenth anniversary of Tilburg's School of Catholic Theology, which, as the reader will discover in the last contribution to this volume, is our University's youngest *and* oldest school. In the preparations for this event, during which we had the assistance of Professor Bart Koet, we decided not to celebrate the anniversary on our own. Instead, we chose to organize an interschool symposium on 'asking questions', and to invite scholars from all Schools for a common reflection. The aim of our anniversary committee (consisting, beside the editors of this volume, of Quirien Hagens MA, Dr. Sam Goyvaerts and Dr. Stefan Gärtner) was to build bridges and to (re)connect the dots between the various islands in the academic archipelago. Initially, we had not planned to publish anything, but precisely the atmosphere of open exchange among a panel of scientists, led by Dr. Roshnee Ossewaarde, spontaneously inspired us to introduce this event to a wider forum as a form of academic best practice, at a time when Tilburg University seeks to promote interdisciplinarity and inter-school collaboration.

1 Cf. W. Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*, New York: Free Press, 2014.