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Sculpting the space of actions: explaining human action by integrating intentions and mechanisms

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The earliest origins of opera probably lie in the ancient Greek dithyrambos, a choral song in honor of Dionysus. This ancient vocal genre, a precursor to the genre of tragedy, was initially performed without vocal soloists and it took several centuries before a singer would step forward from the chorus to deliver a solo part. Some three millennia later, operas are rather dominated by individual roles and the vocal soloists performing them and there is little room for the choir. This history testifies to an increasing emphasis on subjectivity and individuality but at the same time overlooks the fact that individual subjects develop and emerge only through interaction with their fellows. Moreover, most people learn to sing in a group, perhaps at first in a family context, later in school classes or clubs and many also perhaps in a proper choir.

In comparison with the world of vocal music, in academia the role of the choir, to continue the metaphor, has always been much less visible, or rather, audible. The choir from which individuals' thoughts emerge is implicitly present mostly in a list of references, hidden at the end of articles and books. The exception to this rule is the preface of an academic dissertation, in which an author more explicitly acknowledges the fact that his voice can only be heard thanks to the inspiration, efforts, support, responses and protests of many others. I am glad to use this prelude in that vein and mention the other members of the many choirs in which I participated and that helped me to develop my voice and vocal part.

Before doing so, however, I would like to thank both my esteemed conductors or vocal coaches, who have helped me to develop my voice and song. Being an 'external' promovendus, I realize how extraordinarily lucky I have been in having been supervised by two great experts, who have devoted a lot of thought, time and attention to this work in progress over many years. Martin Stokhof has nourished the project from its early, embryonic stage and with his continuous attention and trust has enabled it to overcome several difficult passages. Both on the macro-level of the project as a whole and on the micro-level of sentences, he has demonstrated a most welcome combination of liberalism and precision. Michiel van Lambalgen stepped in somewhat later and presented challenges to the project that were not easy to meet but have eventually made the argument much stronger and the text more accessible. I realize that I may not always have been as good a listener to them as they might have wanted and I want to thank Martin and Michiel for their patience during this period of supervision. I will certainly miss our many exchanges of emails from one M to the other two M's.

Fellow members of the choir are, as mentioned, very important. They sing different parts and by doing so give the individual singer the joy of participating in a complex piece of music that he would be unable to perform by himself. In my case, I have enjoyed the many discussions with colleagues and friends from very different choirs, academic and non-academic. Here, I would like to begin by thanking warmly those colleagues and friends – listed alphabetically – who were willing to discuss with me components of this project: Jan-Bas Bollen, Stephen Cowley (co-author of two articles which laid the foundation for chapter I.2), Nico Frijda, Nel van den Haak, Joke Hermsen, Wolfram Hinzen, Charles Hupperts, Victor Kal, Max van den Linden, Huib Looren de Jong, Harro Maas, Stephan Schleim and Lourens Waldorp. They have all contributed to this work with their own sound and voice, even though we may not always have sung unisono.

I have also enjoyed being part of other ensembles that have inspired me and made the writing of this piece possible, some of which deserve mentioning here. First and foremost, I owe many thanks to my colleagues from the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies of the University of Amsterdam who have, in one way or another, contributed to it. Ranging from Bernard Kruithof - who was always a welcome dialogue partner about many topics including this ‘academic humiliation’ -, via our secretaries – who have photocopied many texts for me -, to my teaching fellows – who have often challenged me with their fresh remarks -, and literally all other colleagues: the IIS has always provided a welcome change from the soloist exercise of preparing a dissertation. In particular, I would like to mention and thank the three consecutive directors who all have supported this project in one way or another: André Schram, Jeanine Meerburg and Lucy Wenting.

This project being interdisciplinary, I gladly mention another ensemble in which I have enjoyed participating for more than seven years: the Association for Interdisciplinary Studies (formerly: Association for Integrative Studies). During the AIS conferences and via email, I have had the pleasure of engaging in dialogues with colleagues from a wide range of disciplines and institutions, sometimes about parts of this project. My board membership of the AIS has allowed me to have continuous conversations with very engaged colleagues who have always been willing to share their insights and experiences, not just concerning conceptual issues but also about nitty-gritty details of academic and other parts of life elsewhere on the globe. In particular, I would like to mention AIS’s co-founder, executive director and past president Bill Newell, who has been both very welcoming and inspiring from the very first time we

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met, and AIS's influential past president Julie Thompson Klein, with whom intellectual and personal exchanges seem to blend so naturally and pleasantly.

Interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity by their very nature perhaps attract persons with great openness, curiosity and willingness to join voices. Indeed, many thanks to my colleagues from the Philosophy of/as Interdisciplinarity Network and those from the International Network for Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity – and particularly the fellow members of the latter's Steering group – for providing room for highly divergent and exciting ensembles, which have been inspiring and enhanced my expertise in many ways.

Listing all these much appreciated colleagues reveals that preparing and rehearsing this score has kept me from taking part in several other ensembles, even though I have enjoyed them greatly for decades. Singing with friends – literally or metaphorically – is probably one of the most rewarding activities and one of the greatest downsides of preparing this book has been its taking up so much of my time and preventing me from continuing these ensembles. I'd like to reassure my kind and patient friends that their presence and our dialogues have sculpted its contents in many ways and that I'm looking forward to us joining voices again.

Naturally, my initial voice culture took place within family circles, both wide and narrow. These circles were and are occupied by very outspoken and highly different or even opposing voices, providing a both challenging and inviting environment for aspiring singers. In this context, my parents had clear and distinct voices, alternating between unisono, harmony and the occasional discord. Yet my sister Myra, brother Ruben - to whom I am grateful for the wonderful cover design - and me were always encouraged to articulate our own parts while simultaneously listening and trying to understand the voices of others. For this encouragement and their stable support over the years, I owe a lot of thanks to my parents. It is to my mother and sister, sadly lacking from our vocal ensemble which they have sculpted in many ways, that this book is dedicated.

Out of sight from colleagues, friends and even family members, each vocalist has to rehearse his part endlessly, making irritating and shrieking noises or keeping annoyingly silent. As the writing of a dissertation is a Wagnerian task, I owe much gratitude to my children, Amos and Sarai, for bearing with me during the many years of preparation. Not only were they forced to be my audience, I was less available

for our close-harmony singing than we all would have liked. Apart from thanking them for their forbearance, I'd like to acknowledge that their voices have influenced my intonation in many ways. It has been a special gift to have had increasingly the opportunity to even rehearse with them some of the lines, particularly with my colleague in *spe Amos*.

My final chord here is devoted to my partner Mercedes, who deserves my heartfelt thanks. She has supported in many ways over the years my protracted rehearsing times even though it affected our duo singing. Moreover, notwithstanding differences in our interests and our musical tastes, she has generously provided the basso continuo which allowed me to develop my part. Finally, being the socially engaged person she is, she has at times sculpted my vocal patterns in other, valuable directions. I hope to show indeed that the exercises from which this book is a result can also bear fruit on other, non-academic, stages.