

Call for Papers:

Anton Pannekoek (1873-1960): Ways of Viewing Science and Society

Amsterdam, 9 & 10 June 2016

Anton Pannekoek was both a prominent astronomer and socialist theorist. The links between his two fields of work have, however, received little attention. Yet, Pannekoek was far from alone in combining radical politics with a career in science. What were the links between Pannekoek's two careers? How should we understand his particular 'ways of viewing' both the stars and society? What role do questions of perception and aesthetics play in his work? And how does the relation between science, art and society in Pannekoek's case compare to the way other contemporary scientists, artists and social activists viewed this relationship?

On 9 & 10 June 2016 an international conference will be held at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam to explore how scholarship, arts and political ideology interacted during the early twentieth century. This conference is organized by the Royal Netherlands Academy and the Anton Pannekoek Institute for Astronomy of the University of Amsterdam, in collaboration with the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

We invite abstracts for contributions to this event. The conference language is English. Publication of an edited volume is intended. Abstracts for a 25 minute presentation can be submitted on the website: <http://iop.uva.nl/pannekoek2016> or sent to pannekoek2016-science@uva.nl before 31 January 2016.

For more information see below, or on the webpage.

Sincerely,

Jeroen van Dongen (University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University)

Ed van den Heuvel (University of Amsterdam)

Bart van der Steen (Leiden University)

Chaokang Tai (University of Amsterdam and Utrecht University)

Jeronimo Voss (Visual Artist, Frankfurt am Main)

Ralph Wijers (University of Amsterdam)

Ways of Viewing Science and Society

Separate Identities?

When Harvard University celebrated its tercentenary in 1936, it conveyed honorary degrees to 39 distinguished international scholars. Astronomer Anton Pannekoek (1878 – 1960) was one of the recipients of this great honor. Before attending the tercentenary conference, however, Pannekoek addressed the Workers' Socialist Party of the United States, whose members remembered him as party theoretician of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) and as one of the current leaders of the council communist movement.

Anton Pannekoek always tried to keep his scientific and political work separated, and even wrote two different autobiographies; one focusing on his work within the labor movement and a second one focusing on his scientific work. The controversial nature of his politics may explain why he himself put his socialist theory at a great distance from his professional career in astronomy. Still, only few efforts have been made to probe the possible connections between his two fields of activity.

Looking further into Pannekoek's attitudes towards the relationship between politics and science does in fact reveal a more complex picture: A closer look at his work in both subjects shows remarkable similarities in his methodology and epistemic choices. Can the same be said for likeminded contemporaries?

Social and Scientific Ambitions

Studying Pannekoek's scientific and political choices, as well as their interaction, can provide us with new information about the intellectual and social relations between political ideology and scholarship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; a period that saw many scholars involved in radical politics. In comparing Pannekoek with contemporaries at similar junctures (not necessarily at the leftist end of the ideological spectrum), we stand to learn not only more about Pannekoek's biography, but also about the science-society relationship at large.

For this reason, this conference also discusses how Pannekoek's socialist work was received within the scientific community and, vice versa, how his (popularizing) scientific work was discussed within the labor movement. Here, too, comparisons with contemporaries can shed new light on the relationship between science and society.

Viewing and depicting the stars: the role of perception

Pannekoek's astronomical work and his socialism are related through his distinctive ideas about how to view nature and how to look at society. In his political work he was inspired by the theory of knowledge put forward by the worker-philosopher Joseph Dietzgen. In his astronomical work these ideas translated into how he mapped and studied the Milky Way, for example by making use of handmade drawings.

Draftsmanship, theoretical notions of perception and related ideas about the workings of the mind played a strong role in Pannekoek's practice of science, while the latter also shaped his ideas about how Marxists should analyze society. The conference is explicitly interested in the methods of scientists to depict nature and their overlap with artistic crafts. In trying to get a better sense of this nexus of relations between art, science and social theory in Pannekoek's world, the conference will also address how contemporary artists (such as Dutch authors Herman Gorter or Henriëtte Roland Holst), philosophers (such as Joseph Dietzgen) and astronomers (such as Sir John Herschel) related *ways of viewing* to constructing social and natural knowledge.

Aim of this conference

The goal of the conference is to shed new light on the work of Pannekoek and his contemporaries: scientists and artists that were also active in politics. It asks how Pannekoek and his contemporaries balanced their scientific, artistic and political ambitions. Furthermore, it focuses on their ways of viewing science and society, and on the ways in which these informed scientific, artistic and political choices. Does a focus on 'ways of viewing' tell us more about why radical politics, science and modernism were complementary perspectives for many at the turn of the twentieth century?

Jeronimo Voss: Aspects of the Milky Way

In May and June 2016, visual artist Jeronimo Voss will present a new installation work at the *Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam*, entitled 'Aspects of the Milky Way'. It is inspired by Pannekoek's astronomical and socialist research. A visit to Voss' installation at the *Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam* will be part of the conference, as well as a public event at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in collaboration with the Stedelijk Museum.

Invited speakers include:

Gerard Alberts (University of Amsterdam), David Baneke (Utrecht University), Klaas van Berkel (University of Groningen), Elsbeth Ety (VU University Amsterdam), Alexei Kojevnikov (University of British Columbia), Sven Lütticken (VU University Amsterdam), Paul Mattick Jr. (Adelphi University), Omar W. Nasim (University of Kent), Daniela de Paulis (Visual Artist / Rietveld Academy), Eric-John Russell (Kingston University), Jasper Schaaf (SPO University of Applied Sciences), Robert W. Smith (University of Alberta), Matthew Stanley (New York University), Jennifer Tucker (Wesleyan University)