

## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

*Bart Van Kerkhove*

Over fifteen years ago, Jean Paul Van Bendegem, then managing editor of this journal, compiled two consecutive of its volumes (42 and 43) under the title “Recent issues in the philosophy of mathematics”. Currently being one of his collaborators at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), where he has since been a full time professor, it gives me great pleasure to present to him in particular the current volume. It contains further contributions to our shared research domain, which back then was quite aptly specified by him as being at the intersection point of the philosophy, history and sociology of mathematics. I shall be connecting to this matter in some more detail in my own (joint) insertion, but suffice it to note, for now, that it is a well known fact that, rather sadly, contributions to this field have remained dispersed for a very long time, marginalized as they were by a dominant philosophical trend of foundational preoccupation. In recent years, however, we may observe (and applaud) the rise of relatively independent fora for these various approaches to meet, often explicitly centered around a strong interdisciplinary interest in the phenomenon of “mathematical practice”. This concept is meant to refer to what it is that mathematicians actually do, at various levels, scales and stages of their research, as opposed to what, according to *a priori* philosophy, they are expected or supposed to do; hence the title of this volume.

The articles gathered here largely derive from the workshop “Mathematics as/in culture” (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 4 December 2003), which I was able to organize with the acknowledged support of Inter University Attraction Poles (phase V), granted by the Belgian Federal Science Policy, i.e., the research project involving contributors Comijn, De Sutter and François. The twin title of the meeting actually

referred to a double interpretation of the term “sociology of mathematics”, as coined in 1942 by the famous mathematician *cum* historian of mathematics Dirk J. Struik (1894-2000), that is, as referring both to the interaction of mathematics with society at large, and to the (mainly social) dynamics within the discipline itself. As a result, as a guest editor, I am able to present here a rather heterogeneous but I dare say fairly rich collection of philosophical papers, exploring and exploiting various political, legal, sociological and cognitive perspectives on mathematical practice.

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