

Knowing Dick de Jongh

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I know Dick for about twenty years, yet I don't know him well. But I'll share the little I do know. In contrast to not being able to share the things I do know that I don't know, or the ones I don't know that I don't know, I can share things about what I know I do know—to paraphrase a known saying of current US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld awarded the "Foot in Mouth" prize 2003 by Britain's Plain English Campaign. Rather than deserving to be maligned, Rumsfeld deserves praise for the masterful logical conondrum: "Reports that say something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know." In our research, for example, we are often interested in getting to know some unknown unknowns, first transforming them into known unknowns, and with enough luck into known knowns. Unless, of course, it happened that we were dealing with unknown knowns, in which case our efforts were most likely wasted. The great logical Kurt Gödel, a far ancestor of Dick, created some of the most celebrated knowns in Logic by letting us know that there are unknown truths that can never be known.

But back to the grind stone: I know from observation that he hasn't changed too much in the last twenty years: a slight small man, with an abundant mop of gray hair and prominent bushy eyebrows. Physically, he keeps in shape bu being an avid bicyclist; I think he is even a member of the ENFB—Eerste Nederlandse Fiets Bond.

The ENFB was created in the sixties, to counteract the tendency of people bicycling less. Dick joined this effeort. But now the ENFB has grown to a bicyclist union of more than 35,000 members and 115 local chapters. It aims primarily at recreational the cyclist.

Dick does not seem to have a homepage on the web; on the other hand, he has a "De Jongh theorem" on completeness of IPC with respect to HA. When Dick talks it is hesitant and with ample pauses for reflection. This makes some conversation easygoing for the relaxed participant, but not for the hasty ones. Eating out takes place preferably in the happy ambience of restaurant "Hemelse Modder"—Heavenly Mud—on the Kromme Waal, within spitting distance of the dutch painter Constant's home and atelier

(Constant Anton Nieuwenhuys, Dutch painter, printmaker and writer was an Abstract Expressionist painter who became a member of the Surrealist group in 1947, and later the Cobra group. He studied for a year at the Kunstnijverheidsschool (1938) and then at the State Academy (1939-42), both in Amsterdam. His work was initially conventional in style and included religious subjects. From 1941, however, he became deeply interested in the work of Cezanne, Cubism and German Expressionism, all of which he learnt of through books. A few of his surviving works from 1945 and 1946 exhibit these influences. During this period he also developed theories concerning art and society, inspired by Marxism. Between 1956 and 1974 he worked to "New Babylon" as a response to what he saw as the increasingly banal conditions of everyday life.)

Back to the ENFB. Unfortunately, I'll be quoting from a webdocument (<http://www.xs4all.nl/fbadam/knelp.wie.htm>) about the bicycling hazards in Amsterdam, which is in Dutch:

"Dick de Jongh, meer dan 25 jaar in de knelpuntengroep, beschrijft een gemiddeld lid: "Je moet goed kunnen kaartlezen. Je moet de stad goed kennen." Wie denkt dat Fietsersbondleden graag op de fiets zitten, kan dat vanaf nu relativeren.

Dick spreekt over zichzelf: "Het bezwaar van fietsen is voor mij dat ik niet zomaar meer rond kan fietsen in de stad." Onoplettendheid kent hij niet meer. Als hij fietst ziet hij wat er aan de hand is. "Je moet ook weten hoe breed een fietspad is. Ik weet de maten van bijna alle fietspaden in Amsterdam." "Noem een voorbeeld," zeg ik. "Noem jij maar een voorbeeld," zegt Dick. Wordt het een quiz? "De Amsteldijk." "Dat is 1.80 meter. De standaardmaat. Het vervelende daar is dat mensen de verkeerde kant op fietsen. Daar is het te smal voor." "Het Van der Helstplein?" "Ja, dat is iets smaller. Het is 1.65 of zo. Ook daar wordt de verkeerde kant op gereden. Het is daar iets minder erg maar toch niet prettig. Zeker niet bij een soort pilaar op de hoek." "Oke Bij de brug van de Breitnerstraat, komende uit de Emmastraat," probeer ik. "Het is niet de Emmastraat maar de Cornelis Schuyt," komt er prompt uit. "Daar ligt eerst een fietsstrook. Bij de Hacquartstraat wordt het een pad. Dat is 1.80, behalve het laatste stuk, dat is 1.65. Probleem daar is een bloemenstal die vrijwel tegen het fietspad aanstaat. Voetgangers die bloemen bekijken moeten op het fietspad staan." "Noem jij eens een fietspad," vraag ik. Want ik durf niet meer zo. "De Spiegelgracht, natuurlijk. Het is in principe 1.80 maar door de bomen wordt het versmald." Aldus Dick, een lid van de knelpuntengroep die niet meer 'zomaar' kan fietsen."