The Department of Psychology and Centre for Psychoanalysis invites to a lecture by

Professor Mattias Desmet, Ghent University, Belgium:

“Pursuit of Objectivity and Loss of Object in Post-World War II Academic Psychology”

August 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2017, 2-4 pm.

The Faculty of Social Sciences, Gathersgade 140, Auditorium 1, Copenhagen

The lecture is a reworking and further development of a Rubin-talk, Mattias Desmet gave at the department a year ago and is highly recommended to those who have already heard it as well as to newcomers.

Abstract:
For over one and a half century, psychology struggles to establish itself as a science. More and more scholars agree, however, that mainstream psychological empirical research finds itself in a methodological impasse. Low validity and reliability of assessment and measurement methods reduce the replicability of findings to a disappointingly low level and a bewildering methodological sloppiness ravages research culture. This presentation starts from a historical and technical discussion of these problems. It will be argued that ultimately, the contemporary methodological problems are rooted in an inadequate conception of the object of psychology. A thorough consideration of the nature of psychological phenomena leaves no shade of a doubt that the object of psychology is to be considered a complex and dynamic system. The specific characteristics of such systems – such as historicity, self-organization, sensitivity to initial conditions, observer relativity, etc. – imply that they cannot be reduced to a set of unidimensional, constituent parts. This in its turn obviously interferes with commonly used reductionistic measurement methods in which isolated psychological characteristics are measured invariantly across large groups of respondents. The object of psychology rather demands research methods centered on single cases and the ultimate goal of psychology is not so much the computation of statistical associations in populations of subjects, but rather a mathematical/topological description of individual systems of subjectivity. The latter type of description intends to make the psyche visible. Such an operation is a condition sine qua non for a truly scientific psychology. Some examples will be presented of how chaos theorists in physics and chemistry visualized a previously hidden reality that determines empirical reality; a reality that is situated in what Husserl called pre-empirical space. The object of psychology is situated in the same pre-empirical space. Finally, it will be illustrated how some of the topological representations of Lacan might be considered predecessors of a future science of subjectivity.

Faculty, students and others with interest are welcome