



university of  
groningen

faculty of arts

# Linguistics and reality

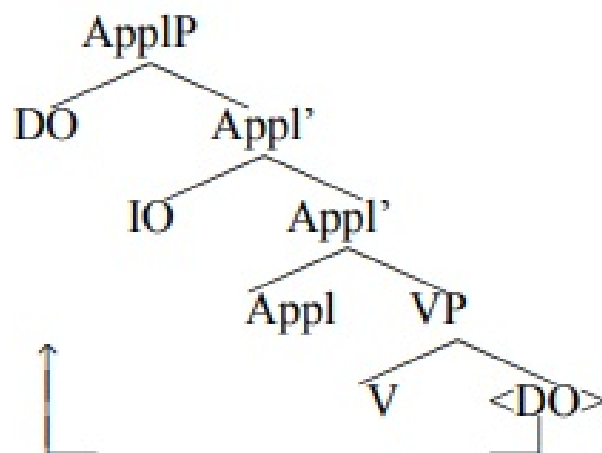
**Jan-Wouter Zwart**

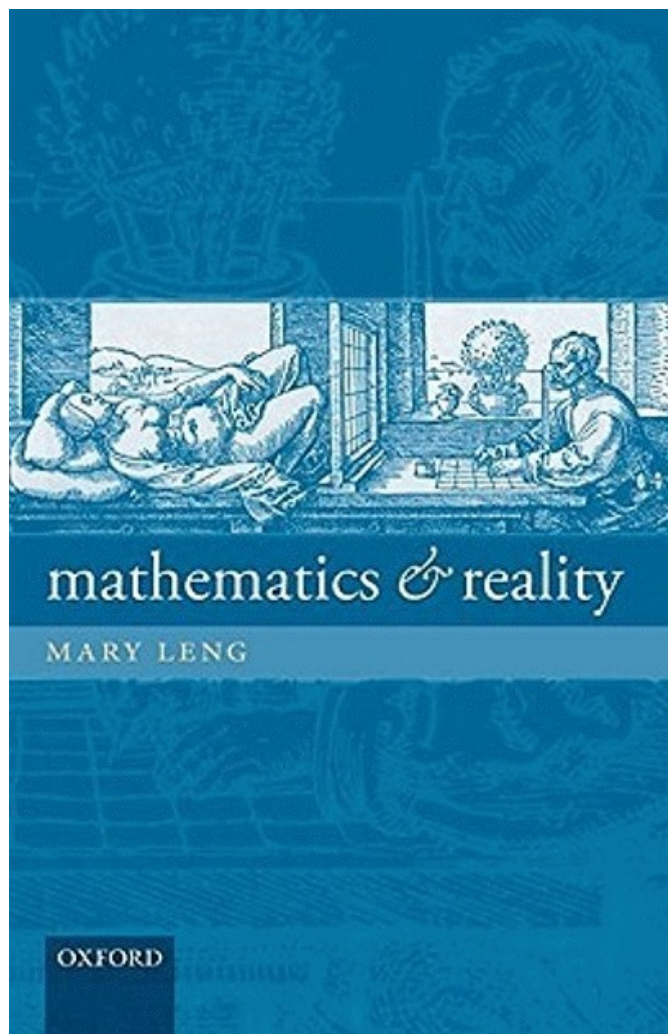
Linguistics Lunch

Groningen, 8 March 2018



(71) *Raising DO in a “symmetrical” language – Appl is a phase-head head with an edge feature (cf. McGinnis 2001).*





*fictionalism*

Linguistics & reality

*platonism*

LingLunch, 8 March 2018



## *mathematics*

- **1, 2, 3 ...**
- **{ x, y, z }**
- **$f(x) = x^3 - 9x^2 + 23x - 15$**

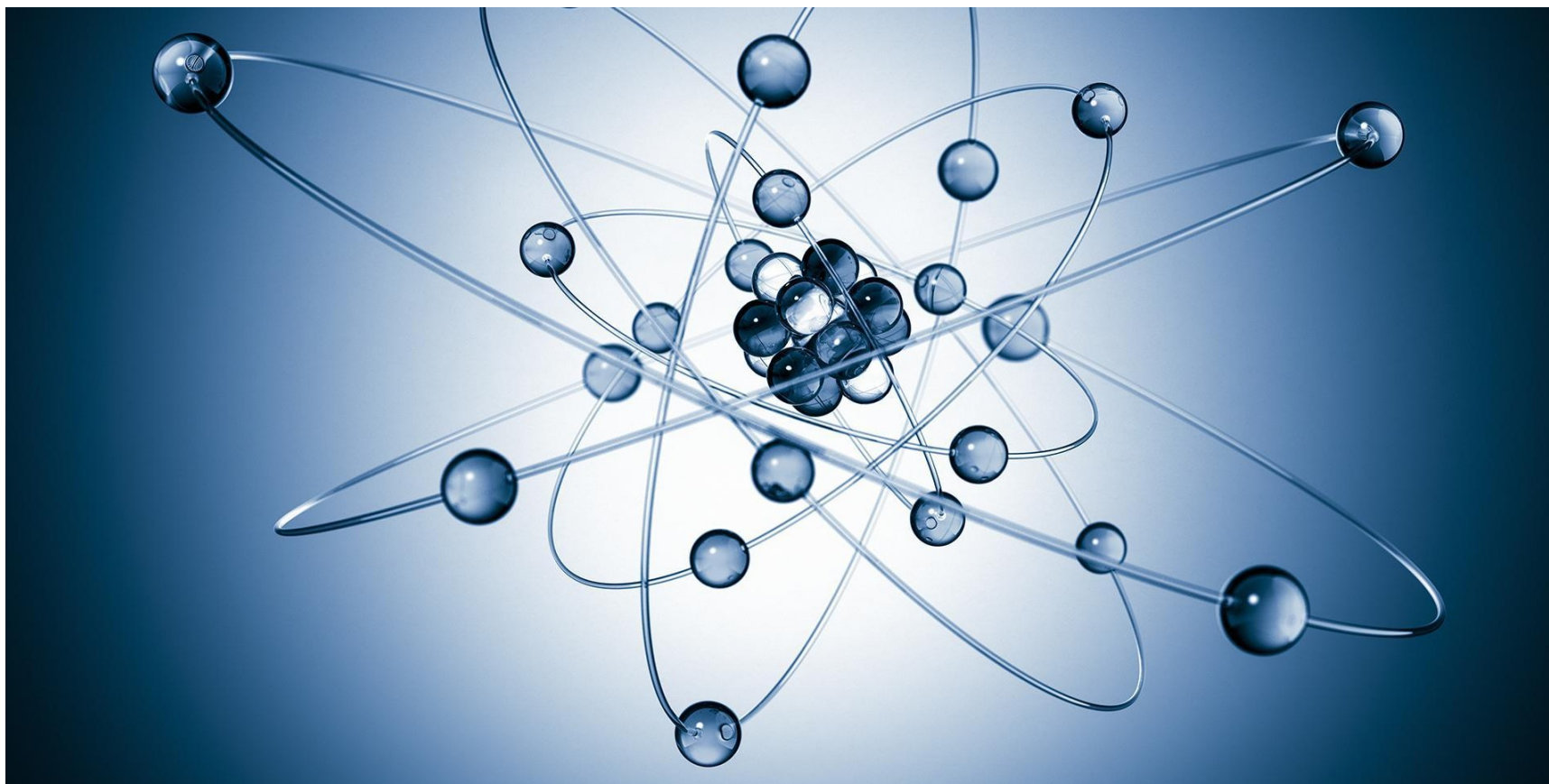


## *mathematics*

- **1, 2, 3 ...**
- **{ x, y, z }**
- **$f(x) = x^3 - 9x^2 + 23x - 15$**

## *linguistics*

- **V, N, T**
- **VP, NP, TP**
- **Merge, Move**



*mathematics successful in modeling physical reality*



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*fictionalism: metaphor*



*fictional* ≠ *nonsensical*

(1) **2 + 2 = 4**

(2) **'4' is a prime number**





*fictional*  $\neq$  *nonsensical*

(1)  $2 + 2 = 4$

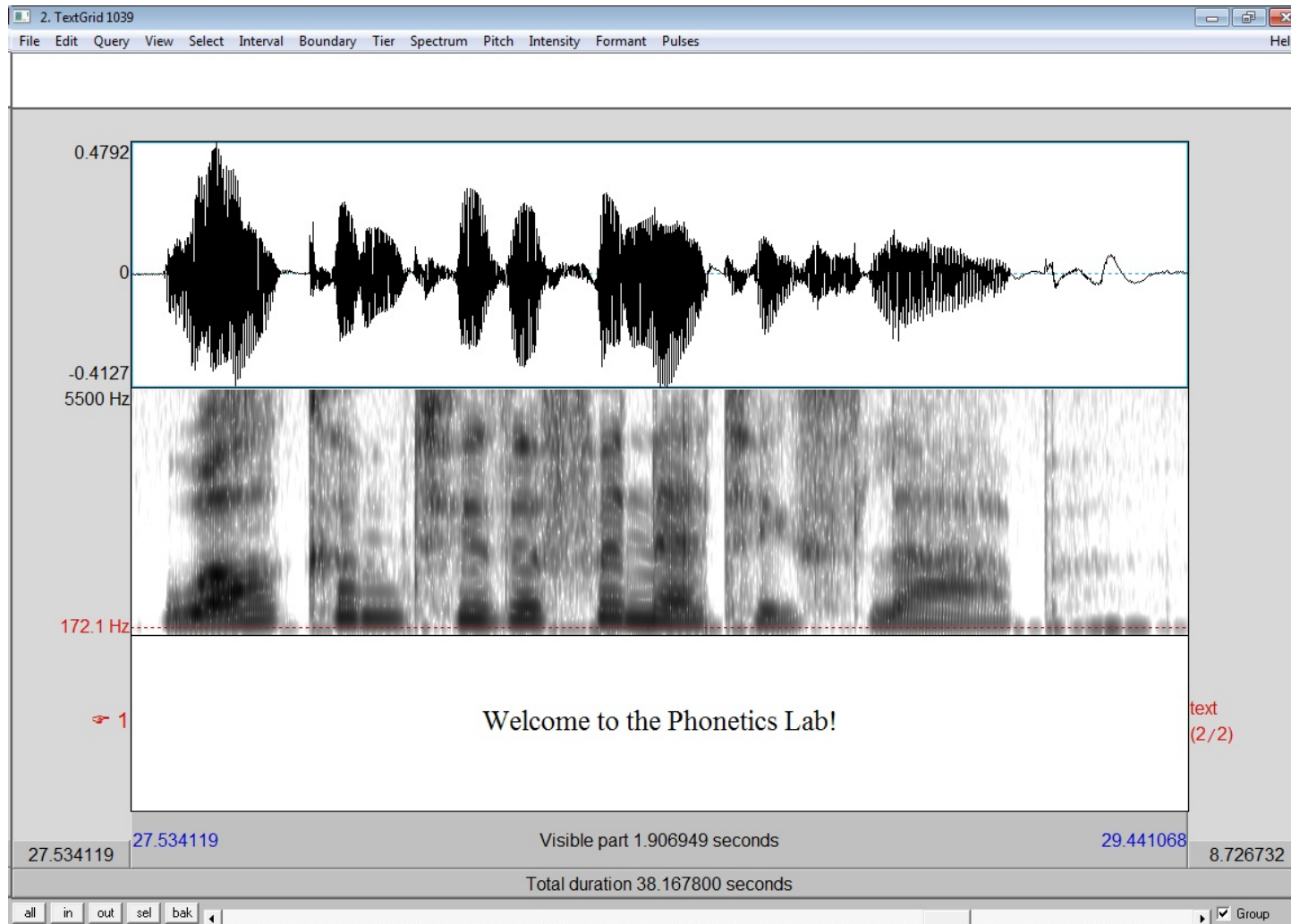
(2) '4' is a prime number

THE STORY OF  
 MATHEMATICS



## *what about language?*









# Language

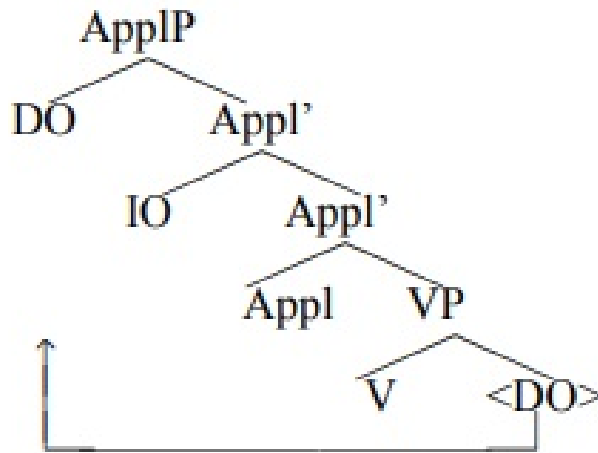
Faculty of nervous system which enables the humans to understand the spoken & printed words & to express ideas in the form of speech & writing.

object of study = the *faculty of language*

» modeling



(71) *Raising DO in a “symmetrical” language – Appl is a phase-head head with an edge feature (cf. McGinnis 2001).*



- not real
- not (necessarily) nonsensical either



## Two consequences

- **psychological reality**
- **evaluation of analyses**



## Two consequences

- **psychological reality**
  - » **physical correlates of the model not obvious**
- **evaluation of analyses**





## Two consequences

- **psychological reality**
- **evaluation of analyses**
  - » **must not be empirical but conceptual**



## **‘minimalism’**

- **model of the faculty of language**
  - » **elements in the model may not be real**
  - » **but the model may still be successful**
  - » **everything in it must be principled (‘inevitable’)**
- **if you want to know more**
  - » ***join our syntax seminar***



# Volkskrant.nl

NIEUWS POLITIEK **OPINIE** BUITENLAND SPORT TECH & MEDIA

VKSHOP SERVICE

## 'Sluwe minimalisten vormen het echte probleem van de universiteit'

OPINIE - Rens Raemakers - 06/01/13, 19:30