

Atocha Aliseda
Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas,
UNAM, México

In what follows I respond to the three questions posed by the organizers of the Jubilee event for Johan van Benthem. I am very grateful for this invitation though so sad for not being able to attend in person.

I met Johan back in the 90's at Stanford University. I was then a PhD student of the Philosophy and Symbolic Systems program and Johan was starting his position as Henry Waldgrave Stuart Professor. I had the privilege to be a student in various of his logic courses and then to be his doctoral student. I learned from him a great deal of things, perhaps logic being the least important of them. I will only mention a couple.

Firstly, I learned from Johan the importance to tackle philosophical questions from an interdisciplinary perspective, in which it is as important to make the right connections amongst several disciplines as framing the problem at issue as precise as possible within the leading discipline in question. My first interdisciplinary enterprise was led by him in the context of my PhD dissertation "[Seeking Explanations: Abduction in Logic, Philosophy of Science and Artificial Intelligence](#)", in which my aim was to lay down logical and computational foundations in order to explore some of the formal properties under which abductive logics may be generated and evaluated. This approach naturally led me to connections with theories of explanation in the philosophy of science and to computationally oriented theories of belief change in artificial intelligence. This research experience has influenced me all along. Recently I became very interested in exploring whether my logical models work in the real world and have worked on the logical aspects of medical diagnosis as done by neurologists.

Secondly, I learned from Johan the importance of having a close interaction and appreciation for students. In this case I grasped it through his behaviour towards myself and other students. Johan has always been a devoted teacher and mentor; always interested in listening to new (and perhaps crazy) ideas and making the best of unarticulated arguments and proofs. One of my most vivid memories connected to this apprenticeship has to do with an advice he gave me over dinner, just after my dissertation defense. I asked Johan for an academic advice, expecting to receive some guidelines related to promising research routes. Instead, he responded along the following lines: Do not expect to convince your colleagues, concentrate on your students, on teaching and mentoring them. This advice has been my guideline all along!

Thanks Johan so much for being as you are!
Many congratulations on your 65th anniversary!

Enclosed are two photos, one of 1997 when I turned in my dissertation to Johan in his office at the CSLI, another one of 2004; we are at the skirts of Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl volcanoes near Mexico City.