

Reflections on the impact, and opportunities, of the corona crisis

# Keep Your Distance, Touch Me

PAUL VERHAEGHE

Alongside his academic work, Paul Verhaeghe, doctor in clinical psychology and professor at the University of Ghent, also writes books for a general audience in which he analyses the relationship between the individual and society from a psychoanalytic perspective. This makes him the best-placed person to reflect on the way the world has been turned upside-down. The problems caused by the corona and climate crises are forcing us all to adapt to a society which has changed beyond all recognition. It leaves us feeling fearful and insecure.

In this essay Verhaeghe places both the cause and effects of the pandemic in a broader context. He argues that we ought to use this crisis as an opportunity to make different choices. The pursuit of the unbridled growth that underlies our social model is no longer justifiable. This crisis is the ideal catalyst for change. Where would we like to take our economy? How should we relate to one another and to the environment? And what is the effect of this 'new normal' on our sense of wellbeing?

## A well-written and soundly reasoned essay

DEWERELDMORGEN

This essay is structured by three questions originally posed by Kant, supplemented with a category formulated by Verhaeghe himself. He shows us what we know, what we ought to fear, what we can hope for and what we can do. His message is one of hope: the Great Transformation 2.0 can help us emerge better from this crisis, with the economy once again serving society and improving its members' lives.



Paul Verhaeghe

HOUD AFSTAND  
RAAK ME AAN



---

## AUTHOR

---



**Paul Verhaeghe** (b. 1955) is a clinical psychologist, psychoanalyst and a professor at the University of Ghent. With 'Between Hysteria and Woman' and 'On Normality and Other Aberrations' he achieved international recognition as an expert on Freud and Lacan. With *Love in Times of Loneliness* he reaches a broad audience, and has done that with his books ever since.

---

**ORIGINAL TITLE** Houd afstand, raak me aan (2020, De Bezige Bij, 136 pp.)

**TRANSLATION RIGHTS** Uta Matten - [u.matten@debezigebij.nl](mailto:u.matten@debezigebij.nl), Marijke Nagtegaal - [m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl](mailto:m.nagtegaal@debezigebij.nl)

**TRANSLATION GRANTS** Patrick Peeters - [patrick@flandersliterature.be](mailto:patrick@flandersliterature.be)