



SPSP Newsletter # 19

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From the editor

We are happy to share another SPSP newsletter with you. This volume opens with reflections from Mariusz Maziarz about the need for an intensified focus on philosophical problems encountered by economists, connections between problems in economy and medicine, and how philosophy of science may come in handy at a time of a crisis. We have also conducted an interview with Alan Love, who coordinates a large and highly interdisciplinary project on the fascinating topic of purpose in the biological sciences. The foundation supporting this and many other projects in philosophy of science in practice, the Templeton Foundation, has been the subject of debates and concerns in our field (also among the editorial team members). Rather than silencing this issue, however, we welcome an open discussion on the funding landscape for philosophy of science projects, especially for conducting large-scale interdisciplinary research.

This newsletter may reach you as you are preparing your presentations for one or more of this year's philosophy of science conferences. We have talked to the organizer of the largest one, the CLMPS in Buenos Aires, as part of our SPSP global series. The Proust Questionnaire is answered this time by Manuela Fernández Pinto.

On behalf of the editorial team,

Sara Green

The editorial team



1 - Sara Green, University of Copenhagen



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3 - Martin Zach, The Czech Academy of Sciences



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Philosophy on a market



Martin Zach interviews Mariusz Maziarz about economic crises and policymaking, connections between problems in economy and medicine, and how philosophy of science may come in handy at a time of a crisis.



11 - [Mariusz Maziarz](#) has a PhD in economics and is currently conducting a second PhD in philosophy. Mariusz is affiliated with the Interdisciplinary Centre for Ethics, at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków as Assistant Professor.

You received your formal education in economics. What made you interested in philosophy?

I did my bachelor's in econometrics and found constructing and estimating statistical models very similar to what 'real scientists' interested in the natural sciences do: they build (mathematical) models of reality and then test them. One day, I ended up in the philosophy of science section of my university library and started to read some classical books by Karl Popper and other early philosophers of science. Surprisingly, falsificationism, particularly its simplified and maybe naïve interpretation, is still a very popular view on how science works among economists, possibly because of Mark Blaug's textbook on economic methodology.

Did you then decide to study philosophy?

Yes, I signed up for a master's program but found connecting it with studying at the Warsaw School of Economics difficult. Another reason for dropping out was that there were not many courses in philosophy of science and studying history of philosophy seemed less appealing during the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. So, I think that an economics and philosophy program would come in handy in structuring my interests. But I continued reading philosophy of science and philosophy of economics literature and found out that there was a gap between the philosophical debates and the methodological and philosophical problems that were concerning for economists.

Oh, that's interesting! Are you saying that there are relatively few "philosophy of science in practice" works about economics?

I have a feeling that there used to be a huge gap between the philosophical problems encountered by economists and the philosophical work focusing on this discipline. One example of this gap used to be the focus of philosophers on studying economic theory (axiomatic models where conclusions

follow deductively from axioms) despite the 'empirical turn' happening for a few decades now. To a greater and greater extent, economists rely on statistical modelling and using experiments similar to randomized controlled trials in medicine. Although more and more philosophers study these research designs, this situation is relatively new. I believe that the worst example of philosophy of economics derived from practice is a whole strain of literature discussing Schelling's checkerboard model. This agent-based model is actually very different from the differential equations models that are the main contribution to mainstream economics, and it was only created to teach economics students (and later used to explain how spatial racial segregation works), but, surprisingly, the checkerboard model was often used as a case study for analysing how economists explain and model phenomena. In my view, the interests of philosophers change now, and their work reflects the empirical turn to a greater extent. But many methodological problems still need to be approached from the philosophy of science angle.

What are these problems? Do you think that such a philosophy of economics in practice can be helpful for economists?

I am sure that there are tons of research questions that are interesting and relevant for economists. What is essential, in my view, is for philosophers to focus on such methods and research designs that are actually used by economists. One such question that is particularly interesting for me is causal inference. For example, there is a methodological debate concerned with the limitations and benefits of informing policy-making decisions with randomized trials. In medicine and philosophy of medicine, the questions concerned with assessing evidence quality emerging from various study designs have been studied for some time and produced an interesting debate between the evidence-based medicine movement and philosophers supporting evidential pluralism and arguing for the [EBM+](#). Another issue that requires philosophical research is the design-based approach to causal inference. Such studies supported by several prominent economists are said to emulate randomized trials, but assessing the degree to which they do so, and how trustworthy the results produced by them are, is a job for philosophers.

However, there are lots of other specific questions related to various research methods used in economics. One philosophically interesting debate that was mainly advanced by economists was to use more realistic assumptions in the dynamic-stochastic general equilibrium (DSGE) models. This change was mainly driven by the recent improvements in computational technology rather than a new anti-instrumentalist sentiment. But it sheds new light on some old philosophy of economics debates. For instance, the preference for more realistic assumptions (i.e., empirically adequate ones) opposes the views of Nobel Prize Laureate Milton Friedman, who argued that models having axioms disagreeing with empirical knowledge are worthwhile as long as they produce accurate predictions.

Another debate that may likely benefit from the attention of philosophers of science is concerned with the question of whether discovering baseline imbalances should lead to re-randomizing the assignment to the treatment and control groups in randomized field experiments. While economists do so, this practice is discouraged by medical researchers on the ground that it involves testing the null hypothesis of no statistically significant difference between the treatment and control groups that is known to be true a priori (so all positive results are false positives).



THE PHILOSOPHY OF CAUSALITY IN ECONOMICS

CAUSAL INFERENCES AND POLICY PROPOSALS

Mariusz Maziarz



12 - If you are interested in reading more about the problem of causal inference in economics, check out Mariusz' book [The Philosophy of Causality in Economics](#).

You have also been involved in the philosophy of medicine. What made you expand on your scholarly interests?

I moved to philosophy of medicine because of some more engaging debates concerned with statistics and assessing evidence, and some common philosophical/methodological problems. For example, both economics and medicine are troubled by the problem of conflicting results. If you search empirical literature concerned with a particular topic, you're likely to find studies reporting positive and negative treatment effects even though they all are methodologically sound. This problem, which can be considered an aspect of the replication crisis seems to be of great importance, taking into account the exponentially rising number of studies. I used to joke that the statistical models are easier to grasp comparing to those employed by economists. However, as Woody Allen once wrote, there is some truth in each joke.

Overall, I think one can now say that we (practice-oriented philosophers of science, medical researchers, and, mainly, the populational immunity) have won the battle against the SARS-CoV-2 and we can now focus on other issues, such as the current stagflationary economic crisis.

Does it mean that you want to move back to philosophy of economics in practice?

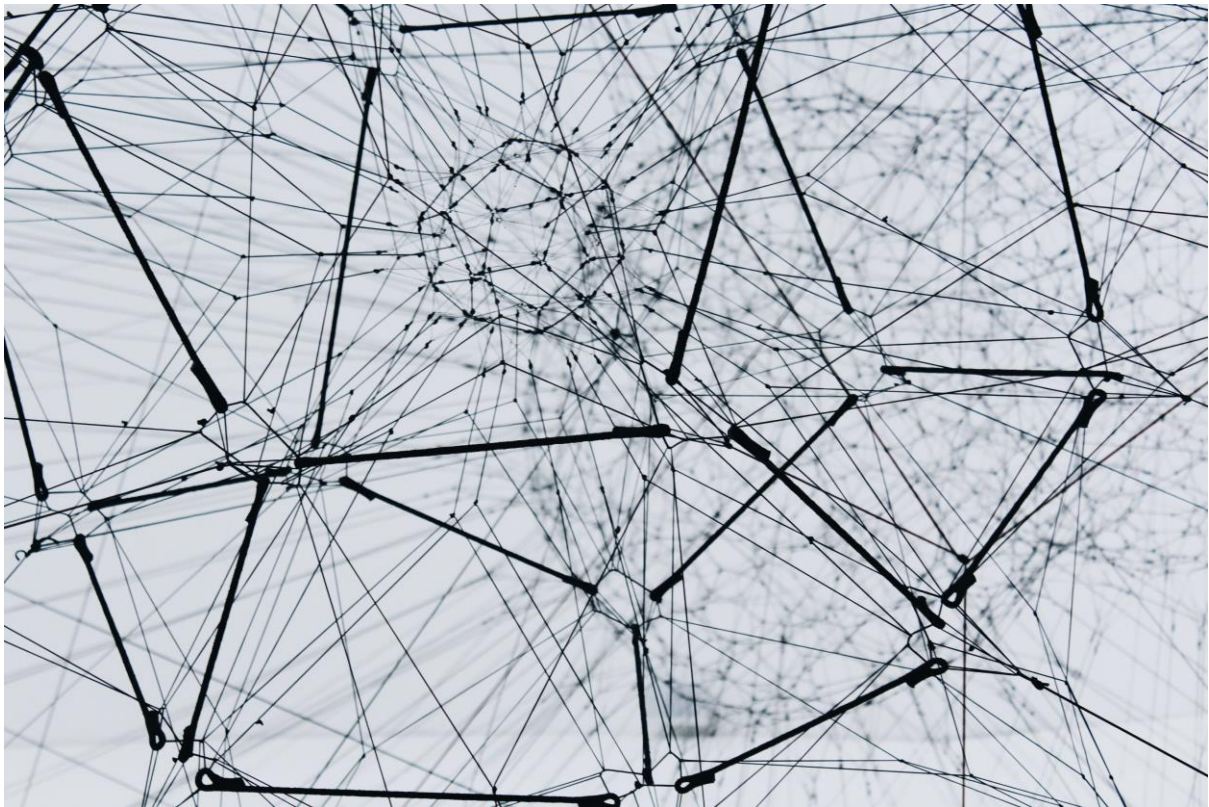
After getting my second PhD in philosophy, I am going to once again focus on the problem of causal inference in economics, but from a normative angle this time. In particular, I am interested in 'importing' the position of evidential pluralism to economics and developing tools for assessing the quality of difference-making and mechanistic evidence in economics.

Good luck with the plan of changing how economists do their jobs!

Yeah, I think I agree with your slightly pessimistic view. Economists only rarely read philosophy, and if they do, they focus on those rare pieces of philosophy of economics in practice that study current controversies and approaches problems that are also seen by researchers. But I believe that one of the purposes of philosophy of science is to study how research practices and the products of science can be used to inform policy-making decisions and benefit the society.

Thank you for the interview. Good luck with your future philosophical work!

Adventures in interdisciplinarity

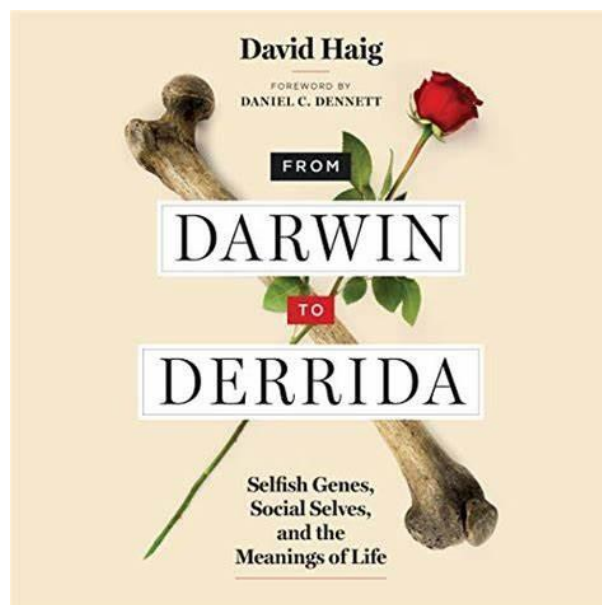


Max Dresow speaks with Alan Love about organizing research on “purpose”



13 - [Alan C. Love](#) is Professor of Philosophy and the Winton Chair in the Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota and Director of the Minnesota Center for Philosophy of Science.

In his recent book, **From Darwin to Derrida**, the evolutionary biologist David Haig recalls a strikingly contradictory feature of his science education. As an undergraduate, “I was repeatedly warned against teleological thinking... by lecturers who spoke of the heart as a pump for the circulation of blood and of RNAs as messengers for the translation of proteins” (Haig 2020, 16). It was as if a writing instructor had counselled her pupils to avoid metaphor by comparing the whole business to “playing with fire.” Somehow, these people had gotten their wires crossed, and were instructing students to abstain from the very thing that was implicit in their language.



“Teleological thinking” is thinking in terms of goals or purposes. It was big in ancient Greece, controversial in the early modern period, and anathema by the time Haig was an undergraduate. And yet, to say that hearts exist “for the circulation of blood” is to make a teleological claim. Just ask yourself: what does it mean to say that an item exists for (the sake of) some action? A straightforward answer is that the item exists to perform that action. Pumping blood is what hearts are all about—it is their purpose, or reason for existing in the first place. But this is teleology. Haig’s

instructors were like Monsieur Jourdain, speaking prose all their lives without knowing it. However, unlike Monsieur Jourdain, they were also lecturing their pupils on the dangers of prose speaking.

If biologists cannot help speaking prose, might they benefit from speaking more of it, or from speaking it more intentionally than they previously have? That is the question at the heart of a novel, large-scale interdisciplinary research project, “Agency, Directionality, and Function,” funded by the John Templeton Foundation. The project combines philosophers, theoreticians, and experimentalists to perform tasks ranging from conceptual engineering to the development of new experimental platforms. These tasks are distributed between [twenty-four subaward projects](#) grouped into seven thematic clusters. Each cluster is led by a philosopher of science, many of whom are members of the SPSP community. And in the middle of it all is Alan Love, whose job it is to keep the whole thing together.

I recently sat down with Alan to talk about the project: where it came from, what challenges it faces, and what he hopes it will accomplish. (Disclaimer: I have been employed as a postdoc on this project since its inception, working with Alan.) The following conversation has been edited for clarity.

Twentieth century biology had a severe case of “teleo-phobia,” which seems to have crested after World War II. Why do you think this was, and to what extent was it a legitimate response to the situation the life sciences found themselves in?

Well, to begin with the second part of your question, I think it was a bit of a mixed bag. Clearly biologists had some reasons to be wary of teleological thinking, not least the prevalence of things like orthogenesis [the proposal that evolution moves in a straight line, perhaps oriented by a goal] and vitalism. But arguably biologists went too far in their attempts to distance themselves from these things, implementing a moratorium on all forms of teleological thinking. I should say that the response wasn't uniform across biology. Evolutionary biologists tended to react strongly against teleological thinking, reflecting their somewhat precarious institutional position in the mid-20th century. But in other areas, particularly those influenced by cybernetic ideas, teleology remained on the menu, so to speak.

Now, two important things happened after the middle part of the twentieth century. The first is that philosophers of science, including some practicing biologists, showed that certain forms of teleological explanation are legitimate, in the sense that they involve causes that precede their effects in time. Teleological explanations aren't necessarily spooky or metaphysically problematic. The other is that interest in teleological *phenomena*—things like goal-directed behaviours—hung around, and even gained ground in evolutionary biology. But this drew attention to the fact that these phenomena had been undertheorized. So you get people calling for a theory of organisms or organization and things like that.

Tell me about how this project came together. How did you come to be involved?

The project has its roots in an ideas challenge that the Templeton Foundation hosted in 2020. The idea was to elicit project ideas on some big topics in biology, and my role, along with several biologists, was to formulate some prompts that could get people thinking in the right direction. [These prompts are [still available](#) on the Templeton website.] Anyway, I was later asked to judge some of the proposals that were submitted, and only after that was I approached about organizing a more intentional, configured project involving a selection of the idea winners. So the whole thing grew organically out of this ideas challenge and my role as a person in charge of developing proposal calls, which I didn't anticipate at the outset.



There are way too many subaward projects to summarize, even briefly. So instead of a summary, can you give me an idea of some of the things that people are working on?

Maybe the best way to capture this is to think about two different axes for the cohort program [i.e., the project as a whole].

On the one hand, there is a methodological axis, spanning conceptual, theoretical, and experimental approaches. So you have people like Justin Garson [a philosopher] doing fairly standard philosophical reflection on concepts, and writing about things like goal-directedness. But then you have someone like Ben Allen [a biologist] working on high-level mathematical models of natural selection, and Ray Goldstein [a physicist] working on the physics of development in an experimental context. All these approaches are represented throughout the project, and scattered along the other axis, which is thematic.

We have people working on directionality in development, on goal-directed behaviour in cells and organisms, on social phenomena like cooperation and joint action, and on agency in higher-level systems [things like ecosystems, or even the whole Earth]. We also have projects that look at directionality in the history of life and in the context of major transitions in individuality, and again, these span multiple methodological approaches.

The organization of the project is one of its more novel features. Can you say a word about the structure of the project? How did you settle on this structure?

What I wanted to achieve with the organization of the process is what you might call "multimodal cross-fertilization." Basically, I wanted to find ways of facilitating interactions between people who might not otherwise interact, while also recognizing that people who speak the same language are going to be able to help one another if they regularly interact too. For example, formal modelling teams will benefit by regularly interacting, but they also need to cross paths with experimentalists and philosophers. So I suppose I was looking for a golden mean of comfortable and less comfortable interactions. Here the cluster coordinators [leaders of thematically organized groups of projects] have a large role to play in greasing the wheels, pushing people outside their comfort zones, and generally identifying fruitful interactions. We don't expect interdisciplinary engagement to arise spontaneously. We expect that it will require structured activities and certain nudges in the form of social engineering practices.

We also have a Scientific Board of Advisors whose job it is to identify what is working and what isn't, and unlike the cluster coordinators [who are philosophers] these are scientists. Since we don't know ahead of time what will work and what won't, these people have a big role to play in identifying where the leading edges are, and in helping to keep the whole thing oriented to its primary aim:

fostering new lines of scientific research on biological phenomena connected to the concepts of agency, function, directionality, and purposiveness.



I know that some of your philosophical work has focused on the challenges and prospects of interdisciplinary integration, specifically in evo-devo. Did this inform your thinking about what successful interdisciplinary engagement might look like in this project?

I think the answer is yes, but in a diffuse way. Very generally, something clear to me from studying evo-devo is that people who work on different temporal scales or with different methodologies often have a hard time talking to one another. I've been analyzing that for two decades, and there was reason to think that this project would encounter similar challenges. Hence the need for structured activities and social engineering, which extends to small things, like making sure dinner groups at workshops include people working in different areas or with different methodologies.

More concretely, I think there are two ideas in my work that are relevant to the design of this project. The first is the idea that concepts are associated with research agendas, which can be made explicit in order to help people recognize differences in the meaning of shared terms, while also recognizing shared interests and orientations around a complex problem that can motivate interdisciplinary approaches. The other notion is adequacy criteria or evaluative standards, which again can be made explicit and which can help us discern when disagreements concern normative commitments that stem from different methodological or disciplinary orientations as opposed to a lack of sufficient empirical data. Overall, the idea is that because concepts often represent complex problem spaces that require different disciplinary approaches, bringing together biological researchers from distinct backgrounds, as well as philosophers, can help structure these spaces for productive research and make clear why a particular approach is needed and what standards of evaluation need to be applied to judge whether progress has been made in addressing an aspect of the problem.

This project has twenty-four subaward projects and over a hundred and fifty total participants. Then there are seven “cluster coordinators,” a five person Scientific Board of Advisors, and an administrative staff at the University of Minnesota. Talk about the challenges of organizing a project with so many people doing so many different things.

The first thing to say is that I have a great support staff at Minnesota, which includes a person in charge of web design and communications, someone in charge of finance, and someone whose job it is to monitor publications and manage open science-related things. Then there is Janet McKernan, who handles the quarterly invoices from the 24 subaward projects, among many other things. Of course, this doesn't eliminate all the challenges, but together we were able to implement some mechanisms that help to mitigate them. For example, we spent five months developing an online dashboard within [the project website](#), which is an administrative structure for bringing people into a common space for things like reimbursements, news announcements, reading group opportunities, and stuff like that. This sort of platform is fairly rare, but with over 120 project participants we couldn't just send out a bunch of emails! That would never work.

In recent years, the John Templeton Foundation (JTF) has been a major source of funding for philosophers of science. But JTF is hardly uncontroversial. How do you approach working with private funding organizations like JTF?

The question I always ask myself is this: Is the project something I want to do, and is the project something for which the leading ideas and overall shape are my own, as opposed to someone else's? This is a question I've always been able to answer in the affirmative with Templeton. Of course, it is often messy when you accept money from a funding body as they are typically complex, multidimensional entities themselves. But for this project, I got to define the goals and supply the overall framing, and pick the people who would be involved. Further, the projects were chosen because of their intellectual pursuit-worthiness, and not because they fit with some broader agenda. In fact, I was able to intentionally choose projects that I knew fundamentally disagreed with each other, in part as a spur to more interdisciplinary interactions. It's also worth mentioning that a project like this is only likely to get funded from a private entity. Government agencies tend to be conservative in their funding practices, and certainly aren't likely to invest in a large-scale interdisciplinary experiment in scientific research like this one, at least in the United States—and with a philosopher in charge.

The subtitle of the project is “Foundations for a Science of Purpose.” Given this, what are some of the things you’re hoping the project will achieve? Is there anything in particular that excites you?

One of the things that really excited me about this project was the chance to design an utterly unique cohort program. Thus, one of my hopes is that some aspects of this organizational structure will find further uptake, or at least that our experimental disposition towards new organizational structures will propagate. We forget sometimes that disciplinary, government-funded research is a product of the mid-20th century. It isn't the only way to do things, and while that format has certain advantages, it has disadvantages too, which have been documented by many social science researchers.

Apart from that, I am excited about ongoing synergies emerging from the project. One thing I haven't mentioned yet is that all 24 subaward PIs will be invited to submit a new preproposal at the end of the grant, with the stipulation that they can have no more than 50% core team similarity. We're hoping that this will incentivise people to pursue collaborations that weren't even imagined at the outset of the project. Again, this kind of grant configuration is unique and Templeton recognized this at the outset by funding an independent sociology team to study the cohort program and gather data about how it did (and didn't) work.

The last thing to mention is that we recently reached an agreement with Springer to publish a new book series based on the cohort program [“Foundations for Interdisciplinarity in the Life Sciences”].

These books will be short, accessible, and available through open-access, so I think it is a great opportunity to share what we've been up to while also providing pointers for further work in this area.

SPSP global: Eleonora Cresto (Buenos Aires) about organizing a large philosophical congress



Ariel Roffe talks to Eleonora Cresto about the work involved in organizing a large philosophical congress – the upcoming 17th CLMPST in Buenos Aires (July), which has several SPSP members on the list of invited speakers.



14 - Eleonora Cresto is philosophy professor at UNTREF and permanent researcher at CONICET (The National Council for Scientific and Technical Research), Argentina.

First of all, could you tell us a bit about yourself? What is your background? What are your research interests?

I did undergraduate studies in philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires is my hometown), and later obtained my Ph.D. from Columbia University, under the supervision of Isaac Levi. I write mainly on both formal and informal epistemology; my recent work deals with problems in game theory and social choice theory, including problems of fair allocation. Within the philosophy of science, I've explored decision-theoretic models of inference to the best explanation, as well as the application of social choice tools to theory choice. I'm also interested in legal epistemology, particularly in discussions on algorithmic fairness in the legal realm.

You are chairing the latest edition of the CLMPST congress, in Buenos Aires, this year. How and when did the proposal to hold the congress there come about? How did you personally decide to get involved in the organization?

In 2019, together with some colleagues from Argentina we started to think about hosting the next CLMPST. Finally we decided to make a proposal and present it to the General Assembly of the DLMPST in Prague (the Division of Logic, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science and Technology). Many of us felt that it would be important for the Congress to be held in the Southern Hemisphere, and in Latin America in particular, something that had never happened before. We believed that it could have a great impact in the local community, and it would also enrich the perspective of scholars who would come to the region. So we put a lot of energy into the proposal. It was a collaborative effort, and a very rewarding experience, as we managed to build a really diverse and federal potential organizing committee, with members from all of Argentina. After Buenos Aires was selected as the new Congress venue, I was voted as chair of the local organization. It was a bit of a

shock, to be honest, because I hadn't pictured myself in that role until that moment. But I'm very happy I stepped in. It is a big responsibility, of course.

Why do you think that Buenos Aires is a good place to hold this congress? What is the philosophical landscape like there?

Buenos Aires (and Argentina, more generally) is home to a lively philosophy community. Most philosophical traditions are well represented, including those that are at the core of the CLMPST. There are strong research groups in logic, philosophy of mind and cognitive sciences, epistemology, and various areas within the philosophy of science, among others. This provides a nice environment for the Congress, with a mass of scholars and students eager to participate. In addition, even though our registration records show that a majority of attendants will still be from the US and Europe, holding the Congress in Buenos Aires played a crucial role at the time of attracting people from the whole Latin American region, which is normally quite under-represented at CLMPST. This is really a great step towards a better North-South integration.

For the most part the research system in Argentina is state-funded. The major research centre at the national level is the CONICET, the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research. Many logicians and philosophers of science belong to various institutions within CONICET, such as the [Argentine Society for Philosophical Analysis](#). In contrast with the way the academic system is structured in other countries, academics in Argentina typically hold double appointments; people can (and are encouraged to) combine research appointments at the CONICET with teaching positions. The largest university in the country is the University of Buenos Aires.

In addition, Argentina is a beautiful country with many different landscapes and the city of Buenos Aires offers many interesting activities and places to visit. The congress website has lots of information and links to help attendees find things to do and places to visit. I think the SPSP community will have a great time here!



15 - Photo by [Barbara Zandoval](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The theme of the congress is Science and Values in an Uncertain World. How and why did you choose this theme?

I first suggested the topic at a meeting with members of the Core Committee (the Programme Chair, and DLMPST representatives), and it was greeted with enthusiasm. The choice was a very natural one, under the circumstances. We were right in the middle of the COVID pandemic, and the feeling of uncertainty was palpable – we didn't even know whether this very Congress would be happening at all in the first place. On the other hand, discussions on the influence of values in science have become popular in recent years, and we hoped to draw from this tradition and contribute to its

growth, as well as to stress the need for responsible research. Another important feature of the theme is that it cuts across the different areas of the Congress, and is relevant to both formal and empirical sciences.

How large do you estimate the congress will be? What kind of work is involved in organizing a congress of this size? How much collaboration do you have? How long have you been working to make all of this happen?

I believe there will be close to 600 attendees. We've learned that we would be hosting the Congress in August 2019, and we started working on it almost immediately. Our webpage has actually been active since the beginning of 2020 (something you know very well, as you are the one who made it possible!). Organizing such a big event would be impossible without different teams putting a lot of effort into this; there is a wonderful Local Organizing team! The Chair is the person who has the global picture in mind, so to speak, and is aware of all that needs to be done. Here I should also mention the Chair of the Programme Committee, Atocha Aliseda, who has been working side by side with us to make this happen.

Putting together a Congress such as CLMPST involves several stages. First you have to picture the kind of event you want, where to host it and how to finance it, discuss names for plenary speakers, think of possible members for the Programme Committee, build the list of Invited Speakers, and make invitations. The second step is marked by the launching of the Call for papers, and involves promoting the Congress, and then assessing the abstracts. The third step begins once you have all accepted papers, and it is mainly concerned with logistics – from negotiating with hotels, to planning the catering, to securing the right rooms for each presentation. Along the way, all this involves answering several thousand emails with all kinds of concerns. Each attendee has his or her own unique problems, requirements and circumstances, and has the right to be listened to and to be taken into account.

What about the financial aspect of the organization? Were you able to secure funding from local/international institutions to hold the congress there?

The DLMPST offered some financial support (as it always does to put this Congress together), and we secured a number of grants from local government agencies. Perhaps I should add that Argentina is a tough country to organize events. Most institutions are very short of money, and these days we have near 8,5 % inflation rate *per month*, which makes it really hard to plan ahead. To counterbalance this, both myself and my fellow local organizers are used to navigating financial crises, so we've learnt from experience how to deal with unfavourable circumstances – but it is definitely more time-consuming (and stressful) than it would otherwise be.

Do you think there are any particular challenges in holding this kind of event in the Global South, Latin America and/or in Argentina?

As I commented before, there are many financial challenges. It is also the case that Buenos Aires is far away geographically from most international centres. This creates an additional difficulty, as some people may be reluctant to travel this far. I believe we did a very good job at promoting the event and making people enthusiastic about it; we are proud to say that we had more than 850 submissions, with very interesting proposals.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I would like to stress the relevance of this type of congress at a time when many events are favoured to happen virtually, as well as the importance of its being hosted by a non-central country. For a

while, many of us were under the impression that virtual events had all the advantages and none of the inconveniences of in-person gatherings. But, in my opinion, one thing we've learned through the pandemic is that this is not true, as it is especially not true for scholars working in peripheral countries. An academic life in which students and researchers routinely visit various different environments and institutions is almost taken for granted in many parts of the world. And rightly so, as a great deal of learning happens through person-to-person interaction, and the same goes for the transmission of research to peers. This is obviously more difficult for students and researchers who live far away from other academic centres, and whose institutions are under-funded. Congresses such as CLMPST 17 are superb opportunities to foster connections, which can benefit all parties involved.

Thank you very much! We look forward to seeing you in Buenos Aires!

The Proust Questionnaire



Saana Jukola talks to Manuela Fernández Pinto



16 - [Manuela Fernández Pinto](#) is an Associate Professor in the [Department of Philosophy](#) and the Center for Applied Ethics at Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá, Colombia). Her research aims at identifying and evaluating the epistemic and social consequences of commercially-driven research today, particularly in clinical research conducted by the pharmaceutical industry.

Who are your favourite heroes or heroines? In real life or in fiction.

I have deep admiration for people who commit their life to fighting for social justice. In my context, I am a constant witness of the huge sacrifices that some people make in this fight. I come from a country with a terrible history of social struggle and civil war. After 60 years of violence, the people of Colombia have recently signed a peace treaty and began a process of transitional justice and social reparation with the FARC-EP, the oldest guerrilla group in Latin America. During six years, the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición (also known as the Truth Commission), was responsible for finding the truth about the crimes committed during the war and recognizing the dignity and the rights of the victims of those crimes. The unthinkable facts uncovered by the Truth Commission not only made clear the extent of the horrors of the war, but also the unbelievable courage of many who dedicated their lives to fighting the silence, indifference, and apathy of Colombian society, and demanding justice. Mothers of disappeared children, social leaders, displaced families, and all the victims of the war who have continued to demand social justice in spite of their precarious and vulnerable situations, those are my everyday heroes and heroines.

Which words or phrases do you overuse?

In English I use “Having said that” and “On that note” frequently. In Spanish, I use “correcto” instead of “sí” perhaps more than usual, and some people find it funny. I also use the (very) colloquial term “parce,” the Colombian equivalent to “dude,” in informal conversation a lot.

What is your favourite food?

Bread. Multi-grain, rich, and dark.

What is the most critical academic or non-academic feedback you ever received?

I have gotten nasty reviews on some papers, but I think the most critical academic feedback I have received was from my adviser, Janet Kourany, while I was her student at Notre Dame. She gave me the hardest time when discussing my ideas and arguments, but she did it always in a very caring and constructive way. Her commitment as mentor was fundamental for me to become a professional philosopher. I have tried to do the same with my students, but I'm afraid I'm not half as good as she is.

Where do you write your best work?

"Where" is probably somewhere quiet with good lighting and good back support (yes, I suffer from back pain as so many academics do). I have a better sense of "when" I write my best, and that is definitely in the morning, probably between 8 and 12. If I have to solve a (philosophical) problem or think hard about something that is the timeframe in which I would have to do it.

What is your favourite entertainment?

I like reading and watching movies, but perhaps my favorite form of entertainment is to watch sports. I'm a football (soccer) fan, and I also follow Formula 1, and cycling, especially the Tour de France. I just went to my first Champions League game a couple of weeks ago to watch the Borussia Dortmund against Chelsea, which was quite exciting. I also love watching matches together with others.

What profession would you like to attempt besides your own?

This is a tough one because I'm very curious and have broad interests, so I think if I had the opportunity, I would like to try many different things. Librarian, dog trainer, train driver, novelist, basketball player, and professional traveler (if that even exists) are some that come to mind.

What is your greatest achievement?

To be honest, I think that my greatest achievement has been making my relationship work, while having an academic career. I don't think I have the right balance yet, but I have been working on it, and things are starting to feel much better.

What is your most treasured possession?

Probably our apartment. Me and my partner put so much effort and hope into buying it and making it home that it has become very meaningful to our lives.

Where were or are you happiest?

I always feel the happiest when I come back home after traveling.