

Society for the Philosophy of Science in Practice

Get involved with the SPSP Newsletter! Mark your conference calendars for our lunchtime meeting on the 27th June

University of Toronto, Biennial SPSP Conference 26-29
June 2013

Editorial

Dear SPSP Community,

Welcome to our pre-conference newsletter! We hope to see all of you in a few weeks in Toronto. Until then peruse the contents of our newsletter and get excited: this conference promises to be outstanding.

In this issue we feature one of our conference keynote speakers Sergio Sismondo 'At The Philosopher's Desk'. He tells us about pretending to be a sociologist, the differences between science studies and science in practice and his traditional—yet versatile—favorite curse word. We also hear from Jordan Bartol on the surprising (and potentially lucrative) side effects of a graduate school education. In our continued pursuit to understand better the philosophy-of-science in practice/philosophy of science-in-practice distinction Laszlo Kosolosky talks to Inmaculada de Melo-Martin and Kristen Intemann about how their work blurs this distinction. And finally, members of our SPSP newsletter editorial team traveled to conferences far and wide this winter and spring and we bring you three reviews in Talk of the Town to show you what you (may have) missed.

Sophia Efstathiou (Researcher, Norwegian University of Science and Technology). Sophia has spent the last 10 years trying to make sure that besides riding the serial intellectual highs of academia, she makes some difference in how practitioners understand their worlds. Developing an account of how some ordinary ideas can become extraordinary, scientific ones, Sophia studies race and aging science and now systems biology research. She loves sparkly things, especially when found on the ground.

Newsletter Committee



Leah McClimans (Assistant Professor, University of South Carolina). Leah works on the methodology of quality of life measurement (sometimes to the detriment of her own quality of life!), medical ethics and is currently attempting some genuine social scientific research (and feeling like a bit of a poser in the process). She loves cats and hates being cold.



Finally anyone interested in becoming part of the dynamic team that puts this newsletter together please note that we will have a *meeting in Toronto on 27 June over lunch*.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter! As always if you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for submissions, please email Leah McClimans at mccliman@mailbox.sc.edu

Looking forward to seeing everyone soon!

For Sale!

Philosopher in a Box (patent pending)

Do you dream of becoming a philosopher but hate the thought of writing alone in a dark room? The uncertain job prospects? We have the answer! Philosopher in a box come complete with 1) the Kantian Canon in German 2) Two classical CDs of your choice (we recommend Bach) 3) For men: 1 pair of pleated trousers, 1 tweed jacket (optional), baggy jeans; For women: mid-length pleated skirt, grey jumper and white blouse (optional) 4) Twenty difficult to answer questions 5) choice of one of the following 'ready-to-go' hobbies: marathon running, classical music or cooking

\$49.95 or 40 Euros

Send check or money order to:

Live your Dreams

PO Box 0000

Columbia, SC USA

Newsletter Committee Cont.



Liz Irvine (Post-doc at Centre for Integrative Neuroscience, Tübingen) Trying for a revolution in philosophy of mind and cognitive science by injecting it with some philosophy of science, but will settle for causing minor disturbances. Moving on from consciousness science, the next project is on decision-making, along with an exploration of different kinds of pluralism.



Buck Field. Independent researcher and consultant Buck Field works at the intersection of project management, history & philosophy of science, research, and policy. On a mission to contribute to future faster-than-light technology, he seeks to bring people and ideas together to change the world for future generations as profoundly as the past 500 years of science have done for us.

Laszlo Kosolosky (PhD Student, Centre for Logic and Philosophy of Science, Ghent University, Belgium). As a 'practical' philosopher of science, Laszlo fills his days investigating the ins and outs of consensus conferences, allowing himself to shed new light on social epistemological issues, such as expertise, (epistemic) responsibilities, consensus making, peer review, science policy and scientific integrity.



At The Philosopher's Desk with Sergio Sismondo

Sergio Sismondo is one of our 2013 conference keynote speakers. He is a Professor at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario and received his PhD from our conference host: University of Toronto. Holding a joint position in Philosophy and Sociology Sergio specializes in science and technology studies. His most current research examines the nature and distribution of pharmaceutical research. Earlier research involved questions of realism, constructivism and deflationism.



1. How did you become interested in philosophy?

In my first year as an undergrad, I took a course in philosophy more or less by accident, while I was exploring the idea of majoring in math. But that philosophy course gave me my worst mark that year, and so – absolutely true – I felt that I should take more of the subject to get better at it. I kept up the math for a few more years.

I doubt that I would have stayed with philosophy past an undergraduate degree were it not for a couple of inspiring courses with Ian Hacking at the University of Toronto. This was in the mid-1980s, and I don't think that many people in Toronto had yet realized how interesting and provocative Hacking was being, or that he was initiating topics of conversation that would become important within philosophy of science. I should also say that the larger philosophy of science and math community at Toronto then was particularly friendly, and even as an undergraduate student I felt that people like Jim Brown and Alasdair Urquhart were exceptionally welcoming and generous with their time. Those philosophers, the atmosphere as a whole, and other perks and freedoms of being a student made me want to stay within the university system.

Since then, I've moved toward and away from philosophy at different times. I appreciate both the discipline's hard-nosed approach and its willingness to tackle big issues. I had absorbed both of those attitudes when I entered science and technology studies (STS), and I intended to apply them in this new field. However, I found that STS had its own forms of rigor and expansiveness (though, just as in philosophy, neither consistently applied), and I found them to be seductive. Moreover, once there, I realized that philosophers all too regularly turn their rigor into closed-mindedness or intolerance.

At this point, I am immersed in STS. Philosophy is present in everything I do – somebody recently said that every page of my *Introduction to Science and Technology Studies* is obviously written by a philosopher – but much of the time I am drawing on philosophy in unconventional ways, trying to do something that runs parallel to mainstream philosophy but on a different plane. I see myself as doing work that is metaphysically or ontologically deflationary, while being inflationary in other ways.

2. You have a cross appointment at Queen's University in Philosophy and Sociology. What have been the greatest opportunities and/or difficulties of navigating between the social sciences and humanities for you?

Well, first of all, I had to pretend to be a sociologist. Just about all of my training and experience as a sociologist was and is really in STS, which hardly counts in many places. Other than that, I've never felt that I exactly had to navigate between the social sciences and the humanities.

There are enormous rewards that can come from connecting with multiple fields. In particular, the combination of having a philosophical sensibility but collecting and working with quantities of real data can produce exciting results. I feel that that is happening with my pharmaceutical research right now; I am asking different questions and seeing different things than are other people working in this area, and I believe that those are differences are very productive.

In more day-to-day terms, there are practical difficulties. Working within an institution based around disciplines – and Queen's is strongly based around disciplines – I've had to accept a role as a jack-of-all-trades. But while I would contest the standard correlate, "and master of none", I don't feel like a master of either philosophy or sociology in general, and some of my colleagues make it clear that they don't see me as one. Ultimately, the snubs aren't important. However, supervising graduate students well is difficult if you are not immersed full-time in a discipline, because they generally need to absorb that discipline if they are going to succeed. I don't have any easy solutions to that kind of problem.

3. How would you characterize philosophy of science in practice in relation to science studies? Do you think these are or should be part of the same enterprise?

Institutionally, philosophy of science and STS are growing further and further apart even while the overlap in their domains of attention remains, or has grown, at least in fits and starts. Luckily, the Science Wars have generally turned cold, with only the occasional book or article accusing STS of unwarranted

Newsletter Committee Cont.



Jordan Bartol (PhD Student, Centre for History and Philosophy of Science, University of Leeds). Jordan spends his time thinking about explanations in molecular biology and neuro-cognitive investigations concerning decision-making. He looks forward to the day when these two fields come together, but suspects he'll be waiting for some time.

At The Philosopher's Desk Cont.

relativism or the like. Yet at the same time, philosophy of science is increasingly attentive to scientific practice – hence the SPSP and the many people contributing to it. I see the work being done by members of SPSP as creating new kinds of STS or philosophy of science.

STS as a field traditionally saw itself as addressing philosophical issues. However, there is less and less engagement with philosophy of science; some parts of the field are eschewing philosophical thinking altogether, and other parts pay attention almost exclusively to homegrown philosophical work. Sometimes, that homegrown philosophy adopts a language and style that puts it in direct conflict with philosophy of science. And of that, some of STS's homegrown philosophy is more creative and more rigorous than much philosophy done from the direction of philosophy. And yet sometimes STS's homegrown philosophy simply can be embarrassing.

Although any rapprochement will have to be slow, I think that it would be worthwhile, and not just because philosophy of science could use STS's data or STS could use philosophy's theoretical or normative acumen. In forms like "philosophy of science in practice" we could be forging something new that will serve as a model or umbrella for a lot of productive work.

Announcement!

Philoslothical Questions: A new edited volume on philosophical questions pertaining to sloths.

We welcome chapter proposals on topics including: Action, Time Perception, and Philoslothical Slothgic.

At The Philosopher's Desk Cont.

4. Some of your more recent work within philosophy of medicine focuses on the pharmaceutical industry. What drew you specifically to this area in medicine?

Actually, I came to philosophy of medicine via an interest in the pharmaceutical industry. Drugs are a wonderful point of intersection of science, industry, government and culture, and are great subjects for research in STS.

I've been doing research about the pharmaceutical industry and its activities for about six years now, and I can no longer look around without seeing it. The industry has insinuated itself into the everyday lives of people in highly developed countries – almost all of us are consuming pharmaceuticals on a daily basis, and see that consumption as crucial to our health and well-being. Indeed, many of us understand our identities partly in relation to our drugs: if we have high cholesterol, that is directly related to the fact that there are drugs for lowering it; if we are bipolar, for most of us that will be a result of the availability of mood stabilizers that allowed the category of "bipolar" to emerge in the 1990s; and so on. Claims like the ones I've just made quickly connect key cultural issues with traditional issues in the philosophy of medicine.

Science plays key roles here, because it contributes to the production of drugs, because government regulation ensures that the key arguments in favor of particular drugs are scientific ones, and because clinical research establishes the statistics that convince our doctors and us to take pills that typically have no immediately observable effect. As a result, the pharmaceutical industry invests heavily in scientific research.

At The Philosopher's Desk Cont.

It doesn't invest so much in the first kind I just mentioned, because basic research has very uncertain economic benefits, and so it is mostly supported by states; however, the industry invests heavily in the clinical research that allow it to bring its products to market and to more effectively sell those products. Pharmaceutical research is closely tied to pharmaceutical marketing. This is why the industry engages in the ghost management of research and academic publication, why it hires enormous numbers of physicians and researchers to present the scientific evidence for particular drug treatments, and why it supports continuing medical education. When I study the pharmaceutical industry, I am led to think about how large quantities of medical knowledge are produced and circulated, rather than how particular cases are made for this or that treatment.

5. What practical advice would you give graduate students and early career academics who wish to integrate the practice of science into their philosophical work?

My best advice to graduate students interested in the practice of science is: make sure that you are genuinely integrating the practice of science, and not just more textbook knowledge. Textbook knowledge is fascinating and important, but should be treated as a special kind of scientific product, only one component of the practice of science. Talk with researchers, but don't stop there; listen to them talk among themselves, when they are presenting more backstage accounts of their work. If possible, participate, keeping track of all of the little challenges, achievements, materials, interactions, and other details along the way, and not just the end accomplishments or failures.

Talk of the Town

Upcoming Workshops/Conferences

Unconceived Alternatives and Scientific Realism

July 1-2, 2013

St. John's College, Durham University

This conference will focus on Kyle Stanford's work on the problem of unconceived alternatives—as presented in his book *Exceeding Our Grasp: Science, History, and the Problem of Unconceived Alternatives* (Oxford: 2006)—and explore its relationship to wider debates in the philosophy of science, concerning topics such as contingency, pluralism and realism.

Keynote Speakers:

- Nancy Cartwright
- Michael Devitt
- Patrick Forber
- Kyle Stanford
- Juha Saatsi
- Ian James Kidd
- Darrell Rowbottom

Further details can be found at

<http://www.dur.ac.uk/i.j.kidd/unconceived-alternatives.htm>

Workshop: Hobbes and Spinoza

October 19, 2013

University of Pittsburgh, Center for Philosophy of Science

Speakers and details at:

www.pitt.edu/~pittcntr

Upcoming Workshops/Conferences Cont. on page 12

The SPSP Proust Questionnaire

Featuring Sergio Sismondo

Who are your favorite heros/heroines of fiction?

I don't know, but let me play with the fact that this is an audience of philosophers of science. One of my favorite philosophical dialogues is Imre Lakatos's *Proofs and Refutations*. Every one of the characters is brilliant, but speaking as a teacher I think that the Teacher character is a hero.

What is your favorite music?

I like the fun of many mixed genres, such as Klezmer and Eastern European music when played with a punk sensibility – or even dominated by that sensibility, as Amanda Palmer does with cabaret music when she is half of The Dresden Dolls. However, purity is also good. I also very happily listen to any of Bach's work for solo instruments, or 19th-century chamber music, or ...

What is your favorite curse word?

I'm pretty boring in that regard. The old-fashioned expletive "f*ck" works for me. I'm not virtuosic, not like some of my neighbors who can use a version of the word as any part of speech (even replacing articles!).

What is your favorite cuddle word?

That's not so easy. I link cuddle words with particular people, and so I couldn't possibly have a favorite in print.

What sound or noise do you hate?

I find difficult the sound of irritation in somebody's voice, if they're irritated at me.

What is your favorite food?

I can't imagine living without bread, good bread baked lovingly by people who care.

What was the most critical academic feedback you ever received?

The most negative feedback I've ever received was a one-sentence review of a manuscript to the effect of "This is clearly graduate student work and shouldn't be published." Luckily the editor didn't think that that was an adequate reason.

Where do you write your best work?

I tend to move from place to place when I am really writing, so I go from home to office to café. I live in a small city, so it's easy to do that.

Proust Questionnaire Cont.

What is your favorite entertainment?

Right at the moment (because of some recent experiences), I would say: drinking a glass of red wine at a pleasant bar while having a conversation with an interesting stranger next to me.

What profession would you like to attempt besides your own?

Well, if I'm just daydreaming, many. Pizza chef? Working in high finance? Being an academic is absolutely wonderful, but many other professions have more immediate rewards for success.

If heaven exists, what would you like to hear god say to you at the pearly gates?

I would like to hear that I lived a life that displayed many virtues (and that God is an Aristotelian).

Talk of the Town

Dimensions of Measurement March 14-16 2013 Universität Bielefeld

Dimensions of Measurement (DOM) took place during a few cold and snowy days at ZIF (Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Forschung) at Universität Bielefeld (<http://www.bicoda.info/>). Luckily the calibre of the presentations was such that those of us from warmer climes were more enchanted than horrified by the cold. For anyone who hasn't been to ZIF, it is a wonderful venue for interdisciplinary research—spacious, modern, filled with natural light and displaying artwork on the upper level. It also sits on a hill overlooking Bielefeld, which, for those of you like me who can't sit all day, is great for taking runs during conference breaks.

I had been looking forward to this conference for quite some time in part because it was a product between the BiCoDa alliance that we—the philosophers and historians at the University of South Carolina—have with Universität Bielefeld and the Technische Universität Darmstadt. But also I had been looking forward to it because of the breadth of topics within measurement that the conference hoped to address. I was not let down.

For me, most important lesson from the conference was that there is more to 'measurement' than meets the eye. We learned from Mary Morgan to see accountancy as measurement, from Simon Schaffer's entertaining keynote we experienced measurement from different times and places, Hasok Chang asked us to reconsider Percy Bridgman, Joel Michell tried to convince us that psychometrics is *not* measurement and Laura Dassow Walls showed us the poetry in Henry David Thoreau's measurement. I haven't even gotten started on the presentations from the parallel sessions: cameras as measurement instruments, florescent dying techniques as bioscientific measurement, commensurability in nutrition and metabolism, clocks, democracy, Darwin...and I could go on. Two published volumes of some of the presentations are in the works so: Watch this space.



Philosophy-of-Science in Practice vs. Philosophy of Science-in-Practice

The Society for Philosophy of Science in Practice is interested in philosophy of science from a practical perspective. Following John Dupré's presentation at our conference in Exeter (June 22-24, 2011), the study of science in practice tends to make two assumptions, i.e. (1) philosophy of science should be connected to science, and (2) there is more to science than published texts, i.e. practice. Nonetheless, as John discussed there are at least two distinct ways to study science in practice: philosophy-of-science in practice and philosophy of science-in-practice.

Philosophy-of-Science in Practice is philosophy that is directly engaged with scientific research through interaction with scientists about philosophical problems (e.g. background assumptions, logical structure, implications of unexpected findings, etc.) This kind of problem-solving is not something scientists *cannot* do, but something scientifically informed philosophers may be good at.

Philosophy of Science-in-Practice is philosophy that is engaged with the people and communities producing science, i.e. their various goals, tools and social structures. These are not just incidental features of the production of science but essential to what it is and what its assertions mean.

While these definitions are helpful to elucidate the different ways in which we can study science in practice, they need not be conclusive. Indeed we hope they are a starting point for further reflection on our common interests. To this end in each newsletter we will present this distinction to a colleague in the field and ask how her/his research relates to it. Is the distinction straightforward or debatable? Are both conceptions (mutually) exclusive or not? Could the distinction be improved? If so, how? In previous issues Kevin Elliott (University of South Carolina) and Hanne Andersen (Aarhus University) discussed how they think the distinction guides their research. For this issue, we asked the 2012 Women's Caucus Prize winning duo Inmaculada de Melo-Martín (Cornell University) and Kristen Intemann (Montana State University) to share their thoughts.



P-o-S vs. S-i-P Cont.

“Our research focuses on interactions between scientific objectivity and non-epistemic values, particularly in the context of the biomedical sciences. This includes examining the negative influences that values and interests can have, such as problems related to the commercialization of biomedical research and conflicts of interest. Yet we are also interested in showing how social and ethical values can play important positive roles in scientific decision-making. Using various case studies, we have argued that non-epistemic values can be relevant to framing research questions, choosing methodologies, selecting standards of evidence, and interpreting the extent to which existing scientific evidence supports particular hypotheses. But reflecting on the social dimensions of science is not only theoretically important for understanding the roles that values play in science. When the social dimensions of research fail to receive sufficient attention and scrutiny, this can lead to medical interventions, research programs, or public policies that do not serve the public’s interests or that fail to meet intended public health goals.

Our work might be seen to fall on both sides of Dupré’s distinction between philosophy of science-in-practice and philosophy-of-science. Insofar as doing philosophy of science-in-practice involves using tools from philosophy of science to help solve problems in science or science related policy, our work on conflicts of interest is an example of this. We show that existing policies rely on mistaken background assumptions –e.g. about bias. Calling attention to such erroneous assumptions is necessary to generate better policy alternatives. Philosophy-of-science in practice on the other hand, appears to be concerned with developing philosophical accounts of scientific practices. Our work examining cases of actual practices in

Graduate Students Speak Out!

Waxing Philosophical

Graduate student training sometimes requires that we pay extremely close attention to details that must be ignored by professional researchers. It often means that we analyse long-established truths, re-construct well-accepted arguments, and do so in rigorously unnecessary detail. It is easy to forget that these tedious tasks may have unexpected benefits.

Thomas Herndon, a PhD student from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, was recently reminded of the payoffs of close attention to detail. Herndon is studying economics. He was given the task of replicating a famous 2010 study establishing that government spending in times of economic hardship leads to a near stall in economic growth. The study was carried out by Harvard economists Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff, both of whom have had impressive careers in both policy and academia. The study, which is the pillar of austerity movements across the globe, should have been easy to replicate. Only it wasn’t.

Herndon’s supervisors were initially skeptical about his failure to replicate. This should have been a simple exercise, they thought. They told him to dig deeper. He did. Herndon, with the help of his girlfriend and fellow PhD student Kyla Walters, spotted a small single-line error in the Excel spreadsheet that Reinhart and Rogoff used in their initial study. When fixed, the results changed drastically. Reinhart and Rogoff’s data now

P-o-S vs. S-i-P Cont.

the biomedical sciences so as to show how implicit value judgments are relevant to the decisions scientists make would seem to fall under this second category.

Yet while we think Dupré's distinction is conceptually useful for thinking of different ways of understanding philosophy of science in practice, we believe that it may actually obscure the ways in which one side of the distinction can be necessary for doing the other. Indeed, it seems to us impossible to do one without doing the other—or perhaps impossible to do it well. We believe that philosophers of science have a crucial role to play in providing conceptual tools that can enhance scientific practices. But it also seems that in order to play that role, they must take “science in practice” seriously and thus, that they must engage with scientific communities.”

Public Health Warning

- ✓ Are you feeling like criticising your scientist collaborators? While at the same time being moved to tears by their visions?
- ✓ Are you having interactional hot flashes? While at the same time feeling disoriented about the canon of your discipline?

You may be suffering from **Multiple Academic Disorder (MAD)**.

This is a serious condition: progressive deterioration is noticed in 8 out of 10 diagnosed cases with dangerous implications for your academic integrity. Please seek help. Call: 0800-MAD-HELP; 24 hours a day (term time only).

Grad Students Speak Out! Cont.

showed that increased government spending has a negligible impact on economic growth. You could practically hear the screams from Westminster, Brussels, and Washington.

Herndon has rocketed to geek stardom, featured everywhere from CNN to The Colbert Report. His findings have left lots of questions about austerity and spending, but they've also left questions about Reinhart and Rogoff. How is it, reports wonder, that two leading academics could miss such a colossal error? But there is a more interesting question: Why did it take a PhD student to find it?

We tend to think of dull graduate student tasks as akin to the famous scene from *The Karate Kid*. Wax on; wax off. Tedious tasks are a means to an end: skill development. But there is more to it than that. The Karate Kid was, in some sense, just learning how to block punches. In the movie it seems like the activity through which he learns these skills is unimportant. But this is wrong. The waxing itself is important. The karate kid was not *just* learning; he was also waxing Mr. Miyagi's car. This, too, needed to be done (in some sense).

Herndon found the error because he was doing what PhD students do (and bemoan) best. He was carrying out seemingly trivial and uninteresting work. He was paying attention to details that go overlooked by busier academics. He was questioning studies that everyone else presumed sound. Most of the time, when grad students do this sort of thing, we come up empty handed. Data is often sound. Arguments usually hold.

Grad Students Speak Out! Cont.

But every once and a while, when the stars align, graduate student drudgery is good for more than just career training. Every so often, the tedious work on which we cut our teeth pays off. Is this slow and careful work a necessary part of science? It may be. Regardless of who *should* double and triple check, it ends up being graduate students that do it.

For Sale!

Viagra for Mac or PC

Worried that your arguments look too flimsy? Try our new software package, designed to effortlessly compile impressive lists of citations, using any key words you want! Or try our new 'Wildcard' feature, aimed at making your research look genuinely interdisciplinary by compiling citations from an unrelated field! Guaranteed to make your arguments more convincing, with minimal effort.

Disclaimer: Does not guarantee that citations are relevant to author's own work.

Talk of the Town

Upcoming Workshops/Conferences Continued from p. 6

Workshop: Experimentation in Neuroscience
November 22-23, 2013

University of Pittsburgh, Center for Philosophy of Science

Watch for details at: www.pitt.edu/~pittcntr

CLPS13: Congress on Logic and Philosophy of Science

September 16-18, 2013

Ghent University

For more details: <http://www.clps13.ugent.be/>

Announcements (Real Ones)

University of Pittsburgh, Center for the Philosophy of Science 2013-14 Visitors will be:

Allan Franklin, Senior Visiting Fellow

Aristides Arageorgis, Visiting Fellow

Ori Belkind, Visiting Fellow

Mauro Dorato, Visiting Fellow

Melinda Fagan, Visiting Fellow

Carrie Figdor, Visiting Fellow

Marco Giovanelli, Visiting Fellow

Leah Henderson, Visiting Fellow

Douglas Kutach, Visiting Fellow

Arnaud Pocheville, Postdoc

Joshua Rosaler, Postdoc

Interested in visiting? See www.pitt.edu/~pittcntr

Talk of the Town Cont.

University of Pittsburgh, Center for the Philosophy of Science Annual Lecture Series 2013-2014:

Sept. 27, 2013 Katherine Brading, U. Notre Dame, Dept. of Philosophy

Oct. 11, 2013 Paul Griffiths, U. of Sydney, Dept. of Philosophy

Nov. 15, 2013 Andreas Albrecht, U. of California, Davis, Dept. of Physics

Jan. 31, 2014 John Lyne, U. of Pittsburgh, Dept. of Communication

Feb. 14, 2014 William Goodwin, U. South Florida, Dept. of Philosophy

Apr. 4, 2014 Alva Noe, U. of California, Berkeley, Dept. of Philosophy

More about talks and programs: www.pitt.edu/~pittcntr

Recent Publication

Kieran O'Doherty & Edna Einsiedel (eds.). (2012). *Public Engagement and Emerging Technologies*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

See:

http://www.ubcpres.ca/search/title_book.asp?BookID=299173962

Conference Reviews

Our very own Sophia Esfsthathiou and Liz Irvine attended and reviewed for us here two 'firsts': the first Nordic STS Conference and the first meeting of the German Philosophy of Science

Talk of the Town Cont.

Society.

First Nordic STS Conference April 24-26, 2013
Rica Hell Hotel

In 2003 the Norwegian government established the Holberg prize for outstanding scholarly work in arts and humanities, social sciences, law and theology. In 2013 the prize was presented to Bruno Latour, thus it is perhaps no surprise that the first Nordic STS conference took place in April 2013

<http://www.ntnu.no/kult/stsconference>. The conference was set in the Norwegian town "Hell" and despite its place-name the event was quite enjoyable.

The organizing scientific committee consisted of STS scholars based in each of the Nordic countries: Jane Summerton, University of Oslo (chair) and Margrethe Aune, NTNU (co-chair) Claes-Fredrik Helgesson, Linköping University, Torben Elgaard Jensen, Aalborg University, Sampsa Hyysalo, Aalto University and Sylvia Lysgård, University of Oslo (scientific assistant). The meeting in Hell was organized by the collaboration of the Center for Technology and Society (KULT) at NTNU in Trondheim and the Center for Technology Innovation and Culture (TIK) in the University of Oslo.

The keynote of the conference titled "Risking Reflexive Reason, Tilting at Sacred Cows: Science, Publics – and Democracy?" was given by Brian Wynne, Lancaster University. Wynne discussed an "exaggerated public scope given to parochial technoscientific meanings" through the example of EU policy and argued for critical approaches to policy scientism. Identity-searching/setting panels such as "Is there a Nordic STS?" were, of course, key.

Talk of the Town Cont.

with science, b. energy, environmental and sustainability, b. policy and public administration, c. public health and care practices. Though prima facie relevant for SPSPers the double session on “practice theory” was disappointingly philosophically thin. That being said philosophers predominated in the panel of projects funded under the Norwegian Research Council’s Ethical Legal and Social Aspects (ELSA) research. The panel titled “Why Should Scientists Collaborate With Us?” suggested some answers: what Fern Wickson, University of Tromsø called a. “migrant labour” (menial lab work in exchange for observation/engagement –a version of participant observation), b. what Rune Nydal, NTNU views as a “collaboration” in articulating and addressing questions that crossover scientific and philosophical interests and escape individual expertise, c. following Bjørn Myskja the possibility of enhancing social responsibility by enabling reflection in science along Eric Fisher’s model of “mid-stream modulation”.

The conference included a range of scholars from STS, History and Philosophy, including 110 contributed papers and 130 participants. The next conference planned for 2015 will take place in Copenhagen.

First Meeting of the German Philosophy of Science Society March 11-14, 2013 University of Hannover

This year saw the first conference of the German Philosophy of Science Society (Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftsphilosophie, GWP, www.wissphil.de). Its theme was ‘How much philosophy in the philosophy of science?’, aimed

Talk of the Town Cont.

at exploring how far philosophy of science has moved away from philosophy in general, and to what extent philosophy of science is currently unified across different scientific disciplines.

Many of the keynotes addressed this provocative theme in their talks. Peter Godfrey-Smith outlined two crucial roles for philosophy – a Sellarsian integrative role, and an incubator role aimed at developing new ideas and frameworks. Margaret Morrison defended a focus on scientifically motivated philosophical questions, illustrating this with how computer simulations are used in experiments in particle colliders. James Ladyman defended his structural realist metaphysics, and explored how it relates to common sense realism. Stephan Hartmann outlined his ‘Scientific Philosophy’, and his work on developing a formal mathematical philosophy to understand scientific explanation and decision making.

Other keynotes discussed similarly broad questions. Chrysostomos Mantzavinos argued for a position of explanatory pluralism in terms of ‘explanatory games’, by exploring different explanatory practices across the social sciences. Wolfgang Spohn outlined part of his formal framework of *a priori* principles for scientific reasoning.

Symposia and sessions reflected a wide range of approaches and areas in philosophy of science, including work on newer areas such as models, philosophy of social science, biology, chemistry and technology, and mechanistic explanation. More traditional areas such as metaphysics, causation, laws and reduction were also well represented.

Of particular practical interest, a symposium led

SPSP 2013

4th Biennial Conference

26-29 June

See You There!



Don't forget: Mark your conference
calendar! Newsletter meeting lunchtime
27 June

All are welcome!!

Talk of the Town Cont.

by Mieke Boon, Till Grüne-Yanoff and Hanne Anderson provided very useful advice on teaching philosophy of science to scientists, including how to get scientists to engage with philosophy of science, and topics that worked, and those that didn't, in the classroom.

Similarly, a panel discussion on careers in philosophy of science was extremely well-attended by younger researchers, and had some sobering but useful advice (have general as well as specific interests, a wide range of teaching competences, consider jobs in 'non-traditional' places, and don't think that it'll be easy).

Given the high quality presentations and discussions, and the friendly and open atmosphere, the conference was a resounding success. Participants were glad

to have such a forum to present work in philosophy of science in Europe, and look forward to future meetings of the GWP.