

The Magazine

May 2022

Introduction

Welcome to our May newsletter! Apologies for not having one last month, but as there was not much to report, we decided to combine April and May into one. This month, we again have lots of exciting news to report in the world of *Phil In Bio Med* that we are happy to share with you. Along with publications and conference announcements, we have another contribution concerning the PinS corpus, which we hope you find interesting. All the best wishes as the summer slowly approaches - let's dive in!

Job openings

A PhD position will be available to work with [Lucie Laplane](#) (CNRS, Paris I & Gustave Roussy) and [Leïla Perié](#) (CNRS, Institut Curie) on rethinking clonal evolution in cancer.

The position is open to philosophers of biology as well as theoretical scientists. Philosophers will need some background knowledge of biology, an interest to work with scientists, in a lab, and the desire to contribute to science. The work will be mainly conceptual, although the candidate will be welcome to participate in experimental work if she/he wants to. Please contact Lucie Laplane as soon as possible if you are interested: (laplanettelucie@gmail.com).

The [CNRS & University of Bordeaux](#) are seeking to hire 2 postdoctoral researchers, funded by a Moore Foundation grant to Thomas Pradeu, CNRS Director of research (please see also short grant description in the 'Announcements' section below). The 2 subprojects are:

1. Development of a new theory regarding how an organism's immune system and its resident microbial communities sense and manage each other;
2. Development of a new theory regarding how an organism's tumors interact with its resident microbial communities, which represents a complex subset of interactions between the organism and the microorganisms present.

Please contact Thomas Pradeu (thomas.pradeu@u-bordeaux.fr) if you are interested.

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Fellowship calls

The Centre for Philosophy of Sciences of the University of Lisbon (CFCUL) will soon launch a call for applications for 2 PhD fellowships (up to 4 years) at the University of Lisbon, for the Doctoral Programme in History and Philosophy of Sciences (Faculty of Sciences).

CFCUL is interested in hosting high quality doctoral students in a wide range of areas in the Philosophy of Science. Candidates must have a Bachelor or Master's degree in the areas of the doctoral programme.

The call will be open between April 29, and June 3, 2022 (23h59, Lisbon time). The application must be sent to cdlisboa@fc.ul.pt and the subject should be: CFCUL | BD 2022 | First and last name of the candidate. For more details, please visit: <https://www.euraxess.pt/jobs/778780>.

CFAs

Philosophy and Neuroscience at the Gulf V

Please mark your calendars for the fifth annual workshop, Philosophy and Neuroscience at the Gulf V, of the Deep South Philosophy and Neuroscience Workgroup. This is currently planned as an in-person meeting at the beachfront Hilton Pensacola Beach Hotel, Pensacola Beach, FL, from Thursday, September 22 through Saturday, September 24!

The workshop is co-organized by: **John Bickle** (Mississippi State University and University of Mississippi Medical Center) and **Ann-Sophie Barwich** (Indiana University Bloomington).

Workshop Themes: Philosophy of Neuroscience Varia; Microscopy in Neuroscience.

For this year's meeting we are calling for submitted abstracts for talks on any topic in current philosophy of neuroscience broadly construed ("philosophy of neuroscience varia"), but also for talks on a special session planned on the role of microscopy in neuroscience research. We will further feature our usual annual events, including invited speakers, invited neuroscientist keynote lectures and short "blitz" talks so as to accommodate as many participants as possible. (More details on next page.)

CFAs (cont.)

Abstracts (up to 750 words) for submitted presentations at this year's workshop will be due by **July 1, 2022**. A second call will be sent out in early June with details on how to submit abstracts. For now, all interested parties can contact John Bickle at jbickle@philrel.msstate.edu for more information or to submit an abstract in advance.

Participants will be responsible for their own travel costs; the Hilton Pensacola Beach will offer special conference rates to all participants for Wednesday night, September 21 through Sunday, September 25. There is no workshop registration fee; funding from the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Mississippi State University pays for workshop meeting space, lunches for all participants on Thursday, September 22, and coffee and refreshment breaks each day.

Please direct all queries to John Bickle at jbickle@philrel.msstate.edu, or to Ann-Sophie Barwich at abarwich@iu.edu.

The Deep South Philosophy and Neuroscience Workgroup is an American Philosophical Association (APA)-affiliated group dedicated to promoting professional interactions between philosophers and neuroscientists through transdisciplinary research and meetings to promulgate results of these interactions. For more information about its events consult this web site: www.deepsouthphilneuro.com

Announcements & Conferences

A complex systems approach to cancer understanding

The aim of this conference will be to gather biologists, philosophers of science, mathematicians, systems biologists, sociologists, medical doctors to name but a few, to foster a broad interdisciplinary conversation about the multifaceted nature of cancer.

The conference is on 17-18 October. This conference is organized IRL, and we hope the state of the pandemics will allow it. If so, this will be held in the Amphithéâtre Descartes at ENS de Lyon.

For details on registration and the program, please visit: <https://compsyscan22.sciencesconf.org>.



Announcements & Conferences (cont.)

The European Brain and Behaviour Society and Austrian Neuroscience Association are honoured to announce the co-organization of the Networking Event at the 2022 FENS Forum in Paris: “[Are we equipped to work interdisciplinarily? On the lack of philosophical education for neuroscientists.](#)” It takes place on 10 July 2022 from 18.45 - 20.30. Participation is FREE but, for logistic purposes you must sign up to attend this event. For more details and to sign up: <https://www.ebbs-science.org/networking2022>.

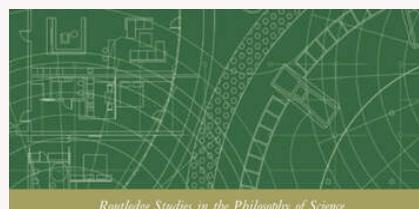
The end-of-seminar conference for the [Duke University Summer Seminar in Neuroscience and Philosophy](#) will take place very soon, 3-4 June. The speakers include John Bickle, Daniel Dennett, and many others. The conference will be available online for remote viewing. Visit the website to attend remotely: <http://www.ssnap.net/>.

Publications

Bickle, J., Craver, C.F., & Barwich, A-S. (Eds). *The Tools of Neuroscience Experiment: Philosophical and Scientific Perspectives*. (2022). Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/The-Tools-of-Neuroscience-Experiment-Philosophical-and-Scientific-Perspectives/Bickle-Craver-Barwich/p/book/9781032127996>

- To see and download the flyer with book details and a discount, click the following link:

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THE TOOLS OF
NEUROSCIENCE
EXPERIMENT

PHILOSOPHICAL AND SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES

Edited by
John Bickle, Carl F. Craver
and Ann-Sophie Barwich



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PinS Corpus in the Spotlight!

This month **Fridolin Gross** (Bordeaux) provides his thoughts on the article “Relations in Biomedical Ontologies” by Barry Smith, Werner Ceusters, Bert Klagges, Jacob Köhler, Anand Kumar, Jane Lomax, Chris Mungall, Fabian Neuhaus, Alan L. Rector, and Cornelius Rosse, published in *Genome Biology* in 2005.

The first author, Barry Smith, is a philosopher who initially worked on classical philosophical topics (e.g., ontological issues in Husserl) but later focused on “formal ontology,” particularly in the biomedical sciences. The other co-authors of the paper are biologists, bioinformaticians, or computer scientists. With an ARC of 4.24 and more than one thousand citations, the paper has received wide attention.

An “ontology” as defined in the paper is a structured vocabulary used to standardize terminology in data-intensive fields to facilitate collaboration, data sharing, and computational analysis. “Gene Ontology” (GO), probably the best-known example of a biomedical ontology, provides a terminology for gene products and the relationships between these gene products and other biological entities such as functions, processes, or structures.

The paper points out specific problems in defining relations in biomedical ontologies, such as ambiguities in the “part of” relation, and offers very specific suggestions on how to make them more consistent and less error-prone. As far as I can see, at least some of these suggestions have subsequently been implemented in GO and in the more general framework of Open Biological and Biomedical Ontologies (OBO). So it is obvious that this paper is a contribution to science. In addition, a closer look at some of the articles in which this paper is cited reveals that it has been used in the creation of a large number of specific ontologies in various contexts in the life sciences and beyond.

The work is also a philosophical contribution to science and thus an example of PinS. However, it may not be as obvious as it might seem at first glance in what exact sense this contribution is philosophical.

(Continued below...)

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PinS Corpus in the Spotlight! (Cont.)

After all, work on formal ontologies does not necessarily have anything to do with “ontology” as a branch of philosophy, and the emphasis on clear definitions and formal rigor found in the paper could just as easily be attributed to the influence of computer scientists who need to ensure that definitions conform to best practices in their field. Moreover, there are no explicit references to other philosophers in the paper. Nevertheless, there are important aspects of the paper that clearly have a philosophical flavor. For example, the authors note that the distinction between “classes” (or “universals” or “types”) and “instances” (or “tokens”) is often disregarded by those working on ontologies, which is a potential source of error (e.g., any instance of “nucleus” is part of an instance of “cell”, while the class “nucleus” is not part of the class “cell”). In addition, the paper discusses a distinction between “continua” and “processes” that seems to be directly inspired by related philosophical concepts. These philosophical resources are used directly in formulating the specific proposals for the revised definitions.

More work would need to be done to trace the influence of philosophy in this area by also considering the broader context of Smith’s work and other ways in which he contributed to the development of biomedical ontologies over many years (e.g., the discussions documented at <https://wiki.geneontology.org/>), but it is obvious that his philosophical background has left its mark.

In summary, while the paper shows that it is not a trivial task to “measure” the exact amount of philosophy in a paper, it seems nevertheless quite clear that this is an excellent example of PinS.

Introducing...

This month, we would also like to call your attention to the work of philosophers [Ann-Sophie Barwich](#) and [John Bickle](#), mentioned more than once already in this newsletter. The reason for doing so is that both philosophers provide great illustrations of doing philosophy at the intersection of philosophy and science, particularly neuroscience.

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Introducing...

For more details about **Ann-Sophie Barwich**, please visit her faculty website: <https://hpsc.indiana.edu/about/faculty/barwich-ann-sophie.html> or her personal website, which has details about her fascinating latest book *Smellosophy: What the Nose tells the Mind*: <http://www.smellosophy.com/>

For more details about **John Bickle**, who shares dual appointments in philosophy and psychology departments, either visit: <https://www.umc.edu/som/Departments%20and%20Offices/SOM%20Departments/Neurobiology/About-Us/Faculty1/John-Bickle-PhD.html> or John's philosophy website at Mississippi State: <https://www.philosophyandreligion.msstate.edu/directory/jb1681>.

