

Report on the 6th Conference of the European Philosophy of Science Association (EPSA17), 6-9 September 2017



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The 6th biennial Conference of the European Philosophy of Science Association (EPSA17) took place at the Streatham Campus of the University of Exeter (United Kingdom) from September 6th to 9th 2017. The programme committee was headed by the co-chairs Thomas Reydon (University of Hannover) and David Teira (University College London). The local organizing committee consisted of Adam Toon, Sabina Leonelli, John Dupré, Staffan Müller-Wille and Shane Glackin. It was helpfully assisted by Ms. Chee Wong.

A high diversity of topics gave participants the chance to take a closer look at what's going on in the various subfields of philosophy of science in Europe and overseas. Topics ranged from general philosophy of science over philosophy of the special sciences (such as philosophy of physics, philosophy of biology and philosophy of the social sciences) and formal philosophy to values in science. The contributed papers were grouped in four parallel sessions.

EPSA17 featured three plenary lectures. They were held by Margaret Morrison (University of Toronto), Philip Kitcher (Columbia University) and Sonja Amadae (University of Helsinki & MIT). The first plenary lecture was given by Margaret Morrison. It focused on the classical dichotomy between experiments and computer simulations. Morrison argued for the view that the dichotomy between experiments and computer simulations is not of much use for the aim of evaluating the nature and status of simulation data. She backed up this claim by pointing to the fact that in many contexts the trustworthiness of experimental data relies to some extent on data generated via computer simulations. One historical example that supports this claim would be the discovery of the Higgs boson. Morrison then discussed possibilities how computer simulations and simulated data could be incorporated in experimental practice.

The second plenary lecture, which was held by Philip Kitcher, was entitled "So ... Who *is* your audience?" Kitcher reflected on the current state of philosophy of science and its relevance for three possible target groups: The general public, philosophers, and scientists. After leading

his audience through a resume of the milestones in philosophy of science in the 20th century, he claimed to have found a turning point in Arthur Fine, who declared the death of general philosophy of science about thirty years ago. According to Fine, current philosophers of science should best stick to philosophy of the special sciences such as philosophy of physics, philosophy of biology and philosophy of the social sciences instead of focusing on science *in general*. Kitcher challenged this view and expressed his worry that debates concerning values in science have lost a lot of impact.

The last plenary talk was given by Sonja Amadae. The talk was about the relation between group action and the agency of individuals. Amadae starts with Christian List's position according to which groups of human agents have only derivative status of moral agents. But instead of considering corporate actors only comprised of human members, she focused on hybrid actors encompassing human agents as well as artificially intelligent networks, which characterize an advanced civilization such as the United States, and also military command and control structures. She then motivated the view that hybrid groups might be considered as moral agents and explored possible moral implications of such a view.

In addition to the three plenary lectures, about 120 contributed papers as well as 26 posters were presented at EPSA17. EPSA17 featured 14 symposia as well. The conference was highly competitive. The acceptance rate for submissions was about 34% (142 out of 423 submissions). A considerable amount of high-quality contributions had to be rejected due to practical limitations (e.g. limited amount of rooms available at the conference venue). The former president Stephan Hartmann (LMU Munich) emphasized during the opening ceremony that the European Philosophy of Science Association will try to increase the acceptance rate for future conferences.

The contributed papers and symposia were flanked by several satellite events. One of these satellite events was the Women's Caucus which comprised a breakfast and an evening lecture held by Helen Beebe (University of Manchester). Both events were organized by Sara Green (University of Copenhagen) and Sabina Leonelli (University of Exeter). Another one of these events featured John Dupré, Sabina Leonelli, Michela Massimi (ERC grant recipients) and Angela Liberatore (ERC scientific officer/European Commission), who gave useful tips and provided general as well as more specific information about the application for ERC grants during a lunch break event. Furthermore, Phyllis Illari (Univer-

sity College London) and Federica Russo (University of Amsterdam), the editors-in-chief of the European Journal for Philosophy of Science, explained their aims for the journal for the next couple of years, the refereeing process and other issues concerning the journal. They reported that they are satisfied with the development of the journal so far. Currently, it can be considered as almost on a par with leading journals in the field such as the *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* and *Philosophy of Science*. One of the declared goals for the European Journal of Philosophy of Science for the future consists in bridging the remaining gap.

All in all, EPSA17 was a full success and philosophers of science around the globe can look forward to the next conference of the European Philosophy of Science Association. EPSA19 will take place at the University of Geneva in September 2019. The co-chairs of the local organization committee will be Marcel Weber and Christian Wüthrich.

Finally, I would like to thank the organizers of EPSA17 for this wonderful, interesting and stimulating conference. Thanks also to David Teira for providing me with data and information for this short report.

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