



MINNESOTA CENTER *for* PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

✧ Questioning ✧

Nancy Cartwright, a well-known philosopher, recently published a paper in the journal *Philosophy of Science* with a provocative title: “Loose Talk Kills: What’s Worrying about Unity of Method.” Her concern is that stressing similarities among sciences can obscure the differences that actually make them effective ways to learn about the world. The Minnesota Center for Philosophy of Science (MCPS) is committed to scrutinizing these differences in theory and practice across the sciences to understand their contributions. Our regular research groups with faculty, post-docs, and graduate students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds facilitate this type of inquiry (see the reverse page for profiles). Included here are some highlights of recent events and activities. For more details, visit us online (www.mcps.umn.edu).

Alan C. Love
Director



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COLLOQUIUM

On the metaphysics of biological functions

This talk tries to clarify some ontological issues concerning biological functions. The guiding question is to what extent functions can be viewed as being mind-independent relations. I examine some standard arguments according to which functions are interest-dependent and show that these arguments simply fail to take into account the relational nature of functions (according to the most common analyses). However, there are other concerns that arise once we ask what kind of relation functional dependency relations are (e.g., the relation between the heart's capacity to pump blood and the whole organism's fitness). I argue that much like in causal relations, the truth-makers for functional statements are variegated. I examine various contenders that can play the role of a functional dependency relation, including causality, supervenience, metaphysical grounding, mechanistic constitution and mereology. I argue that each one of these (except supervenience) can be used to characterize a functional dependency relation in some set of cases, but that there is no unified account to be given for the truth-makers of functional relations.



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MARCEL WEBER


Department of Philosophy,
University of Geneva

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PSA 2016 Poster Forum

The inaugural poster forum was held at the biennial meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association this past November in Atlanta. **Alan Love** chaired the Poster Forum Committee, which was responsible for soliciting and reviewing contributions, as well as coordinating organizational details for the evening. More than 80 posters were presented on research, teaching, and outreach projects ([abstracts](#)). It was so successful that the governing board of PSA voted to make it a permanent feature of future meetings.



Janella Baxter

Janella is a postdoc with the From Biological Practice to Scientific Metaphysics research grant. Her work explores how new biological technologies like CRISPR-Cas9, DREADDs, and expanded genetic codes challenge common beliefs about the nature and scope of biological inquiry.



Jos Uffink

Jos Uffink is Professor of Philosophy. His research is in Philosophy of Physics, with particular emphasis on Quantum Theory, Statistical mechanics and Thermodynamics.



Emilie Snell-Rood

Emilie studies how organisms adjust their development in changing environments. Through interactions with MCPS, Emilie explores the conceptual boundaries of development, modularity, and novelty.

People



Max Dressow

Max Dressow is a graduate student in the Department of Philosophy advised by Alan Love. His research focuses on questions at the intersection of the history and philosophy of biology, with a special emphasis on evolutionary and ecological science.



Sara Parhizgari

Sara Parhizgari is a graduate student at the philosophy department, co-advised by Roy Cook (MCPS) and Geoffrey Hellman (MCPS). She is a member of the Foundations Interest Group. She is writing her thesis on the neo-logicist foundations of mathematics.



Mark Borrello

Mark Borrello is an historian of science who's work focuses on the history of evolutionary theory. He has collaborated with colleagues in the department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior and the Minnesota Center for Philosophy of Science on issues ranging from multicellularity to altruism.

FALL 2016 - COLLOQUIA	
SEPTEMBER 23 RD	ROBYN BLUHM (MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY) How to think about mechanisms in medicine
OCTOBER 14 TH	GÜNTER WAGNER (YALE UNIVERSITY) The conceptual weight of homology
NOVEMBER 11 TH	MARGARET MORRISON (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO) Scientific modeling and the nature of speculation
DECEMBER 2 ND	MARCEL WEBER (UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA) On the metaphysics of biological functions

Research Groups

MCPS has **six** active research groups that focus on topics such as biology, early modern natural philosophy, foundations of logic and math, social and behavioral science, general philosophy of science, and physics. [Discover what they are reading and discussing...](#)

Phone: 612-625-6635
 Email: mcps@umn.edu
 Web: mcps.umn.edu

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