

First Conference of the European Philosophy of Science Association, 14–17 November, Madrid, Spain

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Published online: 10 July 2008
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The newly founded European Philosophy of Science Association had its first conference in Madrid in November 2007. The conference was hosted by the Complutense University of Madrid and brought together over 300 philosophers of science from Europe and the rest of the world. The conference call for papers was launched in March 2007 and the response to it was beyond the expectations of the Steering Committee of EPSA. Over 400 abstracts were submitted in all kinds of areas in the philosophy of science. The 30-strong Programme Committee, consisting of renowned philosophers of science working in Europe and chaired by Mauro Dorato (Rome) and Miklos Redei (London), faced the difficult task of selecting 175 papers for presentation at the conference. Hard decisions had to be made within a very strong field of contributions and the result of the selection procedure was that the quality of papers presented in EPSA07 was invariably high. The conference was structured around five sections: General Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Natural Sciences, Philosophy of Social Sciences, Formal Methods in the Philosophy of Science, and Social and Historical Studies of the Philosophy of Science. Detailed information about the programme may be found at the conference website: <http://www.ucm.es/info/epsa07>.

A number of papers have also been posted at the Pittsburgh Philosophy of Science Archive section devoted to the conference: <http://philsci-archive.pitt.edu/view/confandvol/EPSA07>.

Here we provide a short review of the most relevant topics discussed. Within the first section (General Philosophy of Science), there were sessions devoted to nearly every topic actively pursued in philosophy of science today, such as causation, realism, confirmation, reductionism, structuralism, experiment and observation, prediction, models and representation, and simulation. The second section (Philosophy of Natural Sciences) concerned mainly philosophical aspects of physics and the biomedical sciences. Most of the

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philosophy of physics papers discussed conceptual issues regarding space-time theories (such as the interpretation of special relativity, the relationship between geometry and matter, and the question of general covariance) or quantum mechanics, including historical issues, reflections about ontology, and debates regarding the implications of Bell's inequalities. There were also discussions of classical physics, statistical mechanics and the role of symmetries in physics. The sessions devoted to the biomedical sciences included among others papers on biological grounding of ethical issues and conceptual problems of evolutionary theory. The third section (Philosophy of Social Sciences) had contributions discussing internal issues to many of the social sciences, particularly economics and social psychology, as well as more general methodological issues such as the scientific status of the social sciences. The fourth section (Formal Methods) was mainly concerned with philosophy of mathematics and logic but also with the application of logical tools in the study of scientific knowledge. Finally in the last section of the conference (Social and Historical Studies of the Philosophy of Science) there were papers on the Vienna Circle, Carnap and Feyerabend, and many case studies ranging from experimental and laboratory techniques to issues of gender and values in science.

There were also three plenary lectures, which aimed to provide an overview of the state of philosophy of science in Europe. The first, titled 'Styles in the Philosophy of Science', was given by Anne Fagot-Largeault from the Collège de France. She characterised three diverse styles currently in practice, which we may roughly refer to as analytical philosophy of science, formal methods, and historical epistemology. She argued for the need for further interaction between these traditions. Ilkka Niiniluoto, from Helsinki University, is one of the greatest and leading members of the formal methods tradition. In his lecture entitled 'Theory-Change, Truthlikeness and Belief-Revision', Niiniluoto gave a detailed account of the evolution of attempts to characterise scientific knowledge formally through a notion of truthlikeness. The third and closing plenary speaker, Michael Friedman from Stanford University, gave a talk entitled 'Einstein, Kant and the A Priori'. The talk was devoted to the role of relative a priori principles in the history of physics, and mainly the theories of space-time, from Kant's time onto the advent of general relativity.

EPSA07 was very successful on all counts: 3 days of rich and deep discussions in a great venue in a lovely European capital. The general feeling was that the founding conference of EPSA has set a very high standard for the years to come both in terms of the organisation and the quality of papers. One of the highlights of the conference was the first meeting of the General Assembly of EPSA. After a long and thorough discussion of several issues that have to do with the future agenda of EPSA, the meeting elected the new governing body of the Association for the next 2 years. Stathis Psillos (University of Athens) was chosen as the President of EPSA and Stephan Hartmann (University of Tilburg) as its vice-President.

The EPSA was born as a response to a general sense that philosophy of science in Europe needed a forum that would bring together professional philosophers of science and students from the whole of the continent and the rest of the world and foster collaboration and exchange of ideas among them. Philosophy of science in Europe has had a great tradition and has made important steps forward over the last few decades. There is need of co-ordination of all this activity, of strengthening the ties amongst members of the community, of bringing to light all the diverse and high-quality work that has been going on, and of taking initiatives that aim to further promote and advance research. It is perhaps too early to say whether EPSA will manage to become what it intends to, but as the Madrid conference has demonstrated, there are already some good signs that EPSA may well become an intellectually influential body and an essential reference for the philosophy of

science community in Europe and the rest of the world. The warm welcome to the new association among European philosophers of science has been particularly encouraging and is well reflected in the highly enthusiastic and optimistic atmosphere at the conference.

The new elected Steering Committee has already decided that the next EPSA conference will be held in Amsterdam between the 21st and the 24th of October 2009, hosted by the VU University of Amsterdam. The Programme Committee is chaired by Stephan Hartmann and Samir Okasha and the Local Organising Committee is chaired by Henk de Regt. EPSA09 will have a more complex structure with contributed papers and symposia. It has also been decided that the EPSA11 will be hosted by the University of Athens. The main goal of the EPSA conferences is precisely to promote the excellent work in the field produced right now in Europe and to make it better known across the world. The Madrid conference is very likely to serve as a springboard to even better and bigger occasions. We encourage all philosophers of science in Europe and across the world to join in with these collective efforts to bring up the standing of the discipline in Europe.