

Michael T. Stuart

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2018-22 Ambizione Fellow, Department of Philosophy
University of Geneva
Funding: Swiss National Science Foundation
- 2016-18 Postdoctoral Fellow, Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science,
London School of Economics and Political Science
Funding: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- 2015-16 Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for Philosophy of Science
University of Pittsburgh

Visiting Appointments

- 2018 Visiting Scholar, Department of History and Philosophy of Science
University of Cambridge
- 2013 Visiting Scholar, Department of Philosophy
University of Bielefeld

EDUCATION

- PhD. Institute for History and Philosophy of Science and Technology
University of Toronto (2015)
Dissertation Title: "Thought Experiments in Science"
Committee: James R. Brown, Yiftach Fehige, Joseph Berkovitz, Catherine Elgin
- M.A. Department of Philosophy, **York University** (2008)
- Honours B.A. in Philosophy (summa cum laude), **York University** (2007)

RESEARCH AREAS

Areas of Specialization: philosophy of science; epistemology

Areas of Competency: philosophy of mind; metaphilosophy; experimental philosophy; logic; metaphysics; history of science; values in science

PUBLICATIONS

Book

- 2018 *[The Routledge Companion to Thought Experiments](#)*. London: Routledge (with Y. Fehige and James R. Brown).

Journal Articles and Book Chapters

- Resubmitted “Epistemology of Scientific Imagination: A Dual Process Model.” (*Synthese*)
- Resubmitted “[P-Curving X-Phi: Does Experimental Philosophy Have Evidential Value?](#)” (with E. Machery and D. Colaço) (*Analysis*)
- Resubmitted “Peeking Inside the Black Box: A New Kind of Scientific Visualization” (with N. Nersessian) (*Minds and Machines*)
- Forthcoming “[The Role of Imagination in Social Scientific Discovery: Why Machine Discoverers Will Need Imagination Algorithms.](#)” In M. Addis et al. (eds.), *Scientific Discovery in the Social Sciences*. Springer Synthese Library.
- Forthcoming “[The Content-Dependence of Imaginative Resistance.](#)” In F. Cova and S. Rénhault (eds.), *Advances in Experimental Philosophy of Aesthetics* (with H. Kim and M. Kneer). London: Bloomsbury.
- 2018 “[How Thought Experiments Increase Understanding.](#)” Pp. 526-44 in M. Stuart et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Thought Experiments*. London: Routledge.
- 2018 “[Thought Experiments: The State of the Art.](#)” Pp. 1-28 in M. Stuart et al. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Thought Experiments*. London: Routledge.
- 2017 “[Imagination: A Sine Qua Non of Science.](#)” *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* Vol. XVII, No. 49: 9-32.
- 2016 “[Norton and the Logic of Thought Experiments.](#)” *Axiomathes* 26: 451–466.
- 2016 “[Taming Theory with Thought Experiments: Understanding and Scientific Progress.](#)” *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 58: 24-33.
- 2015 “[Philosophical Conceptual Analysis as an Experimental Method.](#)” Pp. 267-292 in Gamerschlag et al. (eds.). *Meaning, Frames and Conceptual Representation*. Düsseldorf: Düsseldorf University Press.
- 2014 “[Cognitive Science and Thought Experiments: A Refutation of Paul Thagard’s Skepticism.](#)” *Perspectives on Science* 22: 98-121.
- 2014 “[On the Origins of the Philosophy of Thought Experiments: The Forerun.](#)” *Perspectives on Science* 22: 13-54 (with Y. Fehige).
- 2014 “[Introduction to the Special Issue on Thought Experiments.](#)” *Perspectives on Science* 22: 1-12 (with Y. Fehige).

Journal Special Issues

- 2019 *Thought Experiments in the History of Philosophy of Science*. HOPOS special issue (with Y. Fehige).

2014 [*Thought Experiments*](#), *Perspectives on Science* special issue 22:2 (with Y. Fehige).

Encyclopedia Articles

Forthcoming “Thought Experiments.” Oxford Bibliographies (with J. Brown).

Book Reviews

2013 [*Thought Experiments in Methodological and Historical Contexts*](#) edited by Katerina Ierodiakonou and Sophie Roux.” *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science* 3: 154-57 (with J. Brown).

2012 [*Laboratory of the Mind*](#) by James R. Brown.” *Spontaneous Generations: A Journal for the History and Philosophy of Science* 6: 237-241.

Public Philosophy

Forthcoming Post for [*Auxiliary Hypotheses*](#), a blog by the British Society for the Philosophy of Science.

Forthcoming [*From Paintings to Pig-Human Hybrids: Imagination and Our Interaction with Art and Science*](#).” *The Junkyard of the Mind*, an academic blog on the imagination.

2017 [*Using Imagination to Empathize with Space Robots, Demons, and Other Weird Stuff*](#).” *The Junkyard of the Mind*, an academic blog on the imagination.

2015 [*Better Science Policy in Canada*](#).” *The Bubble Chamber*, a blog on the history and philosophy of science.

Manuscripts

In Preparation “Extending the Material Theory: Thought Experiments and Computer Simulations” (invited submission for *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* special issue on John Norton’s [new book](#))

In Preparation “What Scientists tell us about the Imagination”

In Preparation “The Pragmatics of Scientific Representation: An In Vivo Study of Scientific Modelling”

In Preparation “Good Chemists Don’t Imagine: The Rise of Chemical Thought Experiments”

In Preparation “Empirically Disambiguating Imagination and Supposition” (with M. Kneer)

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AND AWARDS

Selected Fellowships

2018-2022 Swiss National Science Foundation Ambizione Fellowship (526 000 CHF)

2016-2018	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellowship (81 000 CAD)
2015	Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of Pittsburgh (40 000 USD)
2009-2014	University of Toronto Fellowship (112 000 CAD)
2013-2014	Ontario Graduate Scholarship (15 000 CAD)
2012-2013	Ontario Graduate Scholarship (15 000 CAD)
2008	York University Graduate Scholarships (4000 CAD)

Selected Grants

2017	Aristotelian Society Conference Grant (300 GBP)
2017	Mind Association Major Conference Grant (1 500 GBP)
2017	British Society of Aesthetics Small Conference Grant (1 283 GBP)
2013	School of Graduate Studies Research Travel Grant (3 250 CAD)
2013	Visiting scholar at University of Bielefeld, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts and Science Student Award: Germany/Europe Research Fund (2 760 CAD)
2006	Ontario Student Opportunity Grant (3 886 CAD)

Selected Awards

2015	IHPST Travel Award (1 500 CAD)
2014	IHPST Travel Award (1 500 CAD)
2014	University of Toronto Doctoral Completion Award (15 718 CAD)
2013-2014	University of Toronto Faculty of Arts and Science Conference Fund (500 CAD)
2013	IHPST Travel Award (1 300 CAD)
2008	Elizabeth Bentham Prize for highest mark in Theoretical Philosophy Exam, York University (500 CAD)

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Invited Conference Presentations

2019	“What is Epistemology of Imagination?” National Research University Higher School of Economics, Russia, February 15.
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- 2018 “Promoting Objectivity through Models.” Center for Logic, Language and Cognition, University of Turin, Italy, May 25.
- 2018 “A New Way to Defend the Value Free Ideal for Science.” CamPoS, University of Cambridge, UK, May 16.
- 2018 “The Value-free Ideal as an Imaginary Model of Science.” Philosophy of Science Conference. Inter-University Centre, Croatia, April 16-20.
- 2018 “Imagination and Narrative in Science.” Narrative Science Research Group, London School of Economics, UK, March 13.
- 2018 “A Framework for Doing Epistemology of (Scientific) Imagination.” Leeds HPS seminar, UK, March 7.
- 2018 “How Scientists Use Imagination to Learn about the World.” Lecture for the Royal Institute of Philosophy, St. Mary’s University, UK, February 27.
- 2017 “A New Kind of Scientific Visualization: Taking Snapshots from inside the Black Box.” Lebanese American University, Lebanon, November 24.
- 2017 “A Different Use for Scientific Thought Experiments.” Aarhus philosophy colloquium, Denmark, November 8.
- 2017 “Epistemology in Two Minds: Should we Bother with a Dual Systems Account of Imagination?” Imagination and Knowledge Workshop, University of Konstanz, Germany, September 28-29.
- 2017 “Thought Experiments and Computer Simulations are Metaphorical Experiments.” Conference on Simulation and Thought Experiments. University of Geneva, Switzerland, June 8-9.
- 2017 “A Diagram Is a [Computer] Model’: Imagination as a Mediator between Visual and Formal. Imagination in Science Conference, University of Leeds, UK, June 6.
- 2017 “An Account of Imagination for Epistemology of Thought Experiments.” Philosophy of Science Conference. Inter-University Centre, Croatia, April 24-28.
- 2017 “Imagining Our Way to Three Kinds of Understanding.” University of Iceland, Iceland, March 8.
- 2017 “A Dual Systems Account of Scientific Imagination.” Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science, London School of Economics, UK, February 6.
- 2016 “To Formal Models and Back Again.” University of Macerata, Italy, October 18.
- 2015 “The Epistemology of the Imagination.” University of Pittsburgh, USA, September 29.

- 2015 “Subjective Elements of Scientific Representation: Empathizing with Black Holes.” Philosophy of Science Conference. Inter-University Centre, Croatia, April 13-17.
- 2015 “Empathy and the Scientific Method.” University of Waterloo, Canada, March 4.
- 2014 “Evolutionary Theory, Causal Completeness, and Theism – Eliot Sober and ‘Guided’ Mutation.” University of Toronto, Canada, April 22.
- 2014 “Imagination: A Sine Qua Non of Science.” Philosophy of Science Conference. Inter-University Centre, Croatia, April 16.
- 2013 “A New Role for Thought Experiments.” University of Konstanz, Germany, June 14.
- 2013 “Thought Experiments, Kant, and Theory Proliferation.” University of Bielefeld, Germany, June 11.
- 2013 “A Solution to the Problem of Coordination.” University of Bonn, Germany, May 28.
- 2013 “Thought Experiments and the Connection between Theory and Experience.” University of Macerata, Italy, May 8.
- 2012 “Paul Thagard: A Refutation.” Thought Experiments in Science: Four Blind Spots - An International Workshop, University of Toronto, Canada, March 23.

Refereed Conference Presentations

- 2018 “Mental Models, Scientific Imagination and Epistemological Anarchy.” Philosophy of Science Association, USA, November 1-4.
- 2018 “Looking Inside the Black Box: A New Kind of Scientific Visualization.” Society for Philosophy of Science in Practice (SPSP), University of Ghent, Belgium, June 29 – July 2.
- 2018 “Are there Thought Experiments in Chemistry, and If Not, Why Not?” UK Integrated HPS workshop, UK, June 20-21.
- 2018 “Understanding and Knowledge: Cases of No Overlap.” Understanding Understanding, University of Tübingen, Germany, May 4.
- 2018 “The Content-Dependence of Imaginative Resistance.” Philosophy of Imagination Conference at Ruhr University Bochum, Germany, March 15-16.
- 2017 “Desiderata for Epistemic Representations: Results from an Ethnographic Study of a Computational Systems Biology Lab.” UK Integrated HPS workshop, UK, June 22.

- 2017 "A Framework for Epistemology of the Imagination." Nordic Network for Philosophy of Science, Denmark, April 20-21.
- 2016 "Empirical Philosophy of Imagination." Evidence and Imagination Conference at the University of Graz, Austria, November 3-5.
- 2016 "Imagination in the Lab." Quadrennial Fellows Conference of the Center for Philosophy of Science, Lund University, Sweden, July 11-13.
- 2016 "Scientific Understanding and the Role of Imagination." Summer Seminar on Understanding, part of the Capstone Conference for the Varieties of the Understanding Project, Fordham University, USA, June 20-25.
- 2016 "Scientists' Attitudes toward Imagination." Society for the Philosophy of Science in Practice (SPSP), Rowan University, USA, June 17-19.
- 2016 "Some Empirical Constraints on the Epistemology of Imagination." Mind and Brain Conference, New College of the Humanities, UK, March 25-26.
- 2016 "Empirically Disambiguating Imagination from Supposition." Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, USA, March 10-12.
- 2015 "Imagination in Social Scientific Discovery." Conference on Scientific Discovery in the Social Sciences, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK, Jan 30-31.
- 2012 "The Cognitive Science of Thought Experiments: Paul Thagard's Skepticism." The Canadian Society for the History and Philosophy of Science. University of Waterloo, Canada, May 26-29.
- 2011 "Can Bayesian Network Modeling Solve Problems in the Philosophy of Science?" 14th Congress of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science. Nancy University, France, July 19-26.
- 2011 "What Can Philosophy Learn from the Clock-in-the-Box Thought Experiment?" The Canadian Society for the History and Philosophy of Science, University of New Brunswick, Canada, May 29-31.
- 2011 "The Notion of a 'Very Generalized Logic' in Thought Experiments." Philosophy of Science Colloquium, University of Johannesburg, South Africa, January 18.
- 2010 "Thought Experiments: Arguing with John Norton." Australasian Association of Philosophy Conference, University of Waikato, New Zealand, December 5 –9.
- 2010 "The Role of Henri Poincaré and Pierre Duhem in the Establishment of Conventionalism in Modern Philosophy of Science." History of the Philosophy of Science Conference at the Central European University, Hungary, June 24-27.

- 2010 “The Role of Henri Poincaré and Pierre Duhem in the Establishment of Conventionalism in Modern Philosophy of Science.” The Canadian Society for the History and Philosophy of Science, Concordia University, Canada, May 28-31.
- 2009 “Philosophical Conceptual Analysis: The Move from Use to Meaning.” Second Conference on Concept Types and Frames in Language, Cognition, and Science, Heinrich Heine University, Germany, August 24-26.
- 2009 “Charity as a Bridge from Use to Meaning.” University of Western Interdisciplinary Student Symposium on Language Research. University of Western Ontario, Canada, March 6-7.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

London School of Economics and Political Science

The Cognitive Science of Populism. “Widening Participation” summer program (2018)

University of Toronto, Co-Instructor

Natural Science and Social Issues, University of Toronto (2014-2015)

University of Toronto, Sole Instructor

Scientific Revolutions I (2013-2014)

University of Toronto, Teaching Assistant

Natural Science and Social Issues (2013-2014)

Reason and Truth (2013-2014)

History of Evolutionary Biology (2013-2014)

Symbolic Logic I (2013-2014)

Modern Symbolic Logic (2012-2013)

Scientific Revolutions II (2012-2013)

Introduction to Philosophy (2012-2013)

Modern Symbolic Logic (2012-2013)

Scientific Revolutions II (2011-2012)

Introductory Philosophy of Science (2011-2012)

Introduction to Philosophy (2011-2012)

Modern Symbolic Logic (2011-2012)

Scientific Revolutions I (2010-2011)

York University, Teaching Assistant

Introduction to Philosophy (2008-2009)

PERSONAL TUTORING

High School

Biology, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics (2005-2008)

Undergraduate

Philosophy, Logic (2011 - present)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Referee

Philosophical Quarterly

Mind

Philosophy of Science

The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science

European Journal for Philosophy of Science

Synthese

Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science

Minds and Machines

Poetics

Science and Culture

HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science

Springer Monographs

Dialectica

TOPOI

Axiomathes

Canadian Philosophical Association

The Independent Scholarship Fund (ISF5 grants)

Philosophical Papers

Panels, Conferences, and Events Organized

Co-organizer, "Bridging the gap: Scientific Imagination meets Aesthetic Imagination,"
London School of Economics and Political Science (October 2017)

Co-organizer, "(Re)Engineering Biology: The Emerging Engineering Paradigm in
Biomedical Engineering, Systems Biology, and Synthetic Biology," University of
Pittsburgh, USA (April 2016)

Co-organizer, "Better Science Policy in Canada," University of Toronto (January 2015)

Co-organizer, Philosophy of Science Speaker Series, University of Toronto (January – March
2013)

Co-organizer, "Thought Experiments in Science: Four Blind Spots - An International
Workshop," University of Toronto, Canada (March 2012)

Co-organizer, Consortium for the History and Philosophy of Biology, Université de
Montréal (May 2010)

Co-organizer, "150 Years After Origin: Biological, Historical and Philosophical
Perspectives," University of Toronto (November 2009)

Conference Committee, Second Annual Graduate Philosophy Conference, York University
(June 2009)

Public Outreach

Philosophy in the Park. Regent's Park, London (August 2018)

University of Toronto Museum of Scientific Instruments exhibit (November 2008)

OTHER

Laboratory Work

Lab consultant: Susan Carey's lab (Harvard, Department of Psychology) on thought experiments (2015-2016)

Lab member: Edouard Machery's lab (University of Pittsburgh) on experimental philosophy (2015-2016)

IRB Approved Experimental Projects

PRO16010298 "Imagination in the Laboratory" (Exempt Approved)

PRO15120307 "Disambiguating Imagination from Supposition" (Exempt Approved)

Technical Proficiency

R
HTML
QDA miner
MaxQDA
Qualtrics

Languages

English (native)
Spanish (fluent)
French (conversational, reading and writing)
German (reading)
Punjabi (basic oral proficiency)

ACADEMIC REFERENCES

Roman Frigg (r.p.frigg@lse.ac.uk)

Professor and Director of the Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science
Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street, London, UK, WC2A 2AE

Nancy J. Nersessian (nancy.nersessian@gmail.com)

Professor
Georgia Tech Regents' Professor of Cognitive Science (Emerita)
Harvard Research Associate
Department of Psychology, Harvard University
William James Hall 33 Kirkland St.
Cambridge, MA, USA, 02138

Steven French (s.r.d.french@leeds.ac.uk)
Professor of Philosophy of Science
School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science
University of Leeds, Leeds, UK, LS2 9JT

James Robert Brown (jrbrown@chass.utoronto.ca)
Professor
Department of Philosophy
University of Toronto
170 St. George Street, Rm. 514
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5R 2M8

Yiftach Fehige (yiftach.fehige@utoronto.ca)
Associate Professor
Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology
University of Toronto
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Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S 1K7

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Thought Experiments in Science

Thought experiments are a means of imaginative reasoning with an employment record longer than two and a half thousand years. Used by Aristotle, Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Maxwell, and Einstein, they form part of the education of every scientist alive today. While most scientific instruments aim to increase the precision of our interaction with empirical data, thought experiments leave the empirical realm behind. They spin buckets in an empty universe, summon demons to play with particles, and challenge us to throw spears at the edge of space. If tools of the imagination like thought experiments are important in science, what role are they playing? Are they for exploring possibilities, gaining knowledge, communicating ideas, or something else?

Using the methods of history, philosophy and cognitive science, I argue that while thought experiments do not usually discover or justify new facts or hence provide new knowledge, they do often increase the empirical content of theoretical structures (laws, models, concepts, etc.) for an agent. Empirical content is increased when the agent connects a theoretical structure to existing concepts, experiences, values and abilities. Through these connections, thought experiments increase scientific understanding. Knowledge can be produced when understanding is applied, but this is a separate achievement. I argue that the understanding produced by thought experiments is necessary for scientific progress because without grasping the empirical content of theoretical structures, those structures cannot be used, and it is necessary for science that they be used. This doesn't mean thought experiments are necessary: only the understanding they produce is. But sometimes that understanding is best arrived at by the use of thought experiments (and imagination more generally).

Chapter 1 ("The Paradox of Thought Experiments") introduces the philosophical literature on thought experiments. Chapters 2 ("Thought Experiments and Arguments"), 3 ("Thought Experiments and Logic"), and 4 ("Thought Experiments and Cognitive Science") reject two important accounts of thought experiments: one that portrays thought experiments as mere logical arguments, and another that uses cognitive scientific evidence to argue that thought experiments are misleading and dangerous. Chapter 5 ("Five Thought Experiments Reconsidered") examines five important historical cases and reveals that their central aim is to increase understanding instead of knowledge. This goes against more than three decades of thinking about thought experiments that portrays them as tools to increase knowledge. Chapter 6 ("Scientific Imagination and the Problem of Coordination") considers results in cognitive and social science to explain the kind of understanding produced, how it is produced, and why it is important. Chapter 7 ("Imagination and Understanding") grounds the ability to increase understanding (in the sense of increasing empirical content) in the use of human imagination. Imagination can be understood in two senses. In one, it is the ability to leave reality behind. Imagination in this sense cannot be investigated a priori or a posteriori without invoking it, making every investigation of it circular. The other sense of imagination concerns specific uses of the ability to imagine. These applications can be investigated non-circularly, and we can discern their epistemic value in each case. I conclude by exploring some implications of this distinction for the relationships among imagination, understanding, explanation, knowledge, representation and objectivity.