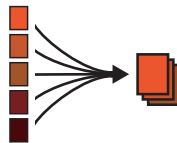


Explorations in Complexity Thinking:
*Pre-Proceedings of the 3rd International Workshop on
Complexity and Philosophy*

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Edited by
Kurt A. Richardson & Paul Cilliers



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Editorial

This pre-proceedings contains the all the papers submitted for the two-day *Complexity and Philosophy* workshop held 22nd-23rd February 2007, in Stellenbosch, South Africa. The event was co-hosted by *Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study* (STIAS), *ISCE Events*, and the *Cathedra for the Study of Complexity* (Instituto de Filosofia de La Habana). As with previous meetings, the aim of this workshop was to explore the philosophical implications of the science and thinking of complex systems.

This biennial workshop was designed to complement the *Biennial International Seminar on the Philosophical, Epistemological and Methodological Implications of Complexity Theory* that is held in Havana, Cuba, January of even years (the most recent being 2006). The larger international seminar provides a forum to discuss complexity and philosophy-related issues in general, whereas the aim of this smaller workshop event is to explore specific issues at a greater length with more time made available for discussion rather than presentation.

The location for the workshop changes each time it is held to enable as wide a range of voices to be heard as possible. In 2002 the event was held in Norwood (just outside Boston) in the US, and in 2004 it was in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This time the event was held in Stellenbosch, South Africa, with the generous assistance of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study.

Thematic concerns

Potential attendees were encouraged to submit papers on the following topics:

- Status, limits and legitimacy of knowledge regarding complex systems;
- Relationship between linear and nonlinear philosophies;
- Complexity-based ethics;
- Frameworks for the analysis of complex systems;
- Complex limits to theories of everything;
- Complexity and the social sciences;
- Complexity and globalization;

- Complexity and human subjectivity.

As you will see in the contents of this pre-proceedings a number of these themes are explored from a variety of perspectives.

Each prospective participant was asked to provide an extended abstract detailing their proposed paper. These were then considered by the event organizers and the most relevant invited to submit full papers. This review process was rather more generous than the usual journal submission process in that our aim was not to choose only finished arguments, but to allow a bit more freedom by loosening the usual scholarly restrictions a little. The hope is that the papers chosen (NB there was a rejection rate of about 30%) represent a broad, although well-considered, basis from which to begin such an exploratory event.

Why a Pre-Proceedings?

There are several reasons why we chose to prepare a pre-proceedings as opposed to the more familiar conference proceedings. Probably the most important reason is to provide the workshop attendees with a complete set of papers at the beginning of the event so that they might familiarize themselves with the content they were to be exposed to over the two-day event. As mentioned above, the focus of the event was critical discussion rather than the more familiar cramming-in-of-as-many-papers-as-possible, leaving little time for debate and dialogue. Having an upfront appreciation of the topics to be explored facilitates such a process by minimizing (but by no means removing) the time spent on developing a common ground before meaningful discussions can commence.

A second reason for providing an ISBN-referenced pre-proceedings in particular is related to institutional requirements. It seems that, although 'talking to each other' is at the heart of philosophical enquiry, fewer and fewer funding bodies are prepared to fund opportunities allowing academics to 'merely' talk to each other. The privileging of unrealistically simple metrics such as 'number of papers published' as proxies for academic achievements are starting to have a negative impact on research quality in every area of enquiry. But it is not only the bureaucrats that we need to watch out for. Ingrained attitudes about what is seen as legitimate forms of enquiry amongst researchers themselves

are limiting genuine forms of intellectual exploration. One example of this is the low regard of poster presentations with many career academics. ISCE Events has organized around fifteen international events over that past 7-8 years. Often, but not always, the highlight of these events for many in attendance are the poster sessions. Such sessions are very fluid and provide 'explorers' with the space to venture into topical areas and utilize modes of communication that are difficult in larger groups. As organizers, we hear all too frequently that producing and presenting posters is an exercise for students only. This is a real shame.

Of course there are many institutional values, rituals, etc. that develop from both the top-down and the bottom-up, and they lead to both desirable and undesirable effects. Allowing philosophers to genuinely philosophize (and not just to bounce around arbitrarily constructed intellectual cages) does not mean removing these disablers/enablers. It simply means that we should resist the reification of such 'boundaries'. When an enabler disables desirable activity then we must be sufficiently confident in the value of our efforts to somehow, and maybe only temporarily, disable the enabler (and vice versa).

We hope this pre-proceedings, however, is seen as much more than just a way to meet trivial funding requirements, but it is important to recognize that without it some attendees would not have been able to attend and benefit from the freedom of just 'talking to each other'.

Another reason (and quite possibly not the only other) is that there were many more philosophers who wanted to attend this event but for one reason or another could not. A number of them were keen to see the papers produced for this meeting. It is nice to think that the boundaries of this event are not located just around a couple of buildings and hotels in Stellenbosch.

It is likely that a number of the papers contained herein will be revised and published elsewhere (either in an edited book or a special issue of a journal). If so, it would be interesting to see how the papers evolve. If events such as this have any value it is in the evolution and diffusion of ideas. A very simple (sorry!) measure for this could be the differences seen between these 'pre-proceedings' versions of the papers and their subsequent revised and republished versions.

For those of you who contributed to this volume, thank you very much indeed for making this the most interesting collection of articles that has so far come out of this biennial event. For those of you, who were unable to attend, but are reading this volume, we hope to see you at future events.

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