

# Interdisciplinarity and Collaboration in Digital Philosophy

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# Outline

1. Digital philosophy and digital humanities
2. Philosophy of/as interdisciplinarity
3. Philosophy of Science in Practice
4. Morals and Directions?

**The take-home:** How do we want to connect digital philosophy to philosophy? To digital humanities? To a philosophy of digital humanities?

# Digital Philosophy and Digital Humanities

# A Series of Unsubstantiated Personal Observations

Lots of the problems in digital philosophy **do not need state-of-the-art methodology**. Many digital philosophers are applying **old tools** to new problems and questions.

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“Cool, how can we use machine learning to do that?”

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“Is that actually the humanities?”

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“Oh, there’s people in that department who do corpus analysis?”

# Philosophy of/as Interdisciplinarity

Synthese (2013) 190:1857–1864  
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## **Philosophy *of* and *as* interdisciplinarity**

**Michael H. G. Hoffmann · Jan C. Schmidt ·  
Nancy J. Nersessian**

On the one hand, [interdisciplinarity] can be a new subject area just as science is the subject of “philosophy of science” and biology the subject of a “philosophy of biology,” and so on. On the other hand, interdisciplinarity can be perceived as a more fundamental challenge to philosophy itself; that is, as a challenge to the self-understanding and self-conceptualization of philosophy as an academic discipline....

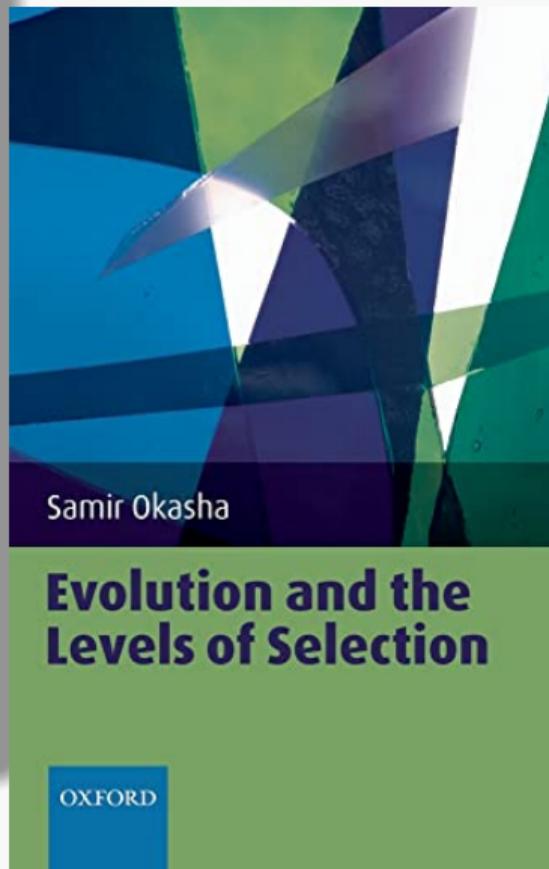
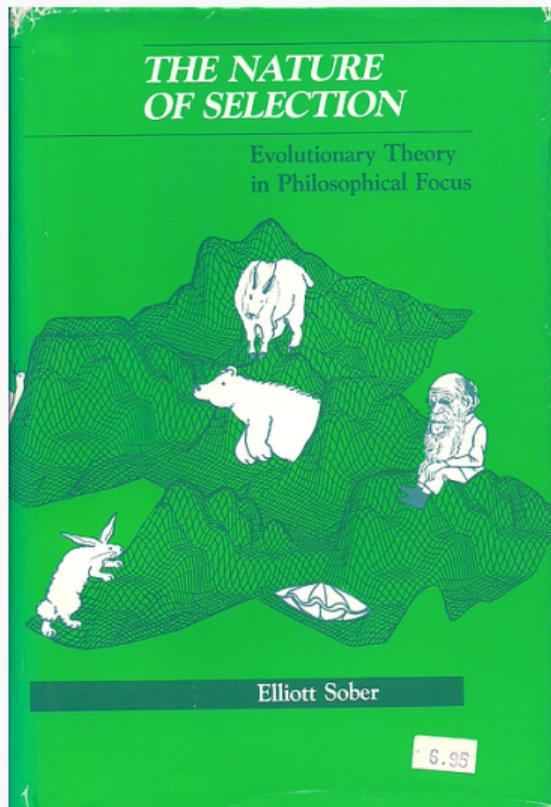
Philosophy “as” interdisciplinarity starts from questioning the academic status of philosophy as a discipline with its well-known specializations, methodological approaches, and interests and attempts to envision new forms of philosophical practice, institutionalization, and products whose common denominator is embedding philosophy in inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration. (p. 1858)

The central issue of methodology is how (and by applying which rules) do we obtain knowledge? With respect to interdisciplinarity, some of the central questions are: Do interdisciplinary methods and actions exist? Is there a specific context of discovery within interdisciplinary projects? (Schmidt 2008, p. 60)

From Klein (2010):

- **Auxiliary ID:** Borrowing of methods without a significant change in practice
- **Supplementary ID:** Enduring dependence between fields, more significant exchanges
- **Structural ID:** When borrowed methods become the basis for an original discipline (e.g., econometrics)

# Philosophy of Science in Practice



What has fostered successful interdisciplinary collaboration in philosophy of biology?

A few unfulfilling answers:

There really is **no stable discipline of theoretical biology.**

Crucial early figures in philosophy of biology  
(David Hull, Marjorie Grene, Robert Brandon)  
either **hold degrees in biology** or **spend time at  
biology institutions** (especially Lewontin's MCZ at  
Harvard).

## **Philosophy in Science: Can Philosophers of Science Permeate through Science and Produce Scientific Knowledge?**

Thomas Pradeu, Maël Lemoine, Mahdi Khelifaoui and Yves Gingras

### **Abstract**

Most philosophers of science do philosophy ‘on’ science. By contrast, others do philosophy ‘in’ science (‘PinS’), that is, they use philosophical tools to address scientific problems and to provide scientifically useful proposals. Here, we consider the evidence in favour of a trend of this nature. We proceed in two stages. First, we identify relevant authors and articles empirically with

PinS papers address a scientific problem, that is, a problem that scientists of a given field themselves address with their usual methods.

The second key element of PinS is the use of philosophical tools to address the scientific problem in an original manner.

The third key element of PinS is making a scientific proposal to solve at least a part of the scientific problem identified in element 1, and necessarily via the philosophical tools used in element 2.

- Investigating and/or proposing a scientific definition or distinction
- Rooting a scientific problem in its broadest philosophical or historical context
- Questioning the consistency of a set of claims made in a scientific field
- Questioning methods on the grounds of broader views on methodological concepts
- Questioning a scientific claim
- Proposing a combination of scientific domains (Pradeu et al.)

# Morals and Directions?

What interaction **do we want** with the digital humanities, or with the rest of traditional philosophy?

Are we looking to build **a sub-specialty** of “digital philosophy?” (Have we already done it?) What would/should that even look like?

How can we **build relationships** with other areas of the humanities, and make our work more visible across our university communities?

Can we better package our work to offer more to our colleagues in **places like DH “hubs”** on campus?

What does a **philosophy of digital humanities** look like? Can we use our work in epistemology, evidence, narrative, testimony, etc. to make a more serious **positive contribution**?

# Worries.

- How does **recruitment** work?
- Where does **publication** happen? Can we ensure that everyone gets appropriate **credit** for their work?
- What are the future **career paths?** (Data science? Libraries? Alt-ac?)
- How do we keep interdisciplinary work from being a **career-killer?**

# Questions?

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