

Diversity and Unity: The Metaphysical Challenge of Scientific Pluralism

HHU-Sorbonne University Workshop, 11th-12th June,
Sorbonne University, France

<https://sites.google.com/view/hhu-sorbonneconference/home>

This workshop aims to extend the scientific pluralist stance into the domain of scientific metaphysics. Although the metaphysics of science is a vast field, pluralism offers both a way to pose new questions and a means of addressing long-standing debates. Recent debates in metaphysics suggest that concerns of this kind are far from out of place.

In the contemporary landscape of the general philosophy of science, scientific pluralism has emerged as a prominent and wide-ranging research program (Ludwig & Ruphy 2021; Ruphy 2016). According to the pluralist agenda, there is no universal methodology (Feyerabend 1975); reductionism fails to capture the complexity of scientific theories and models (Fodor 1975; Mitchell 2009); and no single, fundamental ontology (Dupré 1995) underlies scientific practice. Instead, the diversity of scientific methods, aims, and practices (Chang 2012) has become a central focus of analysis, leading philosophers of science toward what Wylie (2015) aptly describes as a “pluralism of pluralisms.”

Recent debates in metaphysics suggest that concerns of this kind are far from out of place. Markus Schrenk (2023), for instance, advances a pluralist interpretation of David Lewis’s Best System Analysis of laws, proposing a proliferation of best systems across the special sciences, each retaining the autonomy to articulate its own vocabulary. Michela Massimi (2022) similarly highlights the pluralism inherent in the classification of natural kinds, emphasizing their historically and culturally contingent, open-ended character. In the debate about the metaphysical nature of probability, Mauricio Suárez (Suárez 2020) proposes a tripartite pluralist ontology comprising propensities, probabilities, and frequencies.

In a related vein, Hüttemann (2003, 2021) argues that part–whole scientific explanations are non-hegemonic and grounded in relations of mutual dependence, thereby giving rise to a form of “pragmatic pluralism.” Similarly, James Ladyman (2024; Ladyman & Ross 2007) defends the scale relativity of ontology, according to which entities, processes, and structures exist at different scales of measurement, potentially supporting a fruitful form of ontic pluralism.

List of participants:

- Adrien Avramoglou (Paris)
- Andreas Hüttemann (Cologne)
- Daian Bica (Düsseldorf)
- James Ladyman (Bristol)
- Markus Schrenk (Düsseldorf)
- Mathilde Escudero (Paris)
- Mauricio Suárez (Madrid/Cambridge)
- Michela Massimi (Edinburgh)
- Sélène Domino (Paris)
- Sébastien Rivat (Munich)
- Stéphanie Ruphy (Paris)
- Thomas Blanchard (Bordeaux)

The workshop will be held in person from 11/06/2026 to 12/06/2026, at Sorbonne University. Current undergraduate, graduate students (MA and PhD), and established scholars are welcome to participate. The application deadline is 01/06/2026 (via our website). There is no participation fee, but participants must cover their travel and accommodation expenses. We especially encourage applications from members of underrepresented groups.

The conference is organised by [Adrian Avramoglou](#) (Sorbonne University) and [Daian Bica](#) (HHU Düsseldorf) and is hosted with the support of Sorbonne University. It is financially supported by Sorbonne University and FIR, and it also receives additional support from the German Society for Analytic Philosophy.