

# BARNABY R. HUTCHINS

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## Current position

**BOF Postdoctoral Fellow**, Ghent University, Belgium (2017–2018/2019–2021)

## Areas of specialisation

Early modern philosophy, history and philosophy of science, metaphysics

## Areas of competence

Philosophy of biology, philosophy of scientific practices, continental philosophy

## Previous academic appointments

- **Postdoctoral Researcher**, Alpen-Adria University, Klagenfurt, Austria. 2016–2017/2018–2019. (Project: ‘Spinoza on the Concept of the Human Life Form’, PI: Ursula Renz.)
- **Research Fellow**, Department of Philosophy, Bar-Ilan University, Israel. 2015–2016. (Project: ‘Leibniz and the Life Sciences in Early Modern Philosophy’, PI: Ohad Nachtomy.)
- **Visiting Scholar**, Center for Philosophy of Biology, Duke University, USA. Spring 2014.
- **BOF Doctoral Scholar**, Ghent University, Belgium. 2011–2015.
- **Visiting Lecturer**, Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Middlesex University, London, UK. 2008–9.
- **Visiting Lecturer**, University of Westminster, London, UK. 2007–9.

## Education

**PhD**, Department of Philosophy and Moral Sciences, Ghent University, Belgium (BOF scholarship),  
2016

Supervisor: Eric Schliesser

Examination committee: Dennis Des Chene (WashU, St Louis), Alison Simmons (Harvard), Sophie Roux (École normale supérieure, Paris), Charles Wolfe (Ghent), Maarten Van Dyck (Ghent)

Dissertation title: *Obscurity and confusion: Nonreductionism in Descartes's biology and philosophy*

ABSTRACT: I argue that Descartes is a nonreductionist in certain areas of his philosophy and natural philosophy (biology and the mind–body union in particular). Descartes is usually taken to be a strict reductionist, and he frequently describes his work in reductionist terms. This might seem like simple inconsistency, or a mismatch between Descartes’s ambitions and his achievements. I argue that it is more than this: nonreductionism is compatible with his wider commitments; moreover, allowing for irreducibles increases the explanatory power of his system.

**MA Continental Philosophy**, University of Warwick, UK, 2006

**BA Philosophy**, University of Warwick, UK, 2004

## Papers

### Articles

- ‘Descartes, corpuscles and reductionism: Mechanism and systems in Descartes’s physiology’, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 2015.
- ‘Does Descartes have a principle of life? Hierarchy and interdependence in Descartes’s physiology’, *Perspectives on Science*, 2016.
- ‘Descartes and the dissolution of life’, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 2016.

### Solicited book chapters

- ‘The embodied Descartes: Contemporary readings of *L’Homme*’, in *Descartes’ Treatise on Man and its Reception*, eds Delphine Antoine-Mahut and Stephen Gaukroger, 2016 (New York: Springer) (with Charles T. Wolfe and Christoffer Basse Eriksen)
- ‘Descartes on Psychology and Cognitive Science’, in *The Cartesian Mind*, eds Jorge Secada and Cecilia Wee, forthcoming (New York: Routledge)
- “‘Everyone knows what life is’”: Life as an irreducible in and outside of Descartes’s metaphysics and biology’, in *Life and Death in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Susan James, forthcoming (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- ‘Knowledge for Humans and the Epistemological Role of the Notion of God’s Intellect’, in *The Blackwell Companion to Spinoza*, ed. Yitzhak Melamed, forthcoming (Oxford: Blackwell) (with Ursula Renz)

### Encyclopaedia articles

- ‘Life, Mechanization of’, in *The Springer Encyclopedia of Early Modern Philosophy and the Sciences*, eds Dana Jalobeanu and Charles T. Wolfe, forthcoming (New York: Springer)

## Translations

- Maurice Halbwachs, *The Social Frameworks of Memory* [*Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*], forthcoming (Oxford: Oxford University Press) (with Charles T. Wolfe)

## Book reviews

- Richard F. Hassing, *Cartesian Psychophysics and the Whole Nature of Man: On Descartes’s Passions of the Soul* (London: Lexington Books), in *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 6/2, 2017
- Eric Watkins (ed.), *The Divine Order, the Human Order, and the Order of Nature: Historical Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press), in *Isis* 106/3, 2015

## Selected talks

1. October 2019, *London Spinoza Circle*, Birkbeck College, University of London: ‘Spinoza on Human Subjectivity and the Notion of God’s Intellect’ (with Ursula Renz)
2. August 2019, *The Modal-Explanatory Nexus: A Dialogue between the Contemporary and the Early Modern Era*, Humboldt University Berlin: ‘Full explainability and standpoint relativity: Spinoza’s anti-essentialist rationalism’ (with Ursula Renz)
3. June 2019, *Spinoza on essence, politics and being human*, Alpen-Adria University, Klagenfurt: ‘Reversing the grounding relations: Some half-thought-out remarks on action, lifeform, and essence in Spinoza’
4. April 2019, *Mechanism, Life and Mind in the ‘Modern’ Era*, Roma Tre, Rome: ‘Mechanism as a non-exhaustive ontology: Descartes and irreducibles’
5. January 2019, *Mind and Body Across Time and Discipline*, IEA Paris: ‘Descartes, Spinoza, and Embodied Metaphysics’
6. June 2018, *Teleological Explanation between Leibniz and Kant*, The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Israel: ‘Descartes and the very possibility of natural teleology’
7. May 2018, *The Fifth Finnish-Hungarian Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy*, CEU, Hungary: ‘Spinoza and the attributes: The standpoint interpretation’
8. April 2018, *The Concept of Life: From Descartes to Contemporary Biophilosophy*, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia: ‘Mechanising life: Descartes, reductionism, eliminativism, and beyond’
9. March 2018, Antwerp University, Belgium: ‘Spinoza, attributes, and standpoint metaphysics’

10. December 2017, *Research methods in philosophy and history of science*, Ghent, Belgium: 'Anti-objectivity: Metametaphysical pluralism and the early modern canon'
11. June 2017, *Spinoza and Metaphysics*, Klagenfurt, Austria: 'The attributes: Perspectives and standpoints' (invited)
12. April 2016, *British Society for the History of Philosophy/European Society for Early Modern Philosophy*, London, UK: 'Descartes's "vitalism"'
13. March 2016, Turin University, Italy: 'Descartes on life: Eliminativism and vitalism' (invited)
14. February 2016, *Israeli Philosophical Association Conference*, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel: 'Descartes on life: Eliminativism and vitalism'
15. July 2015, *International Society for the History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Biology (ISHPSSB) Annual Conference*, Montreal, Canada: 'Activities vs. ontological parsimony in Descartes's biological mechanisms'
16. November 2014, *The Philosophy of Science Association (PSA) Biennial Meeting*, Chicago: 'Reduction, integration and mechanism in Descartes's biology'
17. October 2014, *Machines of life, development and assimilation: Vitalist themes*, Ghent University, Belgium: "'Everyone knows what life is": Reductionism and indefinability in Descartes's biology' (invited)
18. July 2014, *History of Philosophy of Science (HOPOS) Biennial Meeting*, Ghent University, Belgium: 'Reduction, integration and mechanism in Descartes's biology'
19. July 2013, *ISHPSSB*, Montpellier, France: 'Reductionism, eliminativism, and the concept of life in Descartes' biology'
20. June 2013, *Canadian Society for the History and Philosophy of Science Annual Meeting*, Victoria, BC, Canada: 'The fire without light and interdependence in Descartes' physiology'
21. February 2013, *New York City Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy*, Fordham University, New York, USA: 'The (missing) foundation of life in Descartes' physiology'
22. July 2012, *3 Societies Meeting* (History of Science Society, Canadian Society for the History and Philosophy of Science, and British Society for the History of Science), University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA: 'Descartes' principle of life (and how doesn't have one)'
23. June 2012, *HOPOS*, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, Canada: 'Descartes' principle of life (and how doesn't have one)' & 'Descartes and the dissolution of life'

## Teaching

### Full teaching responsibility

*Early Modern Philosophy, Bar-Ilan University, Israel (mixed undergraduate and postgraduate)*

- Covering Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant.

*History of Ideas (penultimate-year undergraduate), University of Westminster, UK*

- Covering pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Rousseau, Voltaire, Hegel, and Marx.

*Twentieth-Century Thought (final-year undergraduate), University of Westminster, UK*

- Covering Russell, Wittgenstein, Ayer, Heidegger, Sartre, Beauvoir, Levinas, Foucault, Irigaray, and Derrida.

*Existentialism (final-year undergraduate), Middlesex University, UK*

- Covering Sartre, Beauvoir, and Fanon.

### Guest teaching

*History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences (postgraduate), Ghent University, February 2018*

- Descartes and teleology

*Philosophy for Biochemists (undergraduate), Ghent University, February 2015*

- Philosophy of mechanisms

*Capita Selecta From the Scientific Revolution to the Enlightenment (postgraduate), Ghent University, December 2014*

- Function in biology

*Capita Selecta From the Scientific Revolution to the Enlightenment (postgraduate), Ghent University, October 2013*

- Mechanism and the embodied Descartes

## Academic awards

- BOF (Special Research Fund) postdoctoral fellowship, Ghent University, Belgium, 2016
- Postdoctoral Fellowship, Jacques Loeb Centre for the History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel, 2016–2017 (declined)
- BOF PhD bursary, Ghent University, Belgium, 2011–2015

## Service

### Refereeing and conferences

- Referee for *Synthese*, *Early Science and Medicine*, *Biological Theory*, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *HOPOS*, *Springer History*, *Philosophy and Theory of the Life Sciences* series, and *Society and Politics*
- Referee for various workshops
- Local organising committee, website, and graphic design for *HOPOS 2014*, Ghent University
- Organisation of various workshops

### Admin

- Editorial board of *Centaurus* (the journal of the European Society for the History of Science)
- Organisational committee of the *Sarton Centre for History of Science*, Ghent University (2017–2018, 2019–)
- Website, administration, and communications for the *Sarton Centre for History of Science*, Ghent University (2011–2015, 2017–2018, 2019–)
- Administration and website for *Mephisco Joint Programme in Philosophy of Science* collaborative funding bid (UGent, University of Groningen, University of Bucharest, University of Kent, Paris 7, Complutense University of Madrid, LMU Munich) for *Erasmus Mundus* (2011)

## Languages

English (native), French (very good reading knowledge), German (GCSE), Latin (fair reading knowledge), Ancient Greek (basic reading knowledge)

## Nationality

British

## Contact

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