

<http://somatosphere.net/?p=14531>

Special Issue: Georges Canguilhem

2018-06-29 10:13:41

By Anna Zogas

The June 2018 issue of [Transversal: International Journal for the Historiography of Science](#) is an issue about Georges Canguilhem's life, work and intellectual legacies. The journal is **open access**, and all of the articles below can be accessed [here](#). Enjoy!

[Dossier Georges Canguilhem: Introduction](#) (*open access*)

Fábio Ferreira de Almeida

[excerpt] Almost everywhere one hears people saying that our times are ailing. Perhaps, however, the deafening cries of our actuality are not calling so much for answers, cures or medicines, but much more for ears capable of perceiving their whispers. That is the kind of attention that the author of *The normal and the pathological* and of *The knowledge of life*, he who was “at the same time near to Nietzsche and far from him” (Foucault 2008, 1594) learned from the war and from medicine: it is a lesson that still deserves to be studied in the philosophical sense of that word.

[The Birth of the Clinic and the Sources of Archaeological History](#) (*open access*)

François Delaporte

The year 2013 marked the 50th anniversary of the publication of a classic of the historiography of sciences, Michel Foucault's *The birth of the clinic: An archaeology of medical gaze*. In different parts of the world, events were organized to reflect on this important work. The article argues that if one cannot draw a direct line linking the work of the leading historians-philosophers of the twentieth-century sciences in France to Michel Foucault's archaeological study of the clinic, we must recognize that the author of *The Birth of the Clinic* has taken up from these historians-philosophers the methodological and conceptual tools that made it possible to study the history of science and knowledge in a new way.

[The Relationship between History and Epistemology in Georges Canguilhem and Gaston Bachelard](#) (*open access*)

Enrico Castelli Gattinara

The article shows the strategic analogies, but also the differences between Bachelard and Canguilhem on the use of the history of science for epistemology. It emphasizes the importance of the ideology for Canguilhem, and the conceptual essence he recognizes in the history of science, which is read in its internal specific differences and in its complex articulations with life and reality. No concept in fact comes from nothing. The link between history and epistemology is not however of subjection, but of mutual influence. Canguilhem radicalizes the thought of Bachelard, and recognizes the historicity of every aspect of scientific knowledge, even of its less valued features and above all of errors. All aspects of Science are historical. The object of the history of science is not the object of the sciences, because it is always a discourse. This is why the history of science is inevitably linked to other forms of history. This opens up a pluralist conception of History and of Time, thinking of the sciences in their real body and no longer ideal or legal. Thus Canguilhem opens the way to the researches of Foucault and Serres.

[Canguilhem's Concepts](#) (*open access*)

David M. Peña-Guzmán

In the 1950s, George Canguilhem became known in France as a vocal exponent of the philosophy of the concept, an approach to epistemology that treated science as the highest expression of human rationality and scientific concepts as the necessary preconditions for the manifestation of scientific truth. Philosophers of the concept, Canguilhem included, viewed concepts as the key to the study of science; and science, in turn, as the key to a substantive theory of reason. This article explains what concepts are for Canguilhem, how they are extracted from the history of the sciences, and why they continue to matter for contemporary debates in the History and Philosophy of Science (HPS).

[Canguilhem and the Logic of Life](#) (*open access*)

Arantza Etxeberria, Charles T. Wolfe

In this paper we examine aspects of Canguilhem's philosophy of biology, concerning the knowledge of life and its consequences on science and vitalism. His concept of life stems from the idea of a living individual, endowed with creative subjectivity and norms, a Kantian view which "disconcerts logic". In contrast, two different approaches ground naturalistic perspectives to explore the logic of life (Jacob) and the logic of the living individual (Maturana and Varela) in the 1970s. Although Canguilhem is closer to the second, there are divergences; for example, unlike them, he does not dismiss vitalism, often referring to it in his work and even at times describing himself as a vitalist. The reason may lie in their different views of science.

[When the Content to Be Taught Is a Norm: Canguilhem-Inspired Contributions to Educational Practices](#) (*open access*)

Xavier Roth

It has become customary since Foucault to present Canguilhem as a man whose work is voluntarily restricted to a particular domain of the history of science. Yet the current edition of his Complete Works reveals that Canguilhem has never considered himself a true historian of science. If he traced “the history of the formation, deformation and rectification of scientific concepts”, it is above all to nurture his profession of professor of philosophy with “unknown material”. On the assumption that Canguilhem subordinates the history of science to teaching, this article will try to make a further step and show that its inter-regional approach of knowledge can serve as a paradigm in educational sciences, when the knowledge to be transmitted is a-disciplinary and has a strong normative dimension.

[Canguilhem and his Workgroup](#) (*open access*)

José Ternes

This paper develops a brief analysis of the book *Du développement à l'évolution au XIXe siècle*, by Georges Canguilhem and his research workgroup during the years 1958-1960. What is at stake is the history of two core concepts of biology in the 19th century whose unfolding continues to persist at the beginning of the 21st century. Concerning the positive history of modern science, influential works and authors in this history, particularly Spencer and Darwin, are addressed here, in addition to Auguste Comte and Lamarck, when taking into consideration their *legendary* aspect. Each of these concepts has a birthplace of its own. It is also possible to identify a remarkable historical *démarche* but also moments of rapprochement and even of inversion of their meanings; a history of errors, as well as a fundamental history of their histories and of their many *retrospective illusions*.

[Charting Links between Life, Science, and Technique: Georges Canguilhem and Lucien Febvre](#) (*open access*)

Carlos Estellita-Lins, Flavio Coelho Edler

The article explores theoretical convergences between the work of Georges Canguilhem and Lucien Febvre on the theme of science and technique. In comparing the scholarship of both authors from the 1920s through 1940s, we endeavor to show that their critique of mechanistic determinism was rooted in the concept of the genres of life (not only human) and its creative interaction with the environment.

[Science and History of Science: between Comte and Canguilhem](#) (*open access*)

Márcia H. M. Ferraz, Ana M. Alfonso-Goldfarb, Silvia Waisse

In the present article, we discuss the specificity of the object of the history of science as an autonomous and interdisciplinary field of studies by nature and origin, placed at the interface of history, epistemology and science, and focus on some key historiographical views. Within this context, Georges Canguilhem stands out for contributions such as calling the attention to the relevance of epistemology in science history research and the discontinuity-continuity antithesis, among many others. An accurate understanding of Canguilhem's ideas demands an unbiased review of Auguste Comte's work, particularly his views on science in general, the various sciences in particular and the methods to present them, to wit, the historical and the dogmatic. We finish with a short description of our theoretical-methodological work and its implications for studies in the history of science.

[“Genetic Load”: How the Architects of the Modern Synthesis Became Trapped in a Scientific Ideology](#) (*open access*)

Alexandra Soulier

The term “genetic load” first emerged in a paper written in 1950 by the geneticist H. Muller. It is a mathematical model based on biological, social, political and ethical arguments describing the dramatic accumulation of disadvantageous mutations in human populations that will occur in modern societies if eugenic measures are not taken. The model describes how the combined actions of medical and social progress will supposedly impede natural selection and make genes of inferior quality likely to spread across populations – a process which in fine loads their progress. Genetic load is based on optimal fitness and emerges from a “typological view” of evolution. This model of evolution had previously, however, been invalidated by Robert Wright and Theodosius Dobzhansky who, as early as 1946, showed that polymorphism was the rule in natural populations. The blooming and persistence of the concept of genetic load, after its theoretical basis had already expired, are a historical puzzle. This persistence reveals the intricacy of science and policy-making in eugenic matters. The Canguilhemian concept of ‘scientific ideology’ (1988) is used along with the concept of ‘immutable mobile’ (Latour 1986) and compared with the concept of ‘co-production’ (Jasanoff 1998), to provide complementary perspectives on this complex phenomenon.

[Looking through the Corners: Althusserism and the Reception of Canguilhem in Brazil](#) (*open access*)

Tiago Santos Almeida

This paper presents the role of Althusser and two of his students in the 1960s, Pierre Macherey and Dominique Lecourt, in the diffusion of the

work of Georges Canguilhem in Brazil. We begin by a brief review of Macherey's and Lecourt's analysis on the work of Canguilhem taken from two texts that served as postface and preface to the Brazilian and the Argentine translations of *Le normal et le pathologique*. Next, we present the works of

Brazilian authors Sérgio Arouca, Cecilia Donnangelo and Ricardo Bruno Mendes-Gonçalves to show some aspects of the reception of Canguilhem's ideas and concepts in the field of Collective Health.

[Canguilhem and the Machine Metaphor in Life Sciences: History of Science and Philosophy of Biology at the Service of Sciences](#) (*open access*)

Océane Fiant

The metaphor is used in the construction process of scientific knowledge. There are, however, metaphors that do not suit the objects they should represent, which thus impacts the accuracy of the knowledge which derives from these objects. It is the case of the machine metaphor, when resorted to in the study of living organisms. Canguilhem has tackled problems it created in twentieth-century life sciences head on. In his criticism, he links the analysis of Descartes' work to his own philosophical thesis on "biological normativity". By doing so, he so sheds a light on the pitfalls, both historical and biological, over which the machine metaphor stumbles. He thereby orders sciences to periodically make sure of the relevance of their metaphors and explanatory models to their objects.

AMA citation

Zogas A. Special Issue: Georges Canguilhem. *Somatosphere*. 2018. Available at: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=14531>. Accessed June 29, 2018.

APA citation

Zogas, Anna. (2018). *Special Issue: Georges Canguilhem*. Retrieved June 29, 2018, from Somatosphere Web site: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=14531>

Chicago citation

Zogas, Anna. 2018. Special Issue: Georges Canguilhem. *Somatosphere*. <http://somatosphere.net/?p=14531> (accessed June 29, 2018).

Harvard citation

Zogas, A 2018, *Special Issue: Georges Canguilhem*, *Somatosphere*. Retrieved June 29, 2018, from <<http://somatosphere.net/?p=14531>>

MLA citation

Zogas, Anna. "Special Issue: Georges Canguilhem." 29 Jun. 2018.

Somatosphere. Accessed 29 Jun.
2018.<<http://somatosphere.net/?p=14531>>