

Workshop 1 (Elodie Giroux): Health and disease concepts: is there still any relevance of their philosophical analysis?

Is there a future for philosophical analysis of health and disease concepts? If there is, what sort of analysis and to what purpose? In what extent this analysis has structured the field of philosophy of medicine, and will continue to? Conceptual analysis has long been prevalent in Anglo-American philosophy of medicine, alongside the debate on the value-ladenness of health concepts. The relevance of this method for these concepts and more generally the utility of such an analysis has been questioned since several years. But only more recently alternative approaches seem to appear which take other points of departure: they rather seek for an articulation of the analysis of health concepts with issues of disease ontology, disease classification and disease causation. The issue of the relation of the normal and the pathological has also rather become that of the specificity and autonomy of the science of pathology and of the central role of physiology in medicine. Will the importance taken by molecular medicine modify the historical and central role given to functional analysis? We also observe a renewal of the importance given to an articulation of historical, sociological and epistemological approaches to these concepts. Furthermore it has also become necessary to specify the objective of the philosophical analysis of health concepts: is it to serve as a foundation for clinical practice through the determination of what is to be treated and what is not? Is it to modify and specify these concepts or more modestly to clarify their meanings and logical relations? Is it appropriate to seek a definition common to both science and medical practice with regards to a greater coherence, or, on the contrary, to maintain and reinforce the distinction between different concepts? These questions are intertwined with the more general one concerning the role of philosophy in medicine and of the analysis of health concepts in structuring the field.