



Professor Samir Okasha
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Professor of Philosophy of Science

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Summary

I have broad philosophical interests, though most of my research falls into two main areas: (i) philosophy of biology / evolutionary theory; and (ii) epistemology / philosophy of science.

Within philosophy of biology, I am especially interested in foundational and conceptual questions surrounding evolutionary theory. For many years, my research focused on the 'levels of selection' question in evolutionary biology, and the related issue of individual versus group conflicts of interest. This culminated in my book *Evolution and the Levels of Selection* (OUP 2006), which was awarded the 2009 Lakatos Prize for an outstanding contribution to philosophy of science. I continue to work on these topics.

From 2008 to 2011 I was Principal Investigator on a major AHRC-funded research project, 'Evolution, Cooperation and Rationality', in collaboration with Professor Ken Binmore, which led to a series of publications and an edited volume *Evolution and Rationality* (CUP 2012).

From 2011 to 2016 I was Principal Investigator on a research project entitled '[Darwinism and the Theory of Rational Choice](#)', funded by a European Research Council Advanced Investigator Award. The aim of the project was to study connections, formal and conceptual, between Darwinian evolutionary theory and the theory of rationality. This culminated in a book, *Agents and Goals in Evolution*, published by OUP in 2018.

Within epistemology / philosophy of science, I am interested in topics including probability and induction, evidence and confirmation, causality, theory choice, scepticism and knowledge, and epistemological holism. I continue to work on these topics when time permits.

Biography

I received my doctorate in 1998 from the University of Oxford, where I worked with Bill Newton-Smith. I then held a post-doctoral position at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM), before moving to the London School of Economics as a Jacobsen Fellow. I was a Lecturer at the University of York from 2000-2002, and in 2003 moved to the University of Bristol. I was promoted to a personal chair in 2006.

I am a Fellow of the British Academy, and President of the European Philosophy of Science Association.

Teaching

I teach a range of course across the philosophy curriculum, undergraduate and postgraduate.

In the academic year 2018-19, I will be teaching:

Philosophy of Biology (3rd year), and Philosophy of Biology (MA).

My office hours in the academic year 2018-9 are Wed 10-11 and Thur 10-11.

Keywords

- Philosophy of science
- philosophy of biology
- evolutionary theory
- rational choice theory
- philosophy of social science
- epistemology and metaphysics

Memberships

Organisations

[Department of Philosophy](#)

Academics by department

- [Philosophy](#)

Selected publications

- Okasha, S, 2006, '[Evolution and the Levels of Selection](#)'. Clarendon Press
- Okasha, S, 2007, '[Rational Choice, Risk Aversion, and Evolution](#)'. *Journal of Philosophy*, vol CIV (5)., pp. 217 - 235
- Okasha, S, 2012, '[Social justice, genomic justice, and the veil of ignorance: Harsanyi meets Mendel](#)'. *Economics and Philosophy*, vol 28., pp. 43-71
- Okasha, S, 2011, '[Theory choice and social choice: Kuhn versus Arrow](#)'. *Mind*, vol 120., pp. 83 - 115
- Okasha, S, 2011, '[Optimal Choice in the Face of Risk: Decision Theory meets Evolution](#)'. *Philosophy of Science*, vol 78., pp. 83 - 104
- Okasha, S, 2009, '[Individuals, Groups, Fitness and Utility: Levels of Selection meets Social Choice Theory](#)'. *Biology and Philosophy*, vol 24., pp. 561 - 584
- Okasha, S, 2011, '[Experiment, observation, and the confirmation of laws](#)'. *Analysis*, vol 71., pp. 222 - 232
- Okasha, S, Weymark, J & Bossert, W, 2014, '[Inclusive Fitness Maximization: An Axiomatic Approach](#)'. *Journal of Theoretical Biology*, vol 350., pp. 24-31
- Birch, J & Okasha, S, 2015, '[Kin Selection and its Critics](#)'. *Bioscience*, vol 65., pp. 22-32
- Okasha, S, 2013, '[The Evolution of Bayesian Updating](#)'. *Philosophy of Science*, vol 80.

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