

# The Definitions of Humanity

## Philosophy, Cognition, Paleoanthropology

---

**Bordeaux-Les Eyzies, October 3-4-5, 2019**

### □ Schedule

## Thursday, October 3

*Université Bordeaux Montaigne, Archéopole (Odéon amphitheater)  
19, esplanade des Antilles / 33607 Pessac*

**9h – Welcoming of the speakers and welcome speeches**

**9h30-11h – Bipedalism**

François Marchal (ADES, Université d'Aix-Marseille, CNRS)

Brigitte Senut (CR2P, MNHN / CNRS)

Mathilde Lequin (SPH, Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

*Pause*

**11h15-12h45 - Brain and cognition**

Cécilia Heyes (Oxford University)

Cédric Brun (SPH, Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

Alan Mann (Princeton University)

*Lunch*

**14h30-16h - Symbolic thought**

Francesco d'Errico (PACEA, CNRS / Université de Bordeaux / MC; Centre for Early Sapiens Behaviour (SapienCE), University of Bergen)

Philippe Grosos (Université de Poitiers)

Olivier Morin (Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, Jena)

*Pause*

**16h15-17h45 - Language**

Jean-Louis Dessalles (Université de Paris-Saclay, Telecom ParisTech)

Jacques Pelegrin (MAE, Université de Nanterre / CNRS)

Etienne Bimbenet (SPH, Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

## **Friday, October 4**

*Université Bordeaux Montaigne, Archéopole (Odéon amphitheater)  
19, esplanade des Antilles / 33607 Pessac*

### **9h30-11h15 - Altruism and morality**

Tim Lewens (Cambridge University)

Laurence Kaufmann (Institut des sciences sociales, Université de Lausanne)

Bruno Maureille (PACEA, CNRS / Université de Bordeaux / MC)

*Pause*

### **11h15-12h45 - Time**

Claudine Cohen (EHESS/EPHE)

Christelle Lahaye (IRAMAT-CRP2A, Université Bordeaux Montaigne)

*Lunch*

### **14h30-16h – Tool**

Kim Sterelny (Australian National University)

François Bon (Traces, université Toulouse Jean Jaurès)

Anne Delagnes (PACEA, CNRS / Université de Bordeaux / MC)

*Pause*

### **16h15-17h45 - Culture and ways of life**

Daniel Andler (Université Paris-Sorbonne)

Fabrice Clément (Centre de sciences cognitives, Université de Neuchâtel)

Wulf Schiefenhövel (Max Planck Institute for Ornithology)

## **Saturday, October 5 (Les Eyzies)**

*Musée National de Préhistoire*

### **18h30 – Table-ronde “Les Définitions de l’humain”**

*Animée par Bruno Maureille (PACEA, Université de Bordeaux/ CNRS), Etienne Bimbenet (Université Bordeaux Montaigne) et Thomas Pradeu (CNRS & Université de Bordeaux, ImmunoConcEpT - UMR5164)*

Jacques Pelegrin (CNRS)

Claudine Cohen (EHESS/EPHE)

Daniel Andler (Université Paris-Sorbonne)

Tim Lewens (Cambridge University)

Philippe Grosos (Université de Poitiers)

## □Scientific project

The project of defining what a human being is has seemingly become obsolete by now. Is this not to remain attached to a “human exception” that evolutionary biology has made obsolete? Philosophy has long sought to determine the anthropological difference that distinguishes humanity from animality. But now there is a growing demand for a naturalization of philosophy itself and for thinking human beings as animals. Philosophy has to deal with a naturalistic turn requested not only by the evolutionary synthesis, but also by cognitive neuroscience and by the abundant discoveries of animal ethology and primatology. Consequently, the entire picture of humanity needs a wholesale rethink that takes our animal forerunners into account and puts essentialism aside. The recent rediscovery, over the past fifteen years, of the movement of German philosophical anthropology (from Scheler or Gehlen to Blumenberg) is no coincidence: it reflects the effort to take the discoveries from the life sciences into consideration, in order to rethink the defining criteria of the human on a new basis.

This meeting intends to appraise such a naturalistic turn by taking paleoanthropology as a principal area of study. This science, which aims at explaining human evolution from fossil remains, has taught us that features that used to be considered as being uniquely human (bipedalism, toolmaking, pedagogy...) were actually not exclusive to our species. The definition of the human lineage is now called into question by a certain anatomical diversity: for example, bipedalism is not a unique event that would unequivocally mark the emergence of a humankind encompassing the first members of our lineage. As well as toolmaking or increase in brain volume, bipedalism also undermines the definition of the genus *Homo*, which is made uncertain. And yet, these different characteristics are still being used as working markers in paleoanthropology. At different taxonomic levels (tribe *Hominini*, genus *Homo*, species *Homo sapiens*), they are employed as criteria in order to interpret the fossil record. Consequently, a pressing question is: What are the criteria that may be confidently considered as being diagnostic of the human, in the field of paleontological and archaeological research? Are the definitions of the human involved in paleoanthropology merely working hypotheses, or are they able to shed light on our humanity? Are those definitions really different from the features that were identified as uniquely human in philosophy? Are they free from any essentialism?

These issues will be raised in our meeting that intends to onset a dialogue between philosophers and paleoanthropologists and, more broadly, to bridge the gap between the life sciences and the human sciences. The question of the human is an open question now: it is therefore all the more necessary to discuss it at the crossroads of positive knowledge and philosophical thinking.

## □ Organisers

Etienne Bimbenet (Université Bordeaux Montaigne, SPH)

Mathilde Lequin (Université Bordeaux Montaigne, SPH)

Bruno Maureille (CNRS, Université de Bordeaux, Ministère de la Culture, PACEA – UMR5199)

Thomas Pradeu (CNRS & Université de Bordeaux, ImmunoConcEpT - UMR5164)

Claudine Cohen (EHESS-EPHE)

## □ Co-organisers

Labex LaScArBx (Valérie Fromentin)

Musée national de Préhistoire; Ministère de la Culture (Jean-Jacques Cleyet-Merle)

University of Bordeaux Department “Changes” (Eric Macé)

University of Bordeaux Department Biological sciences and Medicine (Alain Pierre Gadeau)

University of Bordeaux Department Bordeaux Neurocampus (Nathalie Sans)

Collège Santé (Jean-Luc Pellegrin)

University of Bordeaux, Department « Archeological sciences » (Bruno Maureille)

Archaeological Sciences Federation (FR3389 FSAB; Bruno Maureille)

## □ Scientific and Financial supports

Bordeaux Montaigne University (Hélène Velasco-Graciet)

SPH (Valéry Laurand)

IRAMAT-CRP2A (Philippe Lanos ; Rémy Chapoulie)

Ausonius (Olivier Deviler)

Bordeaux University (Manuel Tunon de Lara)

ImmunoConcept (UMR5164, Julie Déchanet-Merville)

Institut Philinbiomed (Thomas Pradeu)

CNRS INEE (Stéphanie Thiébault)

Société des Amis du Musée national de la Préhistoire et de la Recherche  
Archéologique (Florence Landais, Président)