Microbiota, Symbiosis and Individuality Summer School Meeting Report

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Video Byte

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Abstract

Microbiota that live as symbionts within and on other organisms are a huge focus area for research. With over 90,000 studies in the past decade alone, the findings have implications stretching beyond individual species, and influencing biological and philosophical concepts with consequences for biological and medical issues. At this intersection of biology, biomedical sciences and philosophy, an interdisciplinary summer school was held in July 2019. The “Microbiota, Symbiosis and Individuality” meeting focused on four facets of microbiological research: Holobionts, Individuality, Causation, and human health. The meeting examined the construction of biological identity as a dynamic dialogue with the organism’s microbiota. Because life relies on symbiosis, a holobiont – the host plus its microbiota – might be considered a biological individual. Focusing on the causal relationships between a host and its microbes will help to inform human health and medicine. This meeting is the beginning of an ongoing conversation that crosses boundaries between disciplines, encouraging the flow of ideas between philosophy and biological sciences to show how both areas of investigation can benefit from each other.