**Functional Hypotheses and the Engaged Point of View**

**A02 Humanities**

Each session will involve a 40 minute talk, 5 minute break, and 30 minute discussion. Talks and discussion will be streamed via MS Teams.

Registration from 10am on 14th, in Humanities Building Foyer.

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| **14th September** |  |  |  |
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| **Session time** | **Speaker** | **Title** | **Chair** |
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| 11-12.15 | Matthieu Queloz | “Do Functional Hypotheses Undermine the Engaged Point of View?” | Neil Sinclair |
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| 12.15 - 13.30 | Lunch (own arrangements) |  |  |
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| 13.30 - 14.45 | Lilith Mace | "The Point of Doubt" | Jim Chamberlain |
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| 14.45 - 15 | Break |  |  |
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| 15 - 16.15 | Angie O'Sullivan | "From Function to Fiction" | Joe Cunningham |
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| 16.15-16.30 | Break |  |  |
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| 16.30 - 17.45 | Michael Hannon | "Reflective Stability & the Function of Moral Practices" | Alice Monypenny |
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| **15th September** |  |  |  |
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| 9 - 10.15 | Catarina Dutilh Novaes (online) | "Should we be genealogically anxious?" | Michael Hannon |
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| 10.15-10.30 | Break |  |  |
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| 10.30 - 11.45 | Alex Prescott-Couch | "Genealogy and Functional Pluralism" | Ben Curtis |

**Conference Theme**

A recent popular trend proposes that we can make progress in disciplines such as ethics, epistemology, aesthetics, and modality by turning attention away from an investigation of their apparent objects (goodness, knowledge, etc.), towards the question of what purposes might be served by thinking in terms of their characteristic concepts. As part of this trend, we find hypotheses concerning the functional role the concepts of **goodness**, **knowledge**, **necessity**, and **beauty**, among others. But how should we understand the notion of functional role contained within such hypotheses? And how should those who actively deploy those concepts react to such hypotheses? These and related questions have recently begun to be explored in general ways that bridge boundaries between philosophical subdisciplines (for example, in M Queloz’ 2021 book *The Practical Origin of Ideas*). This conference aims to further this inter-sub-disciplinary approach.

The aims of the conference, then, are threefold. First, to explore diverse ways of understanding the notion of "function" used in functional hypotheses (concerning a concept, set of concepts, or conceptual/linguistic practice). Second, to explore the impacts that distinct types of functional hypotheses can and should have on the perspectives of the engaged users of those concepts. Third, to pursue these first two aims in an inter-sub-disciplinary way that builds bridges between philosophy of science, philosophical methodology, (meta)epistemology, metaethics, modality, philosophy of language, aesthetics, and other philosophical subdisciplines

**Paper Abstracts**

**Michael Hannon “Reflective Stability & the Function of Moral Practices”**

We humans live by high-minded ideals such as justice, knowledge, and truth. These are familiar philosophical notions, but we rarely think of these ideas in terms of their point or practical function. In this talk, I argue that we should think of our conceptual practices as tools serving practical needs. I then explore whether these practices are 'reflectively stable.' A common view (endorsed by Hume, Bernard Williams, Matthieu Queloz, and others) is that our commitments to justice, truthfulness, and other ideals are 'stable' under philosophical reflection. Hume and Williams claim that we can remain committed to justice and truthfulness while recognising the instrumental function of these practices. In contrast, I ask whether our commitment to justice and truthfulness is threatened once we come to understand these practices in instrumental terms.

**Alex Prescott-Couch “Genealogy and Functional Pluralism"**

There has been a flurry of recent interest in so-called “pragmatic genealogies” (Craig 1990, Williams 2003, Queloz 2021), idealized state-of-nature models that serve to help us understand the function served by a concept, institution, or practice. Such genealogies are often contrasted what I will call “deconstructive genealogies” in the Nietzschean-Foucauldian tradition, which emphasize historical specificity and functional plurality. Should we think of these two different species of genealogy as complementary or in tension? After discussing some ways in which they might be thought complementary, I argue that there are significant tensions between these two types of genealogy.