

CONCEPTUAL ENGINEERING READING GROUP

Conceptual Engineering (or Conceptual Ethics) is a rapidly growing method in analytic philosophy that is of foundational importance and relevant for all sub-disciplines of philosophy. We briefly touched on the idea of conceptual engineering in the form of Haslanger's 'amelioration' in Chris's class. Because of this, it will be valuable to dig deeper into these ideas.

Of conceptual engineering, Steffen Koch writes:

'Conceptual Engineering' is both the name of a philosophical method and the name of an increasingly popular field of metaphilosophical research... The key idea of conceptual engineering is to take a normative approach to traditional philosophical questions: Instead of asking what our current concepts *do* mean, conceptual engineers ask what these concepts *should* mean.

The label 'conceptual engineering' was coined by Richard Creath in 1990. Like Creath, many contemporary authors in the field link their work to Rudolf Carnap's method of explication (Carnap 1950), which is a kind of conceptual engineering designed for the purposes of science. Another important starting point for current discussions about conceptual engineering is Sally Haslanger's 'ameliorative analysis'.

Meetings: We will do Schon-style seminars. In other words, please bring at least one thoughtful question or discussion topic with you, based on the reading, to each meeting.

Here is the tentative schedule:

Day 1: "Conceptual Engineering: The Master Argument" - Herman Cappelen

Day 2: "Philosophy as the Study of Defective Concepts" - Kevin Scharp

Day 3: "A Pragmatic Method for Normative Conceptual Work" - Amie L. Thomasson

Day 4: "Conceptual Ethics and the Methodology of Normative Inquiry" - McPherson, Plunkett

(Papers are from *Burgess, Alexis, Herman Cappelen, and David Plunkett (eds), Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics (Oxford, 2020)*)

Suggested optional readings:

- "A Guided Tour of Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics" - Cappelen & Plunkett
- "What is Conceptual Engineering and What Should It Be?" - David Chalmers
- "Going On, Not in the Same Way" - Sally Haslanger