

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
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Séminaire II : Téléologie (2PH2188)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Pilier principal M A - philosophie	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6
Pilier secondaire M A - philosophie	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Printemps

Equipe enseignante

Kathrin Koslicki.

Contenu

In the domain of artifacts as well as biology, it is quite common to ascribe functions to traits or objects. For example, a screwdriver is for tightening or loosening screws; a wing (of an airplane or bird) is for flying; and a heart is for pumping blood. Such function ascriptions furthermore give rise to normative appraisals, e.g., the phenomenon of malfunction. But what is the best way to understand such function ascriptions? And what kind of value is at play when a screwdriver or a heart is designated as good or bad? Given Aristotle's worldview, function ascriptions and the relevant kind of normativity can be anchored to a teleological perspective according to which the cosmos as a whole tends towards the good. But how can this teleological vocabulary still be maintained in the advent of Darwinian evolutionary theory and other scientific advancements? In this seminar, we will explore these and other central questions as they pertain to the domains of artifacts and biology as well as many other areas.

Forme de l'évaluation

Internal methods of assessment:

- (1) A paper (60% of internal evaluation grade)
- (2) In-class presentation (20% of internal evaluation grade)
- (3) Attendance, participation, discussion forum (20% of internal evaluation grade)

(1) The paper should be approximately 12 pages long (~3000 words). Guidelines and a detailed grading rubric with criteria of evaluation will be made available. Students will receive assistance in finding a suitable topic as well as feedback on a draft before handing in the final version of their papers. (2) Students will be asked to give an in-class presentation of approximately 15-20 minutes at some point during the semester. The in-class presentation should ideally help students find and develop a paper topic, although it is not required that the topic of the presentation will also become the topic of the paper. (3) Attendance and participation, in class and on the discussion forum, are expected and required. Students will receive high marks for participation, if they are successful at demonstrating their engagement with the material discussed in this seminar, e.g., by contributing to class discussions and the discussion forum regularly and in a constructive way. Work that is not submitted by the required deadline, without good cause, will not be accepted and will automatically result in a failing grade for that assessment.

External methods of assessment: MA students in Philosophy are required to take a 30-minute oral examination on the material covered in this seminar. The internal and external evaluation grade each count for 50% of the final grade for this seminar.

Due Dates: Papers are due on Tuesday, May 30, 2023, and will be returned to students with comments and a grade. Students who have handed in a first attempt of their paper and received a grade that is not satisfactory (below 4), will have the opportunity to hand in a revised version of their paper as a second attempt by June 30, 2023.

Assessment criteria: level of preparedness; clarity of oral and written expression; specification of technical terms used; structure (e.g., plan, logical organization of ideas); ability to highlight key points; persuasiveness of arguments; originality and creativity of positions defended; speed of reflection during oral presentations.

Language of instruction: The language of instruction for this seminar will be French and English.

Documentation

Allen, Colin and Jacob Neal (2020): "Teleological Notions in Biology", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/teleology-biology/>.

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Ariew, André, Cummins, Robert, and Perlmann, Mark (eds.) (2002): *Functions: New Essays in the Philosophy of Psychology and Biology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

Cummins, Robert (1975): "Functional Analysis", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 72, pp. 741-764.

Griffiths, Paul E. (1993): "Functional Analysis and Proper Functions", *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 44, pp. 409-422.

Houkes, Wybo, and Vermaas, Pieter E. (2010): *Technical Functions: On the Use and Design of Artefacts*, Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

Millikan, Ruth (1984): *Language, Thought and Other Biological Categories*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA

Millikan, Ruth (1993): *White Queen Psychology and Other Essays for Alice*, MIT Press (Bradford), Cambridge, MA

Preston, Beth (2018): "Artifact", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, URL=<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/artifact/>.

Wakefield, Jerome C. (2005): "Biological Function and Dysfunction", in *Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, edited by David M. Buss, Wiley, New York, NY, pp. 878-902.

Wouters, Arno (2005): "The Function Debate in Philosophy", *Acta Biotheoretica*, Vol. 53, pp. 123-151.

Pré-requis

None.

Forme de l'enseignement

Seminar, 2 hours per week, Tuesdays, 14:00-16:00.

Objectifs d'apprentissage

Au terme de la formation l'étudiant-e doit être capable de :

- Identify the principal positions associated with prominent figures in philosophical debates concerning teleology.
- Describe the main influences and connections between philosophical debates concerning teleology and other areas of philosophy as well as connected disciplines, such as cognitive science, psychology, linguistics, etc.
- Define key concepts and principles used in philosophical debates concerning teleology.
- Examine how philosophers apply key concepts and principles to central problems in philosophical debates concerning teleology.
- Recognise how prominent figures in philosophical debates concerning teleology are influenced by, and have influenced, their predecessors or successors.

Compétences transférables

- Work with other students to contribute to group projects.
- Discuss central texts in the philosophical debate concerning teleology.
- Formulate well-reasoned arguments orally and in writing for or against positions that are advanced in philosophical debates concerning teleology.