**Conceptual engineering and pragmatism – historical and theoretical perspectives**

Céline Henne, Department of Philosophy, University of Toronto

[celine.henne.c@gmail.com](mailto:celine.henne.c@gmail.com)

Yvonne Huetter-Almerigi, Department of the Arts, University of Bologna

[yvonne.huetter@gmx.net](mailto:yvonne.huetter@gmx.net)

*This is an original manuscript of the introduction to the special issue “Conceptual Engineering and Pragmatism”, published by Taylor & Francis in Inquiry on 26 Dec 2022, available online:* [*http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2158927*](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2158927)

**Abstract**: Conceptual engineering takes a distinctively normative and reconstructive approach to our conceptual repertoire. This approach is congenial to the ideas defended by philosophers belonging to the multifaceted tradition of American and Cambridge Pragmatism. This special issue is devoted to the investigation and development of these connections. Our introduction maps some of the historical and theoretical entanglements between the two fields and gives a short overview of the contributions to the special issue.

**Keywords**: conceptual engineering; pragmatism; metaphilosophy; representationalism; action.

Conceptual engineering projects[[1]](#footnote-1) purport to differ from other philosophical projects in the following way: instead of asking ‘What does ‘X’ (really)mean?’ (conceptual analysis) or ‘What is (the nature of) X?’ (empirical or metaphysical inquiry), conceptual engineers shift the focus of discussion towards questions such as, ‘What is our concept of X for? How should we define or improve our concept of X?’. Instead of taking for granted the concepts we *do* have, conceptual engineers think about the concepts we *should* have, thus seeing them as devices that can be perfected, revised, and discarded.

This distinctively normative and reconstructive approach to our conceptual repertoire is congenial to the ideas defended by philosophers belonging to the multifaceted tradition of American and Cambridge Pragmatism. Indeed, pragmatists often emphasise the creative or reconstructive function of speech and thought, including philosophical speech and thought, by contrast with pure description or representation. In their theories of meaning, they give special importance to semantic plasticity, taking concepts to emerge from and evolve in actual linguistic practices. More generally, pragmatists’ focus on consequences in the real world, evaluation relative to functions and purposes, and the coordination of action through language, echoes the approach taken by many conceptual engineers in their projects.

The connection between conceptual engineering and pragmatism sometimes receives direct acknowledgement. For example, Sally Haslanger wants her proposed redefinitions of gender and race to be assessed according to their ‘pragmatic’ or ‘political’ consequences (Haslanger 2000, 34–35), and speaks of a ‘pragmatist theme’ (Haslanger 2012, 362). Amie Thomasson advocates for a ‘pragmatic method’ for conceptual revision even in the domain of metaphysics, by contrast with the view according to which ‘*the metaphysical facts of the world* . . . provide the primary standard’ for conceptual choice (Thomasson 2020, 439). Further, explicit reference is occasionally made to pragmatist philosophers, e.g. to Huw Price by Amie Thomasson (2020, 443), to Hilary Putnam by Sally Haslanger (2012, 14), to Robert Brandom by Alexis Burgess and David Plunkett (2013, 1097 fn 33) and Kevin Scharp (2013, 3–4 fn 8 and 9), and to Richard Rorty by Herman Cappelen (2018, 69, 153–54). However, the connections between the two fields remain largely underexplored. This special issue is devoted to the investigation and development of these connections, with the leading research-questions being: Which tools from both traditions allow for new answers to questions in each other’s fields of investigation? Where do the two movements merge, differ, and potentially enforce or illuminate one another? What distinguishes (neo)pragmatist approaches to language from current approaches found in conceptual engineering projects? The articles from this special issue explore these questions from different angles, delineating areas for fruitful interaction and future research.

**1. Historical considerations**

When Simon Blackburn and Robert Brandom used the expression ‘conceptual engineering’ more than 20 years ago, they were describing a certain type of philosophising that they saw themselves or other philosophers as being already engaged in, rather than opening up a new field. Blackburn lamented that the ‘word “philosophy” carries unfortunate connotations: impractical, unworldly, weird. . . . I would prefer to introduce myself as doing conceptual engineering’ (1999, 1–2). Two years later, Brandom used the expression to identify and characterise Dretske’s, Fodor’s, and Millikan’s attempts to, in Brandom’s words, make ‘intentional soup out of nonintentional bones’: ‘The enterprise in which they are jointly engaged is not so much one of conceptual analysis as it has been traditionally understood as one of conceptual engineering’ (2001, 587).[[2]](#footnote-2) Likewise, when Burgess and Plunkett in 2013 coined the term of ‘conceptual ethics’, they did not assume novelty for the field they intended to establish under this new heading: ‘claims about how one ought (or would do well) to think and talk are nearly as ubiquitous in philosophy as their descriptive counterparts, not to mention their prevalence in ordinary discourse’ (Burgess and Plunkett 2013, 1091). In the same vein, Cappelen in his monograph on conceptual engineering (2018) assumes that ‘there’s a pretty straight intellectual line from Frege (e.g., of the *Begriffsschrift*) and Carnap . . . to a cluster of contemporary work . . . on gender and race, revisionism about truth, revisionists about moral language, and revisionists in metaphysics and philosophy of mind’ (2018, ix). More generally, the focus on and the questioning of the particularities of our linguistic agency is something that certain strands of conceptual engineering also share with Nietzsche, Heidegger, Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Butler, and many others.

Given that such considerations regarding how we ought to think and talk seem to be ‘ubiquitous in philosophy’ (Burgess and Plunkett 2013, 1091), tracing the history of conceptual engineering might be seen a hopeless and futile enterprise. Nevertheless, as Cappelen points out, grouping such variegated projects like Frege’s, Carnap’s, Appiah’s, and Haslanger’s under the label of ‘conceptual engineering’ allows to get a hold on what all these views have in common – namely, the belief that conceptual and linguistic ‘revision is possible and important’ (2018, ix) – and to set out a research programme for investigating what exactly conceptual revision (or amelioration, elimination etc.) entails and how to go through with it. In the same vein, when thinking about the importance of baptising the philosophical territory, Burgess and Plunkett underscored that having a ‘convenient verbale handle’ helps to point out the potential of the field (2013, 1096). Their goal was to give an ‘overview of conceptual ethics as we find it and an attempt to organize the field for the future’ (1091), with the underlying attitude being: ‘If we already practice conceptual ethics, let’s do it well’ (1097).

The same holds for the history of conceptual engineering: retracing this burgeoning field to some of its historical roots can help unify disparate strands as well as recover insights and resources that give shape and impetus to the field, in the present and for the future. This special issue is a first attempt at taking up this task for the history of conceptual engineering inasmuch as it is entangled with the tradition of American and Cambridge Pragmatism.[[3]](#footnote-3)

As mentioned above, various conceptual engineers insist on a direct historical line between their projects and certain strands of pragmatist philosophy. Conceptual engineers often refer to Carnap’s pragmatic account of external questions (regarding the choice of a language) and explication (the revision or replacement of concepts) as a source of the movement. In fact, the first explicit use of the metaphor of ‘engineering’ language can be attributed to Carnap. He employs this metaphor when distinguishing his endeavour from Quine’s: [[4]](#footnote-4)

In my view, however, the choice of a certain language structure and, in particular, the decision to use certain types of variables is a practical decision like the choice of an instrument; it depends chiefly upon the purposes for which the instrument – here the language – is intended to be used and upon the properties of the instrument. I admit that the choice of a language suitable for the purposes of physics and mathematics involves problems quite different from those involved in the choice of a suitable motor for a freight airplane; but, in a sense, both are engineering problems . . . (Carnap 1947, 43)

In her contribution ‘[A new history and underpinning for conceptual engineering](https://www-tandfonline-com.ezp.lib.cam.ac.uk/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2021.2021982)’, Cheryl Misak complements the Carnapian genealogy and finds a more direct pragmatist lineage to the movement in the works of Charles S. Peirce, Frank Ramsey, Arthur Pap, and C. I. Lewis. In line with the spirit of this special issue, Misak’s goal is to recover not only historical ties but also theoretical resources in the works of pragmatists. She finds a criterion for assessing our concepts in Peirce’s pragmatic maxim, which enjoins us to look at the practical consequences of our concepts in experience. This is what Peirce did for the concept of truth, by tying it to the practices of inquiry. In C. I. Lewis’s conception of the ‘pragmatic a priori’, she finds many insights that were credited to his student Quine, in particular with regard to the claim that *all* concepts or ideas are revisable on both empirical and pragmatic grounds, where the two are not mutually exclusive. According to her, Lewis’s account of conceptual change precedes but also improves upon Carnap’s account of external questions, since it accounts for changes *within* a language, rather than focusing on choices between languages. In Ramsey’s work, she finds further resources for dealing with the problem of sameness of meaning or the charge of ‘changing the subject’ which Carnap and conceptual engineers have been concerned with.

Oscar Westerblad’s article ‘[Deweyan conceptual engineering: reconstruction, concepts, and philosophical inquiry](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2118163)’ supplements Misak’s in finding resources for a pragmatist account of conceptual engineering in another classical pragmatist, John Dewey. In *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920), Dewey took a reconstructive approach towards traditional philosophical concepts of experience, reason, truth, and value. In several of his works, he proposed genealogies of traditional philosophical distinctions such as subject/object or theory/practice, emphasising their functional roles in practice and discourse (Dewey 1925; 1934). Westerblad directly draws on Dewey’s view of concepts and inquiry in order to sketch a Deweyan view of ‘actionable conceptual engineering’ (an expression borrowed from Isaac 2021). He shows the value of the ‘Deweyan conception of concepts’ (DCC) over the philosophical and psychological views of concepts: when conceived as rules for operations to be performed, concepts are directly linked to action, open to criticism, and answerable to experience. Dewey’s pattern of inquiry, conceived as the reconstruction of problematic situations, provides a procedure to improve our concepts, when they are taken as the primary objects of our inquiry.

**2. Theoretical connections**

In addition to a potential direct historical line from certain pragmatist ideas to particular forms of conceptual engineering, there are theoretical reasons why the two fields of research could benefit from an in-depth exchange, whether such reasons stem from direct historical influence or from the accidental sharing of dispositions. Namely, there is large overlap regarding concrete theoretical underpinnings including the focus on normativism over descriptivism, the start from the assumption of semantic plasticity, the focus on consequences in the real world, and the metaphysical lightweightness of concepts.

In their article ‘[Normative standards and the epistemology of conceptual ethics](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2127874?src=)’, Tristram McPherson and David Plunkett investigate whether the normative questions raised by their strand of conceptual ethics are easier to answer than questions framed in traditional philosophical inquiry. Their answer is negative: the turn to conceptual ethics will not render the philosophical business less hard or less mysterious and this has to do exactly with the normative nature of the enterprise.

Cappelen sees the focus on normative accounts in conceptual engineering as a return to what analytic philosophy was in its early days and underlines that, in his opinion, the ‘descriptivist turn in the 1970s was an historical aberration’ (Cappelen 2018, 26). Where Cappelen insists on a shift back from descriptivism to normativism, Haslanger argues that ‘Conceptual, descriptive and ameliorative projects cannot, of course, be kept entirely distinct, but they have different subject matters and different goals’ (Haslanger and Saul 2006, 96).[[5]](#footnote-5) In a similar vein, Esa Díaz-León states that moral and political aims are at work already in descriptivist projects (2020, 171) and that ’there is no sharp distinction between debates that are properly descriptive, and debates that are ameliorative, since normative considerations are relevant at many different stages of both projects’ (2020, 185).

This echoes a general disposition amongst pragmatist philosophers according to which there is no sharp line to be drawn between facts and values (Putnam and Putnam 2002; Brown 2020), though the discursive practices of describing and ameliorating might serve different ends or be allocated at different points of time in the process of articulating concepts.

Matteo Santarelli’s article ‘[Improving concepts, reshaping values: pragmatism and ameliorative projects](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2095300)’ shows how resources from John Dewey’s theory of value can further help to investigate what is at stake and what exactly is changing in our linguistic and social practices once we change our concepts. In developing the idea of a concept-value circuit, Santarelli insists that not only are particular values (like social justice) informing and nurturing projects of conceptual engineering, but successful conceptual engineering can have a looping effect on the values that informed our ameliorative projects in the first place. In a nutshell, the engineering process, if successful, has the potential to work both ways: from values to concepts and back.

A point of contention in the current debate around conceptual engineering that could be enriched by positions from pragmatist philosophers regards semantic drift and plasticity: how radical is (can or should) the malleability of language be understood? While many conceptual engineers insist that there are limits to what can be done to language (Chalmers 2011; Eklund 2015; Sawyer 2020), Haslanger and Cappelen agree that there are ‘no “core-commitment” associated with words that cannot be overturned or negotiated’ (Haslanger 2020, 238), and that we should be ‘sceptics throughout’ (Cappelen 2018, 6). Though both Haslanger and Cappelen are embracing forms of semantic externalism, for Cappelen, contestation has no ‘natural endpoint’ (2018, 119, 194) and spreads over semantics as well as meta-semantics. As a corollary, also ‘the rules for conceptual engineering are constantly being engineered’ (2018, 8).

Yvonne Huetter-Almerigi’s article, titled [‘Do you value topic-continuity? The moral foundations of Cappelen’s insistence on “topic-continuity” and reasons for resisting them](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2155237)’, is taking up these radical statements and asks what further reasons determine our intentions to change meanings, if it is not theoretic necessities. She contrasts Cappelen’s moral commitments with Rorty’s moral commitments and analyses their respective rhetoric strategies when it comes to placing their philosophical and metaphilosophical projects in the larger philosophical environment of their time, in particular with respect to the heritage of the linguistic turn.

Where Huetter-Almerigi takes a conciliatory stance with respect to a fruitful conversation between certain forms of pragmatism and conceptual engineering, Neil Gascoigne points towards discontinuity between the two fields. Gascoigne’s contribution, ‘[Making Progress: Pragmatism, Conceptual Engineering, and Ordinary Language](AGREGATIONhttps://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2095301)’, retrieves sources from Richard Rorty and John Dewey to question certain tendencies in the current movement. He points out that the tendency of conceptual engineering to find an overarching and rigid semantic framework (e.g. externalism, internalism) is what creates unresolvable puzzles about the possibility of conceptual amelioration. Offering a reinterpretation of the ‘Strawsonian Challenge’ which has occupied many conceptual engineers (Cappelen 2018; Sawyer 2018; Prinzing 2018; Pinder 2020) – if we revise the very meaning of our concepts, are we not simply ‘changing the subject’ rather than genuinely improving them? – Gascoigne proposes to see Strawson’s criticism of Carnapian explication as a criticism of a certain puritanic endeavour to produce general semantic frameworks, rather than starting from the messy reality of language use itself. His positive proposal for a pragmatist approach to conceptual amelioration finds further resources in ordinary language philosophy.

An important area of tension – and potential fruitful interaction – between pragmatism and current conceptual engineering projects concerns the view of what language is and what it does. Most of the current conceptual engineering projects rest on a representationalist view of language (Löhr 2021), which takes on various forms: talk of “representational devices” abound in the literature (e.g., Cappelen 2018; Simion and Kelp 2020), concepts are often individuated by intensions and extensions or by referential relations to objective properties in the world (Sawyer 2020). By contrast, most pragmatists are united in their rejection of representationalism, adopting instead various forms of non-representationalist views of language,[[6]](#footnote-6) with mixtures and variants of use-theory, operationalism, verificationism, and inferentialism (e.g. Rorty 1979; Brandom 1994; see also Gronda 2020). This means that pragmatists and conceptual engineers do not necessarily agree on what it means to revise a concept, and how we should do it. Another consequence is that questions and problems arising for some conceptual engineers (how do we maintain referential continuity? How can we change our representational devices, if those are individuated by objective properties in the world?) might not arise for pragmatists.

On the other hand, the pragmatist view of language seems particularly congenial to conceptual engineering projects. Pragmatists emphasise the diversity of vocabularies and their functions in human lives. This view of language naturally gives rise to a host of criteria by which we can evaluate concepts, from inferential fruitfulness to human flourishing. This shows that what was initially an area of tension might actually become an area in which the two fields can interact and learn from one another.

Amie Thomasson’s article ‘[How should we think about linguistic function?](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2074886)’ shows the benefits of going beyond representationalism and adopting a functionalist and pluralist approach to conceptual engineering. Further developing the ‘pragmatic method’ she advocated in her previous work (2020; 2021), she trades the ‘metaphysical standard’ of ‘tracking worldly boundaries’ for a more tractable standard, appealing instead to the various functions of discourses and conceptual units in discourse. She finds resources from systemic functional linguistics to develop and extend the neo-pragmatist program. In particular, she argues that the advocation of eliminativism for many concepts that do not ‘refer’ (for example, abstract objects such as properties or numbers) is misguided, once it is seen that language has many other (non-representational) macro-functions. Instead, she encourages us to see them as ‘grammatical metaphors’. Grammatical metaphors, although misleading when taken literally, often have a ‘point’: and it is relative to that point or function that they should be assessed.

Sigurd Jorem and Guido Löhr, in ‘[Inferentialist Conceptual Engineering](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0020174X.2022.2062045)’, also develop a non-representationalist variant of conceptual engineering, drawing instead on the inferentialist tradition, and in particular Robert Brandom’s account. They show that representationalism has a hard time explaining why conceptual engineering is a worthwhile enterprise: extensions and intensions, or referential relations, do not seem to be the kinds of things that can be better or worse. Things look different once we understand concepts as inferential devices rather than representational devices. Conceptual engineering then consists in changing the application conditions of a term (upstream) or the consequences of its application (downstream). The rationale for conceptual engineering can be cashed out in terms of what applications conditions render the consequences of application *appropriate.* In addition, inferentialism provides tractable criteria for the evaluation of engineering proposals, by tracing the consequences of conceptual changes in action.

This last point about the worldly consequences certainly points to one of many potential further engagements between pragmatism and conceptual engineering. For most pragmatists, our linguistic utterances directly impact what we perceive to be our space of agency and how to move in the world (Huetter-Almerigi and Ramberg 2020). How exactly this alteration of salience via linguistic change, which allows for certain sets of properties to emerge while others fade in the background, is conducted and, connectedly, to what extent linguistic alterations actually impact reality is a point of controversy also in pragmatism itself. Consider on this the controversies between Putnam and Rorty (Rorty 1980; Putnam 1981) or Rorty, Ramberg, and Brandom (Brandom 2000; Ramberg 2000; Rorty 2000b; 2000a). In any case, the debate is deeply connected to the current issues in conceptual engineering regarding the potential worldly consequences of linguistic interventions. Burgess and Plunkett construct parts of their account of conceptual ethics around the issue of worldly consequences. According to them, the ‘clearest reason to care about [conceptual choices] is just that their non-conceptual consequences are pervasive and profound’ (Burgess and Plunkett 2013, 1097). They go as far as to sustain that

[O]ur conceptual repertoire determines not only what beliefs we can have but also what hypotheses we can entertain, what desires we can form, what plans we can make on the basis of such mental states, and accordingly constrains what we can hope to accomplish in the world. Representation enables action, from the most sophisticated scientific research, to the most mundane household task. (Burgess and Plunkett 2013, 1096–97)

For Cappelen, if language changes, also the world changes – in a ‘metaphysically lightweight way’ (2018, 137). Conceptual engineering in Cappelen’s account “involve(s) expressions changing their extensions and intensions’ (2018, 140) and operates via the change of extensions (and the intensions which categorise the things that then fall into the set of extensions) directly on the world. Discussions about torture, for Cappelen, are not only meta-linguistic negotiations: it is ‘about torture (topic and thing in the world) not the English or Russian word “torture”’ (2018, 174). Sally Haslanger sustains that ‘Contestation over language and meaning is not always “mere semantics” for it shapes our agency and our lives together. Sometimes we should (at least try to) take control over meanings, for if we don’t, others will’ (Haslanger 2020, 230). Contemporary pragmatist philosophers undergird this point when investigating striking examples of worldly consequences. By drawing on resources from Brandom’s inferentialism, Lynne Tirell (2012) shows how a certain type of language games determined particular killing methods in Ruanda’s Genocide. In a similar vein, Tracy Llanera (2019) shows how the use of religious language facilitated Duterte’s drug war in the Philippines. These are just some potential examples that future research at the border between the two traditions could deepen or engage with. We hope this special issue contributes to facilitate this exchange.

**Funding**: This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Cambridge Commonwealth, European and International Trust [Award number 2090146].

**References:**

Blackburn, Simon. 1999. *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Brandom, Robert. 1994. *Making It Explicit: Reasoning Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard university press.

———. 2001. “Modality, Normativity, and Intentionality.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63 (3): 587–609. https://doi.org/ppr2001633111.

Brandom, Robert B. 2000. “Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Historicism.” In *Rorty and His Critics*, edited by Robert B. Brandom, 156–82. Oxford: Blackwell Pub. https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674270572-006.

Brown, Matthew J. 2020. *Science and Moral Imagination: A New Ideal for Values in Science*. Science, Values, and the Public. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Burgess, Alexis, and David Plunkett. 2013. “Conceptual Ethics I.” *Philosophy Compass* 8 (12): 1091–1101. https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12086.

———. 2020. “On the Relation between Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics.” *Ratio* 33 (4): 281–94. https://doi.org/10.1111/rati.12265.

Cappelen, Herman. 2018. *Fixing Language: An Essay on Conceptual Engineering*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198814719.001.0001.

Carnap, Rudolf. 1947. *Meaning and Necessity*. University of Chicago Press.

Chalmers, David J. 2011. “Revisability and Conceptual Change in ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism.’” *The Journal of Philosophy* 108 (8): 387–415.

Creath, Richard. 1990. *Dear Carnap, Dear Van: The Quine-Carnap Correspondence and Related Work: Edited and with an Introduction by Richard Creath*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dewey, John. 1920. *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. Dover Publications.

———. 1925. *Experience and Nature*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company.

———. 1934. *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action*. London: G. Allen & Unwin Limited.

Díaz-León, Esa. 2020. “Descriptive vs. Ameliorative Projects: The Role of Normative Considerations.” In *Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics*, edited by Alexis Burgess, Herman Cappelen, and David Plunkett, 170–86. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198801856.003.0009.

Dutilh Novaes, Catarina. 2020. “Carnapian Explication and Ameliorative Analysis: A Systematic Comparison.” *Synthese* 197 (3): 1011–34. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-018-1732-9.

Eklund, Matti. 2015. “Intuitions, Conceptual Engineering, and Conceptual Fixed Points.” In *The Palgrave Handbook of Philosophical Methods*, edited by Christopher Daly, 363–85. Palgrave Macmillan.

Floridi, Luciani. 2011. “A Defence of Constructionism: Philosophy as Conceptual Engineering.” *Metaphilosophy* 42 (3): 282–304.

Gronda, Roberto. 2020. *Dewey’s Philosophy of Science*. Synthese Library. Dordrecht: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37562-1.

Haslanger, Sally. 2000. “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?” *Noûs* 34 (1): 31–55. https://doi.org/10.1111/0029-4624.00201.

———. 2012. *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*. New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199892631.001.0001.

———. 2020. “Going On, Not in the Same Way.” In *Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics*, by Sally Haslanger, 230–60. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198801856.003.0012.

Haslanger, Sally, and Jennifer Saul. 2006. “Philosophical Analysis and Social Kinds.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 80: 89–143.

Huetter-Almerigi, Yvonne. 2020. “Two Forms of Realism.” *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* XII (1). https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.1868.

———. 2022. “Rorty on realism, antirealism, and antirepresentationalism.” In *Handbuch Richard Rorty*, edited by Martin Müller. Springer VS.

Huetter-Almerigi, Yvonne, and Bjørn Torgrim Ramberg. 2020. “Analytic Philosophy of Language (Wittgenstein, Sellars, Quine, Davidson, Kuhn).” In *Handbuch Richard Rorty*, edited by Martin Müller, 1–16. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-16260-3\_67-1.

Isaac, Manuel Gustavo. 2021. “Which Concept of Concept for Conceptual Engineering?” *Erkenntnis*, September. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-021-00447-0.

Llanera, Tracy. 2019. “‘The Law of the Land Has God’s Anointing’— Rorty on Religion, Language, and Politics.” *Pragmatism Today* 10 (1): 46–61.

Löhr, Guido. 2021. “Commitment Engineering: Conceptual Engineering without Representations.” *Synthese*, August. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-021-03365-4.

Pinder, Mark. 2020. “On Strawson’s Critique of Explication as a Method in Philosophy.” *Synthese* 197 (3): 955–81. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-017-1614-6.

Price, Huw. 2011. *Naturalism Without Mirrors*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Prinzing, Michael. 2018. “The Revisionist’s Rubric: Conceptual Engineering and the Discontinuity Objection.” *Inquiry* 61 (8): 854–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2017.1385522.

Putnam, Hilary. 1981. *Reason, Truth and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511625398.

Putnam, Hilary, and Cogan University Professor Emeritus Hilary Putnam. 2002. *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*. Harvard University Press.

Queloz, Matthieu. 2021. *The Practical Origins of Ideas: Genealogy as Conceptual Reverse-Engineering*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Ramberg, Bjørn. 2000. “Post-Ontological Philosophy of Mind: Rorty versus Davidson.” In *Rorty and His Critics*, edited by Robert B. Brandom, 351–70. Oxford: Blackwell.

Rorty, Richard. 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1980. “Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism.” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 53 (6): 717–38. https://doi.org/10.2307/3131427.

———. 2000a. “Reply to Ramberg.” In *Rorty and His Critics*, edited by Robert Brandom, 370–77. Blackwell.

———. 2000b. “Response to Brandom.” In *Rorty and His Critics*, edited by Robert Brandom, 183–90. Blackwell.

Sawyer, Sarah. 2018. “The Importance of Concepts.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 118 (2): 127–47. https://doi.org/10.1093/arisoc/aoy008.

———. 2020. “Talk and Thought.” In *Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics*, edited by Alexis Burgess, Herman Cappelen, and David Plunkett, 379–95. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198801856.003.0018.

Scharp, Kevin. 2013. *Replacing Truth*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199653850.001.0001.

Simion, Mona, and Christoph Kelp. 2020. “Conceptual Innovation, Function First.” *Noûs* 54 (4): 985–1002. https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12302.

Thomasson, Amie. 2015. *Ontology Made Easy*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199385119.001.0001.

———. 2020. “A Pragmatic Method for Normative Conceptual Work.” In *Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics*, edited by Alexis Burgess, Herman Cappelen, and David Plunkett, 435–58. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198801856.003.0021.

———. 2021. “Conceptual Engineering: When Do We Need It? How Can We Do It?” *Inquiry* 0 (0): 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/0020174X.2021.2000118.

Tirrell, Lynne. 2012. “Genocidal Language Games.” In *Speech and Harm: Controversies Over Free Speech*, edited by Ishani Maitra and Mary Kate McGowan, 174–221. Oxford University Press.

1. For the sake of simplicity, in this introduction, we use “conceptual engineering” to refer to the family of philosophical projects concerned with the amelioration of our conceptual devices: conceptual ethics, ameliorative analysis, revisionary projects, explication, etc. In line with the terminology defended by Burgess and Plunkett (2020) and McPherson and Plunkett in this special issue, we use “conceptual engineering” in the broadest sense, which encompasses conceptual ethics as a subprogramme of conceptual engineering (the part that focuses on evaluative considerations), whereas conceptual engineering at large investigates additional matters (such as revision and implementation). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Two further, independent occurrences of the metaphor can be found in Richard Creath (1990) and Luciano Floridi (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For work on further traditions and strands of thought see, e.g., Dutilh Novaes (2020) on Carnap and Foucault, Queloz (2021) on the practical origins of concepts in Nietzsche, Edward Craig, Bernard Williams, and Miranda Fricker. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For a comprehensive outline of what is at stake in the debate between Quine and Carnap in a pragmatist keysee e.g. (Price 2011) and (Thomasson 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A main point of divergence among particular conceptual engineers (and also among particular pragmatists) can be traced to their endorsement or not of the analytic-synthetic distinction. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. On the difference between antirealism and antirepresentationalism see, e.g. (Huetter-Almerigi 2022) and how various forms of antirepresentationalism frame realist intuitions (Huetter-Almerigi 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)