

How Not to Not Change the Subject (and How to *Actually* Not Change the Subject)*

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Abstract (Word Count: 299)

In 2015, ‘marriage’ was redefined in the United States to include same-sex couples. In conceptual engineering, this is often assumed to be a paradigm case of Sally Haslanger’s (2020a, 2020b) *semantic amelioration*. Semantic amelioration changes a concept’s content to make it better. In the case of [MARRIAGE], [MARRIAGE]’s content was broadened to include same-sex couples – which, many contend, made it morally better. Semantic amelioration faces the following challenge, however: Doesn’t changing a concept’s content ‘change the subject?’ By broadening [MARRIAGE]’s content to include same-sex couples in 2015, didn’t we replace [MARRIAGE] with a new concept that sounds and looks like [MARRIAGE] but nevertheless *isn’t* [MARRIAGE] – something like, [MARRIAGE*]? This is the *topic continuity problem* (TCP). Here, TCP assumes *content essentialism* about concepts, i.e., that a concept’s content is essential to it. Thus, since semantic amelioration changes concepts’ contents to make them better, semantic amelioration necessarily replaces concepts, according to this version of TCP. Haslanger recently resists this notion, however. Instead of embracing content essentialism about concepts, Haslanger embraces *functional essentialism* about concepts – that a concept’s function is essential to it. And since semantic amelioration leaves a concept’s function unchanged, Haslanger denies that semantic amelioration is conceptual replacement. In this paper, I argue that Haslanger’s functional essentialism integrally links concepts’ functions to their contents, such that changing a concept’s

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content requires changing its function, on Haslanger's account. Therefore, semantic amelioration still replaces concepts even on Haslanger's functional essentialism. I think this is avoided, however, if we incorporate Amie Thomasson's (2020) recent work on concepts into Haslanger's. Combining Thomasson's work with Haslanger's yields a new functional essentialism about concepts – called *proper* functional essentialism. Proper functional essentialism allows that *some* functional changes in concepts don't replace them, and hence, it perhaps reveals how to *actually* not change the subject in semantic amelioration.

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1. Introduction

Conceptual ethics concerns “normative issues about which concepts one should use (and why) and evaluative issues about which concepts are better than others (and why)” (Cappelen and Plunkett, 2020, p. 4). Sally Haslanger's (2012) “ameliorative” projects – especially her *semantic* ameliorative projects – feature heavily in this literature. Semantic amelioration “[changes] what partition of logical space [a] term or concept represents . . . to do better in tracking reality” (Haslanger, 2020a, p. 242; cf. 2020b, p. 239). Semantic amelioration changes a concept's *content* to make it better.

A concept's content is, basically, a concept's *extension*. A concept's content – or, as Haslanger calls it (following Yalcin (2018)), a concept's “partition of logical space” – is what a concept picks out and separates from other things in the world. The concept [MARRIAGE]'s¹ content, for example, are those relationships and bonds we call ‘marriages;’ [MARRIAGE]

¹ Writing words in this way will denote the corresponding concept of the term.

separates the logical space we call ‘marriage’ from the rest of the world. [MARRIAGE] therefore allows us to speak of marriages because marriages are [MARRIAGE]’s content.

Now, since semantic amelioration betters a concept by changing its content, semantically ameliorating [MARRIAGE] means changing [MARRIAGE]’s content for the better. This entails changing what we consider a marriage – and so, who can get married – for the better. Thus, semantically ameliorating [MARRIAGE] means changing who can get married for the better.²

Semantic amelioration faces the following challenge: Doesn’t changing a concept’s content ‘change the subject’? In conceding that, e.g., same-sex couples couldn’t get married in pre-2015 America but that they now can, don’t we plainly admit that [MARRIAGE] was replaced with another concept like [MARRIAGE*]? This is the *topic continuity problem* (TCP). TCP maintains that any attempt at conceptual revision results in conceptual replacement (Cappelen (2018), Ball (2020), Kocurek (2022)).³ Here, TCP assumes *content essentialism* about concepts, i.e., that a concept’s content is essential to it. You might sympathize with TCP and content essentialism especially if you think that a concept’s *intension* is essential to it. A concept’s intension is, basically, a concept’s meaning, the conditions under which something is in the extension of a term or concept (Putnam, 1973, pp. 699-700; 1975, pp. 134-136).⁴ [MARRIAGE]’s intension in the present-day US is plausibly ‘a civil union between any two (consenting) people.’ This allows [MARRIAGE] to apply to any two people. From this, we get the following base assumption: a concept’s intension determines its extension.⁵ Consequently, changing a concept’s content – as in

² Haslanger (2020a, p. 242; 2020b, p. 240) includes that semantic amelioration betters a concept in one of three ways: alethically, pragmatically, or morally. As it pertains to [MARRIAGE], [MARRIAGE] became a *morally* better concept, according to Haslanger, when we semantically ameliorated it to include same-sex couples, as I shall describe below (§3).

³ See Strawson (1963) for the original topic continuity challenge.

⁴ My reading of Putnam’s conceptual intensions closely follows that of Bogardus (2022).

⁵ Putnam (1973, 1975) notably argues against this. But he more so means to argue that the psychological state of a speaker doesn’t determine a concept’s extension. If I, for example, start calling all tables ‘chair’ and all chairs

semantic amelioration – seems to require changing a concept’s intension. But surely, as Mark Richard writes, “substantial changes in semantics mean abandoning the concept” (Richard, 2020, p. 361).⁶ So, if you sympathize with TCP, you reject that semantic amelioration could be conceptual revision. It must be conceptual replacement.⁷

Haslanger resists the above, by offering a way to reject content essentialism about concepts. Rather than embrace content essentialism – and thus, TCP – Haslanger proposes that we embrace, what I term, *functional essentialism* about concepts. Functional essentialism maintains that a concept’s function – not its content – is essential to it, such that a concept is replaced if and only if its function is. And since, she argues, semantic amelioration leaves concepts’ functions unchanged, semantic amelioration doesn’t replace concepts. I argue, however, that Haslanger’s functional essentialism integrally links concepts’ functions to their contents, such that changing a concept’s content, on Haslanger’s account, requires changing its function. Therefore, semantic amelioration still replaces concepts even on Haslanger’s functional essentialism. I think this is avoided, however, if we incorporate Amie Thomasson’s (2020) recent work on concepts into Haslanger’s. Combining Thomasson’s work with Haslanger’s yields a new functional essentialism

‘tables,’ I’m wrong to do so, even if in my mind it is correct to call tables ‘chair’ and chairs ‘table,’ which is to say, even if what I mean by ‘chair’ and ‘table’ is what you mean by ‘table’ and ‘chair’ respectively. In other words, the speaker can’t determine the meaning of her spoken terms; what I intend by ‘chair’ doesn’t determine what ‘chair’ means. Putnam therefore sets the groundwork for semantic externalism. See Haslanger (2012a), Barnes (2017), Richard (2020), Koch (2021), and Kocurek (2022), for more on semantic externalism.

⁶ To be clear, Richard agrees with Haslanger that semantic amelioration doesn’t necessarily change the subject. At this point in his paper, Richard is merely motivating the thought that it might.

⁷ In this paper, I somewhat take for granted that TCP poses an issue in modernity, especially as it pertains to [MARRIAGE]. Surely, that is, ‘married’ means the same thing it does today when we say, ‘same-sex couples can get married,’ as it did pre-2015 when we said, ‘heterosexual couples can get married’ or ‘same-sex couples *cannot* get married.’ If it doesn’t, so the thought goes, then we aren’t *really* talking about marriage or [MARRIAGE]. We’re talking about something else, a homophone, a term that represents a concept that *sounds* and *looks* like [MARRIAGE] from pre-2015 but is completely different and has secretly replaced it. When I presented this paper at the Southwestern Philosophical Society 2024 conference, many didn’t see the problem with this. They didn’t see the issue with replacing [MARRIAGE] with, e.g., [MARRIAGE*]. For those who also fail to see the problem, you may appreciate the metalinguistic negotiation literature, which, basically, contends that issues in philosophy – especially metaphysics – are issues over which concepts we should use. See, e.g., Ludlow (2008), Plunkett and Sundell (2013), Plunkett (2015), Thomasson (2016), and Díaz-León (2021).

about concepts – called *proper* functional essentialism – that perhaps reveals how to *actually* not change the subject in semantic amelioration.

2. How Not to Change the Subject

Haslanger’s concept functions seem to denote what concepts do for us; we know a concept’s function given the role it plays in society.⁸ Continuing with [MARRIAGE] as a case study, Haslanger suggests that a [MARRIAGE] concept is one that helps us process couples’ private lives (Haslanger, 2020b, p. 254). We call two people ‘married,’ then, to denote that they are engaged in a specific, intimate relationship with each another. So, let’s assume that [MARRIAGE] helps society process information regarding a specific relationship between two people; let’s assume that this is what [MARRIAGE] is for.

To begin to account for [MARRIAGE]’s semantic amelioration and demonstrate that we can reject content essentialism about concepts, Haslanger asks us to consider three contexts in which [MARRIAGE] functions – social, legal, and religious. Within each of these contexts, [MARRIAGE] functions slightly differently, and couples can “fulfill” each of these [MARRIAGE] functions in turn (p. 255); couples can fulfill one of these marriage functions without necessarily fulfilling the others.⁹ As a result, these [MARRIAGE] functions can be at odds; couples can be (socially) married but not (legally and/or religiously) married.

Haslanger writes that, in the historical United States, “a social marriage was a legal marriage was a religious marriage (more or less)” (p. 253). Being legally and socially married, that

⁸ This notion of conceptual functions coincides with ones later described by Nado (2021), Riggs (2021), and Jorem (2022).

⁹ Haslanger doesn’t get super specific regarding how exactly [MARRIAGE] functions at each of these levels, but as I read her, couples are, perhaps, socially married if they conduct their private lives according to how we think married couples generally or ought to do so; couples are legally married if they obtain the proper documentation to be considered such in the government’s eyes; and couples are religiously married if they perform the proper religious ceremony to be considered such in a given religion’s eyes.

is, required being religiously married. Religious [MARRIAGE], however, excluded same-sex couples. This focused [MARRIAGE] on heterosexual couples; heterosexual couples were thought the only kinds of couples that could get married in any sense due to [MARRIAGE]'s religious prominence. Over time, however, disparities between social, legal, and religious [MARRIAGE] came to light. New kinds of couples began fulfilling [MARRIAGE]'s social function but not its legal or religious functions, as alluded to above. Same-sex couples were, as I understand Haslanger, acting 'as if' they were married, but government and religious institutions refused to recognize them as such. As a result, same-sex couples were widely accepted as *socially* married but not legally or religiously married. This incongruence ultimately prompted a change in legal and religious [MARRIAGE]'s content, according to Haslanger: "As same-sex couples came to be increasingly recognized as socially married, pressure increased to extend the boundaries of legal and religious marriage" (p. 255).

Haslanger thinks social [MARRIAGE]'s wide applicability revealed an important partition of logical space that legal and religious [MARRIAGE] could refer to, namely, same-sex couples. Crucially, Americans noticed that broadening [MARRIAGE]'s content in this way "would allow us to better manage intimacy and childrearing" – [MARRIAGE]'s most important function (Ibid). Precluding same-sex couples from marriage in any context, therefore, proves a moral failing, so Haslanger suggests, because doing so prevents [MARRIAGE] from performing as best it can – which is to say, as it *should*. Hence, Americans remedied this failure, as I read Haslanger, through a metasemantic shift in [MARRIAGE]: Legal and religious [MARRIAGE] opted to align with

[MARRIAGE]’s social function to include *all* couples and thereby highlight a (morally) better partition of logical space and allow [MARRIAGE] to perform its function better.¹⁰

Now, despite [MARRIAGE]’s semantic amelioration and change in content in 2015, [MARRIAGE] continued to play the (social) role of capturing a specific relationship between two (consenting) people. Thus, [MARRIAGE]’s function remained unchanged. And if Haslanger is right and concepts like [MARRIAGE] have their functions essentially, then [MARRIAGE] was not replaced in 2015 in the US. It was merely revised. Hence, Haslanger proposes, semantic amelioration need not result in conceptual replacement; we can reject content essentialism about concepts.¹¹

3. A Valiant Effort

While I am sympathetic to Haslanger’s framework, I’m skeptical that it avoids TCP. First, Haslanger’s idea of conceptual functions seems vastly underdefined – perhaps because she’s not exactly sure what concepts are or if they exist and thus cannot fully explain what it means for concepts to have functions (2020a, p. 230 & p. 238) – and similar to conceptual intensions in a key regard. Specifically, just as conceptual intensions are traditionally assumed to determine conceptual extensions, so too, it seems to me, do conceptual functions give rise to conceptual content on Haslanger’s account. If I’m right about this, then a change in [MARRIAGE]’s content

¹⁰ Haslanger omits many nuances that led to [MARRIAGE]’s amelioration. This, I take it, is to make semantic amelioration easier to understand: “I am arguing, generally, for the coherence of semantic amelioration against the content essentialist, and using a story about [MARRIAGE] (perhaps true of our world, but maybe only of another possible world) as an example” (Haslanger, 2020b, p. 255). So I think that Haslanger is happy to grant that [MARRIAGE]’s semantic amelioration is much more complex than she lets on. She may even be happy to grant that [MARRIAGE] is not an instance of semantic amelioration. The picture described above merely serves to elucidate how Haslanger sees semantic amelioration working without changing the subject, that is, on a framework other than content essentialism.

¹¹ It’s unclear to me if Haslanger thinks we may individuate concepts based on their functions. Nado (2021, p. 86), who construes conceptual functions as Haslanger seems to, notably argues against this. I, however, am much more optimistic that we can individuate concepts based on their functions – specifically, based on their *proper* functions (see §4 and fn. 18 below).

requires a change in [MARRIAGE]'s function. As a result, [MARRIAGE]'s semantic amelioration entailed a functional change, and so – per Haslanger's functional essentialist picture – [MARRIAGE] was replaced when ameliorated in 2015.

I shall first motivate conceptual functions yielding conceptual content: If [MARRIAGE] serves to capture a specific relationship between two people, then [MARRIAGE]'s content cannot fail to involve two people engaged in the specific relationship it captures. Thus, any two people displaying the proper relationship are married, and any two people failing to display the proper relationship are unmarried. This, I imagine, is what it means for people to “fulfill” or not “fulfill” [MARRIAGE]'s function (Ibid). [MARRIAGE]'s function therefore determines that its content necessarily involves those couples engaged in a specific relationship; a concept's content derives from its function.

Now recall, Haslanger maintains that (legal and religious) [MARRIAGE] wasn't replaced when semantically ameliorated in 2015; Americans mean exactly the same thing by ‘married’ when they today say ‘same-sex couples can get married’ as they did when they said ‘same-sex couples cannot get married’ pre-2015. Focusing on the legal context, this means that, legally, [MARRIAGE] played the role of, e.g., capturing an intimate relationship between two people (or some other role that same-sex couples can fulfill) pre- and post-2015, since Haslanger's framework is functional essentialist; [MARRIAGE] must have retained its function to have survived its amelioration in 2015. Notice, however, that same-sex couples can fulfill the function, ‘captures an intimate relationship between two people,’ by displaying this intimate relationship. Hence, if legal [MARRIAGE] always functioned this way, then it always applied to same-sex couples. Pre-2015, however, [MARRIAGE] didn't legally apply to same-sex couples. Pre-2015, same-sex couples were outside legal [MARRIAGE]'s partition of logical space. And since concepts' contents derive

from their functions on Haslanger's account, as I argued, the only explanation for this is if, legally, [MARRIAGE] functioned differently pre-2015 compared to post-2015. Thus, [MARRIAGE]'s legal function pre-2015 must have been one that same-sex couples couldn't fulfill. Otherwise, again, it wouldn't have been false to say that same-sex couples could get married at that time; same-sex couples would have always been part of legal [MARRIAGE]'s content by being able to fulfill its function. Consequently, [MARRIAGE]'s change in logical space in 2015, on Haslanger's account, must have derived from a change in [MARRIAGE]'s function; there must be something about [MARRIAGE]'s function that allows same-sex couples to fulfill it now, whereas they couldn't have before. And since Haslanger is a functional essentialist, [MARRIAGE] was replaced when ameliorated in 2015.

Now Haslanger might double down and respond that legal [MARRIAGE] served to, e.g., capture a specific relationship between two people pre-2015, but that our tending to heterosexual couples as the paradigmatic marriage case restricted its partition of logical space, allowing [MARRIAGE] to regulate intimate parts of couples lives *only to a degree*. She might then reiterate that our noticing this moral failing prompted [MARRIAGE]'s amelioration, an alteration in [MARRIAGE]'s content that allowed it to function *better* but nevertheless in the same way it always did. This response, however, concedes my point. The 'better way' that [MARRIAGE] legally functions is a *different* way that [MARRIAGE] legally functions. Legal [MARRIAGE] didn't apply to same-sex couples pre-2015. So, legal [MARRIAGE] didn't regulate intimate parts of all couples' lives pre-2015. Legal [MARRIAGE] *does* apply to same-sex couples post-2015, however, and thus it *does* regulate intimate parts of all couples' lives post-2015. [MARRIAGE], therefore, functions differently today than it did pre-2015; [MARRIAGE] functionally changed from regulating intimate parts of *heterosexual* couples' lives to regulating intimate parts of *all*

couples' lives in 2015. This is the only way to account for [MARRIAGE]'s change in content on Haslanger's account. If I'm wrong, it's only because Haslanger fails to give an adequate account of concepts and what it means for them to have functions. Thus, I'm doing my best. And my best forces Haslanger to conclude that we replaced [MARRIAGE] when we ameliorated it in 2015.

4. A Proper Solution

Assuming I'm representing Haslanger accurately, I think Amie Thomasson's (2020) work on concepts can come to Haslanger's aid. Thomasson compares concepts to artifacts (Thomasson, 2020, p. 446). Specifically, just as artifacts have proper functions, she proposes, so too may concepts. Now an object's proper function is that which an object does best. Likewise, a concept's proper function is that which a concept does best and is the reason that concept was "perpetuated in our culture" (pp. 445-448).¹² Take [WATER]. Plausibly, our [WATER] concept serves to pick out liquid H₂O. It also, however, serves to pick out 'liquid that replenishes me' and 'liquid that I wash with.' Finding [WATER]'s proper function – and so the function that [WATER] serves best – on Thomasson's framework, requires questioning what we couldn't do or speak of as effectively without [WATER]. Out of the functions listed above that [WATER] can serve (there are no doubt more, but I'm trying to keep things simple), picking out liquid H₂O seems its proper one. [WATER], that is, plausibly picks out liquid H₂O best. For without [WATER], speaking of liquid H₂O becomes incredibly difficult to do. Thus, we can consider 'picking out liquid H₂O' [WATER]'s proper function.¹³

¹² See Millikan (1984) for more on proper functions. Simion and Kelp's (2020) "etioloical functions" also compare in this regard.

¹³ Proper functions, as Thomasson describes them, are a tricky concept, and you might disagree that [WATER] best helps us pick out liquid H₂O. If so, then swap [WATER]'s proper function out with something else. This is peripheral to the argument. Nevertheless, that there can be such disagreement raises questions regarding *just how* we determine concepts' (or objects') proper functions. How do we know, that is, what a concept does best? This, it seems to me, comes down to intuitions. I don't like this answer. But this seems right to me, and it's something that I definitely need to further consider. Thanks to Scott Aikin for pushing me on this point.

What, then, are we to make of the other non-proper functions of [WATER], like picking out ‘liquid that replenishes me’ and ‘liquid that I wash with’? While Thomasson doesn’t say, I propose that we call these *accidental functions*¹⁴ of [WATER].¹⁵ These functions are not most fundamental or proper to [WATER]; they are not what [WATER] does best and are (likely) not why [WATER] was conjured. Accidental functions are, in essence, ways that a concept *can* function.¹⁶ So, let’s consider concepts as serving a variety of functions, some of them accidental and (at least) one of them proper.

Combining the above with Haslanger’s functional essentialism yields *proper functional essentialism* (PFE). PFE maintains that conceptual replacement occurs if and only if concepts lose their proper function(s).¹⁷ This means that accidental functions are of no matter as it pertains to maintaining the subject. [WATER], that is, could fail to pick out ‘liquid that replenishes me’ and ‘liquid that I wash with’ without being replaced or going out of existence. For these functions are *accidental* to [WATER]. They are not essential to it, unlike [WATER]’s proper function of picking out liquid H₂O.¹⁸

¹⁴ Many thanks go to Gabriel Kim for this terminology.

¹⁵ My ‘accidental functions’ compare to Jorem’s (2022) “insignificant functions.” I, however, wield accidental functions much differently than Jorem does his insignificant functions. For Jorem isn’t primarily discussing ways of avoiding TCP in his paper.

¹⁶ You may also notice that [WATER]’s accidental functions of picking out ‘liquid that replenishes me’ and ‘liquid that I wash with’ only exist *because* [WATER] first picks out liquid H₂O. Hence, if [WATER] didn’t pick out liquid H₂O, it wouldn’t pick out ‘liquid that replenishes me’ or ‘liquid that I wash with.’ I’m happy to qualify this as another quality of accidental functions: They owe their existences to concepts’ proper functions.

¹⁷ I am unsure if concepts (or objects) can have multiple proper functions. Thus, I am unsure if some concepts may be replaced just in the event that multiple of their (integral) functions are lost. I’m not opposed to this idea, hence why I include the parenthetical. Nevertheless, this is a notion that deserves more attention.

¹⁸ To continue the thought expressed in fn. 11, it seems to me that we may differentiate concepts based on their proper functions. I think we can know a given concept, that is, based on what it does best for us. We can know a concept is [WATER] if it fundamentally and most properly picks out liquid H₂O. And we can know a concept is [MARRIAGE] if it fundamentally and most properly captures a specific relationship between two people. I’m not sure if there are any consequences to this view. It just seems right to me that, by identifying the role that a given concept plays best, we can know which concept it is.

Let's apply PFE to [MARRIAGE]'s semantic amelioration. Rather than calling 'captures a specific relationship between two people' any old [MARRIAGE] function, PFE calls this [MARRIAGE]'s *proper* function. This is plausibly what [MARRIAGE] does best and is plausibly why [MARRIAGE] was perpetuated in our culture. Accordingly, PFE claims that [MARRIAGE] ceases to exist if and only if it stops performing this function. Now, [MARRIAGE] captured a specific relationship between two people pre-2015 and still does so post-2015. Thus, [MARRIAGE]'s proper function persisted through [MARRIAGE]'s amelioration in 2015. And since PFE maintains that preserving a concept's proper function preserves the concept, PFE concludes that [MARRIAGE] was not replaced in 2015; changing [MARRIAGE]'s content did not change the subject.

How, then, does PFE account for [MARRIAGE]'s excluding same-sex couples pre-2015? Why doesn't [MARRIAGE] exclude same-sex couples today? Recall, I argued that concepts derive their contents from their functions. [MARRIAGE], then, must have functioned *such that* it couldn't apply to same-sex couples; [MARRIAGE] must have served some function pre-2015 that prevented it from including same-sex couples at that time. Now, assuming 'captures a specific relationship between two people' is [MARRIAGE]'s proper function and [MARRIAGE] wasn't replaced when ameliorated in 2015, then [MARRIAGE] did not, on PFE, essentially exclude same-sex couples pre-2015. If it did, then [MARRIAGE]'s including same-sex couples post-2015 resulted from a change in its proper function – and thus, [MARRIAGE] was replaced, contra our driving assumption. So, PFE does not attribute [MARRIAGE]'s excluding same-sex couples pre-2015 to its proper function. PFE rather attributes this phenomenon to one of [MARRIAGE]'s *accidental* functions.

Recall, accidental functions do not matter in terms of maintaining the subject. They are ways concepts *can* function or functions that concepts serve non-essentially. This is ultimately why the function that caused [MARRIAGE] to exclude same-sex couples pre-2015 must have been accidental. Clearly, [MARRIAGE] no longer serves the function that precluded it from including same-sex couples. For [MARRIAGE] today *includes* same-sex couples. Now, because [MARRIAGE] is today the same concept it was pre-2015, the function in question wasn't essential to [MARRIAGE]. If it was, then again, [MARRIAGE] was destroyed when it stopped serving this function – which isn't true. Whatever function caused [MARRIAGE] to exclude same-sex couples was, therefore, demonstrably non-essential to it. It was, in PFE's terms, accidental.

So, [MARRIAGE]'s persisting through its semantic amelioration in 2015 reveals that an *accidental* function caused [MARRIAGE] to exclude same-sex couples pre-2015. We can now paint the full proper functional essentialist picture of [MARRIAGE]'s semantic amelioration: Pre-2015, [MARRIAGE] served some accidental function like, 'excludes same-sex couples,' causing it to exclude same-sex couples. Post-2015, [MARRIAGE] no longer serves this function, as demonstrated by same-sex couples' inclusion in [MARRIAGE]'s partition of logical space. In 2015, then, we erased [MARRIAGE]'s function, 'excludes same-sex couples,' thus allowing it to apply to same-sex couples. That's why [MARRIAGE] today applies to same-sex couples, whereas it didn't before, according to PFE.

Now again, since 'excludes same-sex couples' was one of [MARRIAGE]'s accidental, non-essential functions, [MARRIAGE] was not replaced when semantically ameliorated, according to PFE. For [MARRIAGE]'s proper function remained untouched during

[MARRIAGE]'s amelioration.¹⁹ Thus, whereas Haslanger faces the challenge of denying something that, I argued, her functional essentialism necessitates – that [MARRIAGE]'s semantic amelioration involved a change in its function – to deny that [MARRIAGE]'s semantic amelioration replaced it, PFE faces no such challenge. Instead, PFE acknowledges and *accepts* that [MARRIAGE] underwent a functional change, since this is the only way to account for its amelioration. PFE, however, qualifies this point, maintaining that [MARRIAGE]'s change in function was non-essential, non-proper, and hence *accidental* to it. And because this change was accidental to it, [MARRIAGE] was not replaced when ameliorated in 2015, so claims PFE. PFE thus improves on Haslanger's framework by allowing concepts to experience *some* functional changes, namely, accidental ones, without being replaced. Therefore, if functional essentialism about concepts is right, PFE perhaps reveals the way we *actually* don't change the subject in semantic amelioration: by preserving concepts' proper functions.

¹⁹ I'm once again going to flag something I said in fn. 10: [MARRIAGE]'s semantic amelioration – *if* it was indeed semantically ameliorated – was no doubt much more complex than I'm letting on. I'm merely trying to fix Haslanger's account of semantic amelioration, here, which is why I proceed with the simplified picture of [MARRIAGE]'s semantic amelioration that Haslanger does.

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