

# Conceptual Engineering Online Seminar

SPRING  
2022  
PROGRAMME

The Conceptual Engineering Online Seminar is co-organized by the Department of Philosophy at the University of Zurich and the Arché Research Centre at the University of St Andrews. The meetings take place every Tuesday at 3-5pm BST/4-6pm CEST from March 29 to June 28, for a total of 14 sessions.

SESSION #11 | June 7, 2022

## CATHERINE HERFELD (Zurich) | “Thick Concepts in Economics”

In this talk, we examine the viability of avoiding value judgements encoded in thick concepts when such thick concepts are used in economic theories. Thick concepts have an evaluative and a descriptive component. We focus on what implications the use of such thick concepts might have for the tenability of the fact/value dichotomy in economics. Our suggestion is that despite attempts to rid thick concepts of their evaluative component, economists are often not successful. To support this suggestion, we focus on the strategy of explication to remove the evaluative component of thick concepts and argue that often economists either have to make value judgments or are unable to individuate out the phenomenon under analysis. We support our claim with a case study, namely the concept of addiction in Gary Becker and Kevin Murphy's *Theory of Rational Addiction* (1988). One consequence of this analysis is that theories containing thick concepts could commit the economists to making value judgements and as such undermine the fact/value dichotomy.

**ZOOM DETAILS**  
ID: 632 3422 0568  
Passcode: CEOS22

**YOUTUBE CHANNEL**  
[www.youtube.com/channel/UCconceptualEngineering](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCconceptualEngineering)

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