

Dynamics of Artifacts

Wednesday, 11 December 2024, 4pm – 5.30pm

Venue: AS3-05-23

An artifact is crafted for a function. Its function, according to many leading theories, is essential to it. If so, what an artifact is for is a timeless, “static” aspect of what it is that derives from the authority of crafters and what they crafted the artifact for. Many of us, however, are receptive to an artifact changing what it is for: it may gain or lose a function, or its original function may evolve. If so, what an artifact is for is a temporal, “dynamic” aspect of what it is that derives from the authority of users and what they use an artifact for, even if it is not what it was crafted for. The dynamic aspect allows what the static aspect precludes: change in what an artifact is for. And so the static and dynamic aspects seem in conflict. I will explore an approach that harmonizes them. It promises to accommodate our inclinations better than approaches favoring only one aspect. A broader implication is that the approach challenges the widespread assumption, shared by friends and foes of essences alike, that essences are immutable.



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Michael J. Raven is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Victoria and Affiliate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Washington. He is a co-founder and co-editor-in-chief of the journal *Metaphysics*, and also a co-founder and steering committee member of the Metaphysics Collaborative. His research focuses on metaphysics and neighboring subjects