Truth & Stereotypes

Greg Restall

THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Philosophy lecture

Philosophy lectures are *interesting*.

Stereotypes

Generics

Inference

Disagreement

Truth

STEREOTYPES

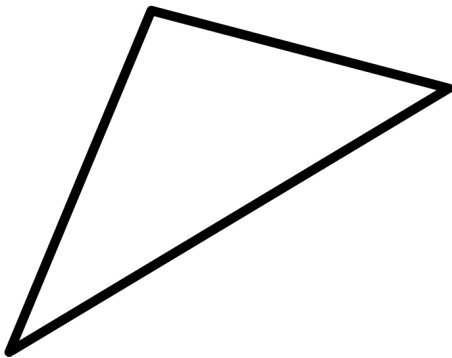*Philosophy lecture*

Bird

Man

Muslim

Acquiring Concepts

1. By *definition*

1. By *definition*

2. By *example*

A *triangle*
is a plane figure,
with three sides,
each of which
is a straight line.

Even *if* a concept is learned
by way of a definition
you can have a *stereotype* for it.

Stereotypes can be *helpful*

Definitions are *hard*.

Definitions are *hard*.

Examples are *specific*.

Definitions are *hard*.

Examples are *specific*.

They can *respond* to experience.

Definitions are *hard*.

Examples are *specific*.

They can *respond* to experience.

They encode *expectations*.

Stereotypes can be *unhelpful*

Expectations don't always match reality.

Expectations don't always match reality.

They *can* blind us to what is really there.

Expectations don't always match reality.

They *can* blind us to what is really there.

They often *don't* respond to experience.

Stereotypes are "in your head" . . .

Stereotypes are "in your head" . . .

. . . but they aren't *only* in our heads.

Stereotypes are kind of *social schema*.

...schemas are understood to be representations of phenomena that organize our beliefs in a way that helps us form expectations and process new information. Groups form shared schemas that enable their members to respond similarly to circumstances they encounter. Schemas encode knowledge and also provide scripts that frame our interaction with each other and our environment; such scripts can guide group members through collective events or even organize a life.

— *Sally Haslanger* Resisting Reality, (*Oxford, 2012*)

… in our use of *language*.

… in our use of *language*.

Language is a *central* way
(though not the *only* way)
we share our representations,
our expectations, and our knowledge.

GENERICS

Fs are Gs

- All Fs are Gs

- Most Fs are Gs

- Some Fs are Gs

- The Fs I've seen are Gs

- Fs are usually Gs

- ~~All Fs are Gs~~

- Most Fs are Gs

- Some Fs are Gs

- The Fs I've seen are Gs

- Fs are usually Gs

- ~~All Fs are Gs~~

- ~~Most Fs are Gs~~

- Some Fs are Gs

- The Fs I've seen are Gs

- Fs are usually Gs

- ~~All Fs are Gs~~

- ~~Most Fs are Gs~~

- ~~Some Fs are Gs~~

- The Fs I've seen are Gs

- Fs are usually Gs

- ~~All Fs are Gs~~

- ~~Most Fs are Gs~~

- ~~Some Fs are Gs~~

- ~~The Fs I've seen are Gs~~

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- ~~The Fs I've seen are Gs~~

- ~~Fs are usually Gs~~

Fs are Gs

Philosophy lectures are interesting.

Birds fly.

Men are dangerous.

Opinion Rape and sexual assault

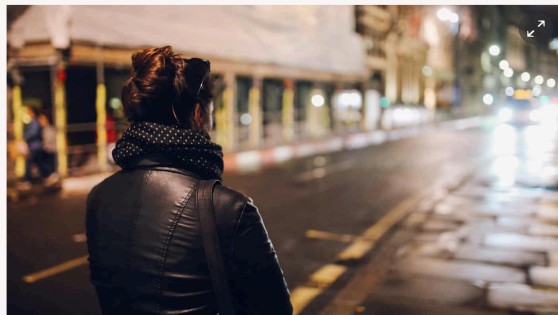# Imagine if men were afraid to walk home alone at night

Katy Guest

There was uproar when women discussed an imaginary 9pm curfew on men, but the anger is misdirected

Mon 8 Oct 2018 20.26 AEDT

13,580

▲ 'If women found themselves in charge of the world, they would … walk places, sometimes, without feeling scared.' Photograph: lechatnoir/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Muslims are peaceful.

Muslims Unite for Pittsburgh Synagogue

Support Shooting Victims with Short-Term Needs (Funeral Expenses, Medical Bills, Etc)

🔥 914

Muslims Unite for Pittsburgh Synagogue
Donate to Shooting Victims' Families
LaunchGood.com/Synagogue »
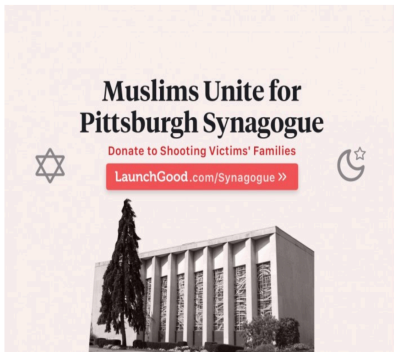
📍 Pittsburgh, PA   🏷 Causes

$112,285
funded of $125,000 goal

2572
supporters

8
days left

SUPPORT

PARTIAL FUNDING
This campaign will collect all funds raised by Nov 7, 2018 4:45 PM.

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Muslims Unite to Help Pittsburgh Synagogue

✉ Email Campaign Creator

Donald Trump

Trump links UK crime rise to 'spread of Islamic terror'

In latest Twitter outburst US president makes terrorism link even though annual figures cover all police-recorded offences

Jamie Grierson
✔ @JamieGrierson
Sat 21 Oct 2017 00.40 AEDT

7,534

⊘ This article is over **1 year old**

▲ Donald Trump: 'United Kingdom crime rises 13% annually amid spread of Radical Islamic terror. Not good.'
Photograph: Getty

Donald Trump has erroneously linked a rise in recorded crime in England and Wales to the "spread of radical Islamic terror" in his latest outburst on Twitter.

We *argue* about claims like these.

We *argue* about claims like these.

A *lot*.

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NotAllMen

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The correct title of this article is #NotAllMen. The substitution or omission of the # is due to technical restrictions.

#NotAllMen is a popular Internet meme.[1][2] It is a shortened hashtag version of the phrase **not all men are like that**,[3] sometimes abbreviated **NAMALT**.

A *Time* magazine article on the subject states that "Not all men" was previously stated as an object of frustration, but in early 2014 it became usually used as an object of mockery. Intended to counter generalizations about men's behavior, the phrase has been criticized for deflecting conversations from uncomfortable topics, such as sexual assault.[4][5]

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But it's hard to see
what generics *say*.

Birds lay eggs

All birds lay eggs?

All birds lay eggs? — No. Male birds don't.

All birds lay eggs? — No. Male birds don't.

Most birds lay eggs?

All birds lay eggs? — No. Male birds don't.

Most birds lay eggs? — No. Many die before they they lay.

Mosquitos carry Ross River Fever

Only a *tiny fraction* of mosquitos
around the world carry RRF.

The *logic* of generics is just *weird*

Birds lay eggs.

Birds lay eggs. — *True*

Birds lay eggs. — *True*

Birds are female.

Birds lay eggs. — *True*

Birds are female. — ???

Birds lay eggs. — *True*

Birds are female. — ???

But *more* birds are female than lay eggs!

This is a puzzle

Generics are *pervasive.*

Generics are *pervasive*.

But it's difficult to grasp how they work.

We acquire generics from an early age.

We learn with them
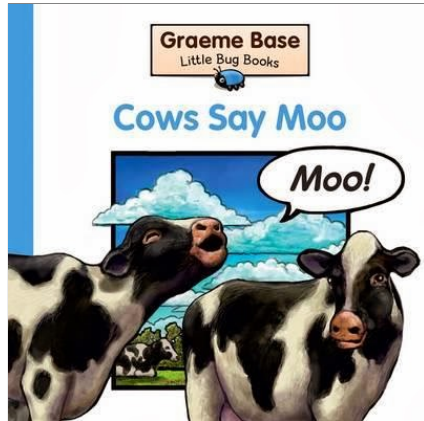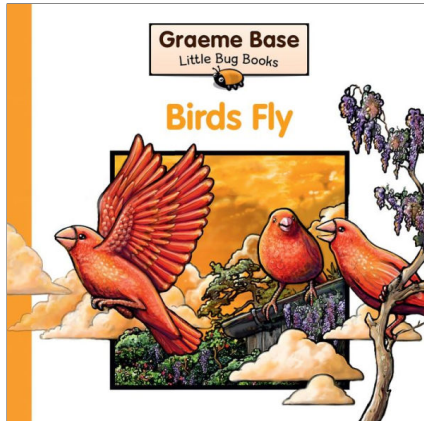
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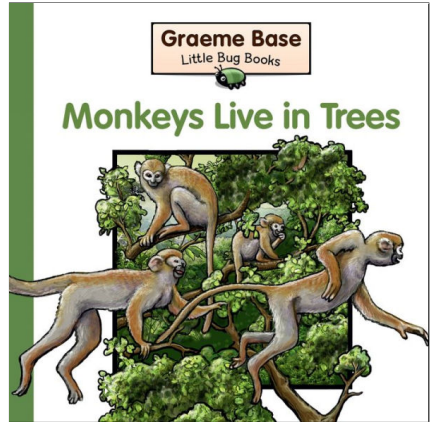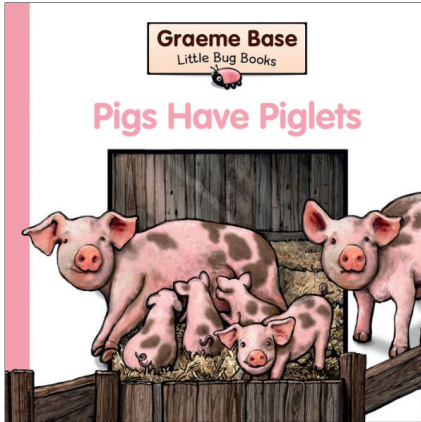
So how *do* they work?

So how *do* they work?

Can we shed any light
on the *arguments*
we have about generics?

INFERENCE

Inferring is an action

Consider the difference:

Consider the difference:

Tweety is a bird. Tweety flies.

Consider the difference:

Tweety is a bird. Tweety flies.

Tweety is a bird. *So*, Tweety flies.

Consider the difference:

Tweety is a bird. Tweety flies.

Tweety is a bird. *So*, Tweety flies.

There is a difference between making two assertions, and making one assertion to *give a reason* for another.

Tweety is a bird. So, Tweety flies.

Tweety is a bird. So, Tweety flies.

ABELARD: Does Tweety fly?
ELOISE: Yes, she's a bird.

ABELARD: Does she have stripes?
ELOISE: Yes, she's a zebra.

ABELARD: Does she have stripes?
ELOISE: Yes, she's a zebra.

ABELARD: Is she a zebra?
ELOISE: Yes, she has stripes.

ABELARD: Does she have stripes?
ELOISE: Yes, she's a zebra.

ABELARD: Is she a zebra?
ELOISE: Yes, she has stripes.

Each direction can make sense,
given an appropriate context.

ELOISE: She has stripes.
ABELARD: Why?
ELOISE: She's a zebra.

ELOISE: She has stripes.
ABELARD: Why?
ELOISE: She's a zebra.

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ABELARD: Why?
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Each direction can make sense,
given an appropriate context.

Reason giving is *defeasible*, or *non-monotonic*:

Tweety is a bird. So, Tweety flies.

Reason giving is *defeasible*, or *non-monotonic*:

Tweety is a bird. So, Tweety flies.

Tweety is a bird. *Tweety is a penguin*. ~~So, Tweety flies~~.

Claim: *Generics make inferences explicit*

Tweety is a bird. So, Tweety flies.

— Birds fly.

Tweety is a bird. So, Tweety flies.

— Birds fly.

She's a zebra. So, she has stripes.

Tweety is a bird. So, Tweety flies.

— Birds fly.

She's a zebra. So, she has stripes.

— Zebras have stripes.

Claim: *Generics make inferences explicit*

Tweety is a bird. So, Tweety flies.

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— Zebras have stripes.

She has stripes. So, she's a zebra.

Tweety is a bird. So, Tweety flies.

— Birds fly.

She's a zebra. So, she has stripes.

— Zebras have stripes.

She has stripes. So, she's a zebra.

— Striped things are zebras.

Claim: *Generics make inferences explicit*

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— Birds fly.

She's a zebra. So, she has stripes.

— Zebras have stripes.

She has stripes. So, she's a zebra.

— Striped things are zebras.

— Striped horses are zebras.

I can *make explicit* my preparedness to infer that something is a G from the fact that it's an F (or to *explain* being G by way of being F) by saying

Fs are Gs.

This explains many of the distinctive features of generics

- *Exceptions*: **Birds fly**. (*Yes!* Despite penguins.)

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- *Weird logic of generics*: **Birds lay eggs**. (*Yes!*) **Birds are female**. (*No!*)

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    - **Does Tweety lay eggs?** Yes, **Tweety is a bird**. (*Good!*)

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    Is Tweety female? Yes, **Tweety is a bird**. (????)

    Or, **Tweety lays eggs** since **Tweety is a bird**. (Good!)
    Tweety is female since **Tweety is a bird**. (???)

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- *Low rate generics with striking properties*: **Mosquitos transmit RRF**.

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  - We are happy to explain **This transmits RRF** by granting **this is a mosquito**.

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▸ *Low rate generics with striking properties*: **Mosquitos transmit RRF**.

    ▸ We are happy to explain **This transmits RRF** by granting **this is a mosquito**. (*Remember this*: it will come up again.)

Inference and explanation
are *very* basic practices.

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(How often do kids ask "*why*"?)

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So it's not surprising that generics
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Inference and explanation
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(How often do kids ask "*why*"?)

So it's not surprising that generics
are *everywhere* in our thought and talk.

The inferences associated with
a concept form part of its *schema*.

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NotAllMen

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*The correct title of this article is **#NotAllMen**. The substitution or omission of the # is due to technical restrictions.*

#NotAllMen is a popular Internet meme.[1][2] It is a shortened hashtag version of the phrase **not all men are like that**,[3] sometimes abbreviated **NAMALT**.

A *Time* magazine article on the subject states that "Not all men" was previously stated as an object of frustration, but in early 2014 it became usually used as an object of mockery. Intended to counter generalizations about men's behavior, the phrase has been criticized for deflecting conversations from uncomfortable topics, such as sexual assault.[4][5]

Contents [hide]

ELOISE Men are violent.

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ABELARD No, not *all* men.

ELOISE Men are violent.

ABELARD No, not *all* men.

ELOISE ???

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ABELARD No, not *all* men.

ELOISE ???

ABELARD *Actually*, the majority of men are non-violent.

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ELOISE ???

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ABELARD No, not *all* Muslims.

ELOISE ???

ELOISE Muslims are terrorists.

ABELARD No, not *all* Muslims.

ELOISE ???

ABELARD *Actually*, the vast majority of Muslims are peaceful.

ELOISE   Muslims are terrorists.

ABELARD   No, not *all* Muslims.

ELOISE   ???

ABELARD   *Actually*, the vast majority of Muslims are peaceful.

ELOISE   ???

ELOISE Sharks are dangerous.

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ABELARD No, not *all* sharks.

Not all Sharks!

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ELOISE ???

ELOISE Sharks are dangerous.

ABELARD No, not *all* sharks.

ELOISE ???

ABELARD *Actually*, the vast majority of sharks are harmless.

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ELOISE ???

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ELOISE ???

ELOISE Mosquitos carry Ross River Fever.

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ABELARD No, not *all* mosquitos.

ELOISE Mosquitos carry Ross River Fever.

ABELARD No, not *all* mosquitos.

ELOISE ???

ELOISE Birds fly.

ELOISE Birds fly.

ABELARD No, not *all* birds.

ELOISE Birds fly.

ABELARD No, not *all* birds.

ELOISE ???

What can we do about
these disagreements?

Don't use generics!

Don't use generics!

Use explicit quantifiers,
like *all*, *some*,
at least 20%, etc . . .

Good luck with that!

Use generics,

while being aware
of what they are,
and what they aren't.

If I say that *birds fly*,

If I say that *birds fly*,

I am shaping my *expectations*,
and my *explanations*,

If I say that *birds fly*,

I am shaping my *expectations*,
and my *explanations*,

and I'm putting it out there
to shape yours, too.

Inference
(offering a *reason*),
is a *social practice*,
like all speech acts.

The *words*, *concepts*, and *schemas*,
you use are *learned*,
both *explicitly* and *implicitly*.
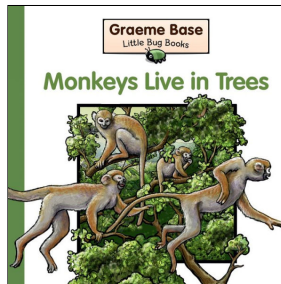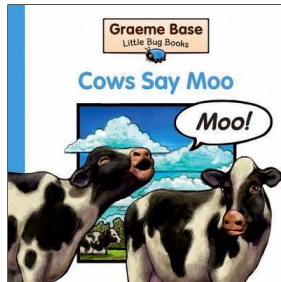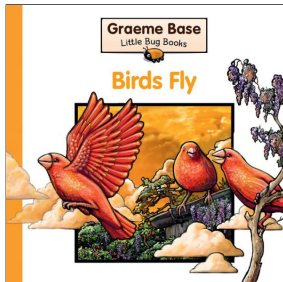
We often simply *absorb*
(or *accommodate*)
what's taken to count
as an explanation
or as an answer to a question.

If I say *Tweety's a bird*, so *Tweety flies*.

If I say *Tweety's a bird*, so *Tweety flies*.

It's *one* thing to agree or disagree
with the two claims I made.

If I say *Tweety's a bird*, so *Tweety flies*.

It's *one* thing to agree or disagree
with the two claims I made.

It's another thing to agree
or disagree with the **so**.

Expectations
and explanations
are highly *local*.

Opinion Rape and sexual assault

Imagine if men were afraid to walk home alone at night

Katy Guest

There was uproar when women discussed an imaginary 9pm curfew on men, but the anger is misdirected

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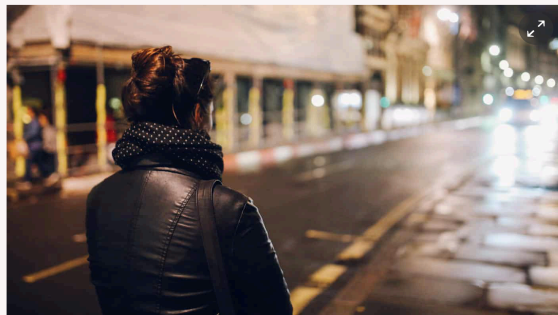
⚠ 'If women found themselves in charge of the world, they would ... walk places, sometimes, without feeling scared.' Photograph: lechatnoir/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Q: How did you get injured?

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A: I was in the park at night.
A man attacked me.

Q: How did you get injured?

A: I was in the park at night.
A man attacked me.

Men are dangerous.

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Q: How did you get Ross River Fever?

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Men are dangerous.

Q: How did you get Ross River Fever?

A: My bed netting wasn't secure.
I was bitten by mosquitos overnight.

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Men are dangerous.

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Mosquitos carry Ross River Fever.

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A desparate person, short on money tried to rob me.

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Desperate people in need are dangerous.

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Desperate people in need are dangerous.

Q: How did you get Ross River Fever?

A: My bed netting wasn't secure. I was in FNQ,
and I was bitten by a mosquito of genus *Culex* overnight.

Q: How did you get injured?

A: I was in the park at night.
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Desperate people in need are dangerous.

Q: How did you get Ross River Fever?

A: My bed netting wasn't secure. I was in FNQ,
and I was bitten by a mosquito of genus *Culex* overnight.

Mosquitos of genus Culex, in FNQ, carry Ross River Fever.

▸ *Man*, or *desparate person, short on money*, or . . . ?

- *Man*, or *desparate person, short on money*, or . . . ?

- *Mosquito*, or *Mosquito of genus Culex*, or . . . ?

- *Man*, or *desparate person, short on money*, or . . . ?

- *Mosquito*, or *Mosquito of genus Culex*, or . . . ?

- *Muslim*, or *person prone to violent responses to tension, radicalised by an ideology*, or . . . ?

We tend to favour descriptions we think we can *grasp*.

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If all the RRF-carrying mosquitos glowed bright pink,

We tend to favour descriptions we think we can *grasp*.

If all the RRF-carrying mosquitos glowed bright pink,
we'd probably not say "*mosquitos carry RRF*."

We tend to favour descriptions we think we can *grasp*.

If all the RRF-carrying mosquitos glowed bright pink,
we'd probably not say "*mosquitos carry RRF.*"
Instead, we'd say "***pink** mosquitos carry RRF.*"

We *really* want explanations for things
we want to *avoid* or *control*.

Violence, terrorism, disease, and so on.

- Different distinctions are salient from different perspectives, and from different traditions.

Which Generics Make Sense? . . . and to whom?

‣ Different distinctions are salient from different perspectives, and from different traditions.

‣ A robust ecology of different perspectives should help expand and refine the available repertoire.

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   – This would require different communities in which different explanations and expectations are explored and developed . . .

Which Generics Make Sense? . . . and to whom?

- Different distinctions are salient from different perspectives, and from different traditions.
- A robust ecology of different perspectives should help expand and refine the available repertoire.
  - This would require different communities in which different explanations and expectations are explored and developed . . .
  - . . . and space for these communities to communicate and contend.

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▸ Stereotypes make a difference to those who *judge* and those who are *judged*.

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▸ A robust ecology of different perspectives should help expand and refine the available repertoire.

    – This would require different communities in which different explanations and expectations are explored and developed . . .

    – . . . and space for these communities to communicate and contend.

▸ Stereotypes make a difference to those who *judge* and those who are *judged*.

    – It makes a difference to treat men as dangerous.

Which Generics Make Sense? . . . and to whom?

▸ Different distinctions are salient from different perspectives, and from different traditions.

▸ A robust ecology of different perspectives should help expand and refine the available repertoire.

    – This would require different communities in which different explanations and expectations are explored and developed . . .

    – . . . and space for these communities to communicate and contend.

▸ Stereotypes make a difference to those who *judge* and those who are *judged*.

    – It makes a difference to treat men as dangerous.

    – It makes a difference to *me* to know that (many) women experience men as dangerous.

Which Generics Make Sense? . . . and to whom?

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  – It makes a difference to *me* to know that (many) women experience men as dangerous.

  – It makes a difference to *Muslims* to be stereotyped as terrorists.

Shifting people's generic judgements involves shifting their practices of *explanation* and *expectation*.

Can generics be *true*?

Well, it's *true* that men are dangerous
if (and only if) men *are* dangerous.

Can generics be *objectively* true?

It's true that I am standing
if (and only if) I am standing.

ELOISE I am standing.
ABELARD I am not standing.

Disagreement?

ELOISE I am standing.
ABELARD I am not standing.

ELOISE Men are dangerous.
ABELARD Men are not dangerous.

Disagreement?

ELOISE I am standing.
ABELARD I am not standing.

ELOISE Men are dangerous.
ABELARD Men are not dangerous.

ELOISE *Homer Hudson Chocolate Rock Icecream* is delicious.
ABELARD *Homer Hudson Chocolate Rock Icecream* is not delicious.

We can *disagree* with generics, because our practice of *inferring* and *explaining* is social.

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We're in this practice of interpreting and understanding the world *together*.

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about truth and generics.
But it gives us a place to *start*.

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To get *better* with our generics and stereotypes,
we all have to learn how to *explain* and to *understand*,
in our *talking* and in our *listening*,
Not just to those like us, but
also those very different from us.

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That is not merely a *theoretical* goal.

. . . to where?

What would the world be like,
for that to be *possible*?

What would the world be like,
for that to be *possible*?

And what can we do
to help it along the way?

Thank you!

SLIDES: http://consequently.org/presentation/
2018/truth-and-stereotypes/

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