What's the Point of State-of-Nature Models?

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Introduction

Practical explanations are tools which aim to clarify the evolution and function of our conceptual practices. There is current discussion about how we ought to construct and interpret practical explanations, and more specifically if state-of-nature models are useful when doing this. Model-based explanations utilize and argue in favor of state-of-nature models; paradigm-based explanations on the other hand, do not. Further contention concerns firstly whether state-of-nature models are best understood as fictional or historical representations, secondly if they reveal some fundamental basic function of a conceptual practice, what Queloz calls the actualist interpretation, or simply a part of it that is equal to other functions of that practice, which in turn he calls the dynamic interpretation (Queloz 2019 697-698).

In this essay, I will argue for the utility of state-of-nature models when constructing practical explanations for conceptual practices, in alignment with Queloz's dynamic interpretation of pragmatic genealogies. In opposition stands an alternative but related framework, namely the paradigm-based explanations, which diverge significantly from Queloz's pragmatic genealogy, and dismiss the use of state-of-nature models as redundant (Fricker 2019 243). In what follows, I will address the reasons behind this divergence and present an argument put forth by Mathieu Queloz in favor of the relevance of state-of-nature models in practical explanations, as well as an argument of my own, directed toward what I perceive to be an inherent flaw in paradigm-based explanations.

Since the term 'practical explanations' might be unfamiliar to some readers, section 1 of this essay covers its meaning and the method it denotes. Here, I also define terms that might be new for the uninitiated. Further, section 1 includes a motivation for the subject broadly, which seems appropriate, since the discussions and issues it covers are difficult to place in the analytic/continental divide. Section 2 gives a brief but informative summary of the two methods of practical explanation that this essay revolves around, laying the foundation for section 3,

which explores in detail the current discussion between these two methods; their points of divergence and contention, and the arguments that have been presented, ending with an intermediary conclusion. In section 4 I present my own argument against paradigm-based explanations, which if successful will have revealed a weakness perhaps worth some attention. Section 5 concludes this essay, and at the very end I offer a brief thought on a way to further strengthen pragmatic genealogies.

1. Background

Practical explanation refers to a kind of philosophical method that stands as an alternative to the analytical approach to explicating concepts. Its historical roots run deep, and can be traced back to Nietzsche, Hobbes, and Hume and their genealogies of morality, state-emergence, and justice, respectively. Its modern form, which is of concern here, grabbed a foothold with Edward Craigs 1990s book 'Knowledge and the State of Nature', and many variations have since been put forward by different philosophers. Bernard Williams took a more historical approach (see Williams 2002), Miranda Fricker started out in line with Craig but went on to develop her own paradigm-based method, Kusch, McKenna and Queloz not only raised important meta-philosophical questions, but also developed and strengthened Craigs position (see Kusch & McKenna 2020 and Queloz 2019; 2020a; 2020b). Queloz, whose work has influenced this essay greatly, also brought some well needed structure and formulated a very helpful general taxonomy of what quickly became a variegated issue.

Craig's method has been referred to as 'practical genealogy', or simply 'genealogy', which may seem fitting for two reasons. Firstly, it recalls the method's historical roots in the works previously mentioned, which, depending on one's philosophical leanings, may provoke adherence or rejection. Secondly, it reflects a common practice within the method itself, namely that of looking at the origin of a concept in a state-of-nature setting, and from there trace its development. However, the discussion has developed to a point of conflict over the utility of

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that specific origin-oriented aspect of the method (see Fricker 2019 & Queloz 2019). Therefore, to accurately reflect the current state of the discussion it is more appropriate to use the term 'practical explanations' when referring to the method as a whole. Subsumed under this term are model-based explanations and paradigm-based explanations – the two main kinds of practical explanations.

1.1 Practical explanations

Practical explanations, not surprisingly, aim to explain something, so what is it exactly? The short answer is a concept (like knowledge or justice), which is to be explained in terms of its social function, its role and significance for human beings living together in communities under various circumstances. We apply a multitude of concepts, implicitly and explicitly, every day. Social institutions, like our educational and legal systems, manifest these practices on a large scale, while a single individual operate with them personally and interpersonally. She might, for instance, lament some perceived injustice on her way to work ("that police officer shouldn't have given me a ticket!"), or question the competence and wisdom of a local politician ("that guy doesn't know what he's talking about!"). While concepts can be useful tools to be employed, they also subconsciously shape the way we see and interact with the world. Following Queloz (2020a 2), we may call the relationship between humans and concepts – how we live and operate with them – our *conceptual practices*. Practical explanations are concerned with explaining our conceptual practices in terms of their function. The concept and hence the conceptual practice may be vindicated if the function seems valuable, or undermined if it seems counterproductive or even harmful.

How are we to understand 'function' in the present context? Queloz mentions several senses. We could attribute functions to things based on their contribution to the smooth operation of a specific system, like the function of the components of traffic control, which is to ensure efficient flow (Queloz 2020b 10). Alternatively, an etiological sense ascribes function based on

the historical selection or intended purpose for which items were designed or evolved, while an agentive functions account would view functions as imposed by the intentions of interacting agents (Queloz 2020b 10). However, this essay does not aim to compare all the various notions of function, rather, a more general description will be satisfactory. To this end, function should be understood in relation to needs. The function of a conceptual practice, therefore, is to help humans to cover one or several of their basic needs, such as food, shelter and security, or other, subtler needs.

Craigs practical explanation of the concept of knowledge might serve as an example. The central question for Craig was, in short: which basic, universal human needs are met by our attribution of knowledge to agents (Kush & McKenna 2020 2, see Craig 1999)? In other words, what is accomplished by saying this person knows, and this one doesn't? The answer, he contends, is our need to 'flag good informants'. He tries to make his case by showing how his contention retroactively explains several issues around knowledge in analytic epistemology – the nature of justification, skepticism, etc. – as well as much of how we talk about knowledge agents (Kush & McKenna 2020 4, see Craig 1999). So, Craig is after the function of knowledge for humans and finds it in our basic need to identify sources (agents) of good information. It is important to note that Craigs practical explanation falls under the subtype of model-based explanations, since it employs the use of state-of-nature models.

1.2 Why bother with practical explanations?

Traditionally, according to Craig (1999 1), when trying to understand *knowledge*, we have done so by breaking down what we mean when we say that someone *knows*. Certain necessary and sufficient conditions must be met for us to correctly ascribe knowledge to someone – conditions that satisfy our shared intuitions of when we would or wouldn't attribute knowledge to some agent (Craig 1999 1). We might think, for example, that Peter does not know that it's 5pm after

looking at his watch, since unbeknownst to him it stopped working the day before, even though it is in fact 5pm – his "knowledge" here is accidental.

We seem to have intuitions about the extension of knowledge (i.e., roughly the instances denoted by the concept) as well as intuitions about its intension (i.e., roughly the internal content or *meaning* of the concept). Critics would argue that our intuitions about the intension of knowledge seldom match our intuitions about its extension: we often ascribe knowledge to agents in situations where they (arguably) lack it and refrain from ascribing knowledge to agents that (arguably) have it (Craig 1999 1-2). Here is a first problem then: if we accept that the critics have a point, we must accept that we lack a clear analysis of the concept as it is commonly used and instead have a rather mysterious conception that doesn't capture its everyday use. So, Craig concludes that the traditional analytic approach still has lengths to go before reaching a clear understanding of our everyday conception of knowledge (Craig 1999 1). If the past is a sign of the future, such an enterprise is doomed to run into problems, which motivates Craig to look at alternative ways to shed light on it, one that reflects how we live by and operate with it on a daily basis.

A second issue is concerned with what Craig perceives to be a commonly held attitude amongst adherents of the analytic approach, namely that if they were to successfully analyze our everyday conception of knowledge in such a way that the intension of the concept matched our intuitions of its extension, that would mark the end of inquiry (Craig 1999 2). But Craig thinks that a successful analysis would immediately raise the question of why it is that the concept in question has been so extensively adopted by different human societies. He takes this to imply that the concept serves some very general and basic human need, and that further inquiry into the relationship between such needs and the concept itself ought to be of interest to philosophers (Craig 1999 2). Interestingly, Hannon (2015) discusses the universality of the concept of

knowledge and cites two articles showing that every human language has a word denoting it (Hannon 2015 770-771, see also Goddard 2010; Haspelmath & Tadmor 2009).

Similar to Craigs first point, Fricker contends (2016 166) that there are subject matters with philosophically important features of a distinct kind. These features are not necessary conditions, yet they are explanatorily basic and should be preserved in an account of such subject matters. Conceptual analysis, she concludes, is ill-equipped to handle these, since its aim is precisely to discern necessary and sufficient conditions and tends to exclude explanatorily basic yet non-essential features (Fricker 2016 166). When the subject matter is internally diverse, as tends to be the case for conceptual practices, the highest-common-denominator delivered by analysis could be very low, and the resulting account lackluster and thin. Fricker proposes (2016 166) instead that we opt for a paradigm-based explanation when approaching them.

2. Model-based explanations and pragmatic genealogies

When trying to understand our concepts and conceptual practices, some philosophers have opted for an alternative approach by placing them in fictionalized circumstances under which they plausibly came to exist. The thought is that a practice's original purpose can be discerned in *primitive* human settings, and that this purpose can give us information about its origin and development. The type of models in question, then, are state-of-nature-models, but the way these models are understood in the contemporary discussion that this essay covers differs in crucial aspects from their older counterparts.

Craig and Williams, for instance, did not take their state-of-nature models to reflect some actual historical period; rather, on their understanding, the models are purely fictional (Queloz 2020b 4), perhaps echoing Hume, who conceived the state-of-nature as "a mere philosophical fiction, which never had, and never cou'd have any reality" (T, 3.2.2.14). Does this imply, then, that the

models we're concerned with are intended to hold any resemblance to actual historical events? The answer is not straightforward. Firstly, we are not historiographers attempting to explain the historical roots and subsequent development of a practice; rather, the focus here is social function. Secondly, although some scholars hold the position that the models are attempts at filling in blank spaces from pre-history, effectively modelling *possible* scenarios of early human life (see Kitcher 2011), that is not the position that I will defend here. Finally, Locke, among others, imagined the state-of-nature as a situation in which humans lack any centralized authority (T.T 2.19). While this notion may resonate with readers familiar with state-of-nature models, the conception I aim to defend here, put forward by Matthieu Queloz, departs from this view as well:

- **State-of-nature society**: Its starting point is a temporally and spatially unspecified state-of-nature setting, where humans live in small, basic societies.

- **Basic plus subsequent needs**: The model illustrates how these humans have certain basic needs, which in turn create further practical needs for them to meet the demands of their environment. Furthermore, the model might consider additional needs stemming from various alternative societal structures.

- **Consequent need to solve a practical problem – Corresponding way of life**: The model shows how this collection of needs culminates in the necessity to solve some practical problem by coming up with a specific set of conventions (virtues, concepts, institutions, etc.) as an answer to it. The implication is that, considering their needs, this community would reasonably transition into a way of life where this particular set of conventions obtained.

- **Natural unconscious transition to way of life**: Additionally, the model could explain how these humans would naturally transition into that way of life without explicit, conscious thought and intention.

The approach outlined above Queloz dubs 'pragmatic genealogy', and the key to understanding it lies in viewing the state-of-nature as dynamic models (Queloz 2020b 4). He posits that these models, akin to scientific idealizations, begin from a highly idealized scenario where we emphasize specific practical needs and trace how these needs could lead a community to come up with a basic version of a conceptual practice. Initially fictional, the model gradually incorporates more complexities, including additional needs and insights from actual human history, sociology, and psychology, thus bridging fiction and historical reality. The models are dynamic in the sense that they are not static representations; they evolve by incorporating new information and perspectives, moving from an abstract, idealized starting point towards a more nuanced and realistic depiction of human conceptual practices (Queloz 2020b 4). As an example, consider Queloz analogy to explaining the design of a car to someone unfamiliar with our culture: Instead of detailing the mechanical assembly process, one could describe how the car's design meets a series of needs. Fundamentally, a car is shaped by the need for mobility. Additionally, its design accommodates the drivers need for visibility, security, comfort, and even aligns with aesthetic trends. Imagine a computer animation where a basic geometric shape gradually transforms into a recognizable car by adapting to these various user needs. This transformation doesn't mirror the actual car assembly but highlights how different design elements of the car serve specific needs (Queloz 2019 689).

Pragmatic genealogical models are designed to shed light on the significance of our conceptual practices, particularly by unveiling their social functions and how they meet our practical needs. These models highlight the collective benefits of certain practices, often unrecognized, demonstrating their value to society as a whole (Queloz 2020b 4). The strength of these genealogies lies in their ability to trace a sequence of needs, starting from a universally acknowledged need and culminating in the identification of perhaps more specific, yet previously unnoticed needs, which is addressed by the practice in focus (Queloz 2020b 5). This

process is different from theories that try to explain the emergence of functional structures through natural or market-driven forces, as it uncovers hidden functionalities in practices that may initially appear unstructured or arbitrary. By mapping out a series of needs from a basic one (need A) to specific ones (need B, C…) to need X, related to the practice, the model effectively argues that if need A is valid, then so is the necessity for need X and the corresponding practice (Queloz 2020b 6).

2.1 Paradigm-based explanations

Miranda Fricker, once a proponent of model-based (genealogical) explanation, has in recent times shifted to an alternative approach she calls paradigm-based explanation (see Fricker 2016). Her transition seemingly stems from a loss of faith in the efficacy of the fictionalizing and historicizing elements inherent in state-of-nature models, which led her to favor instead a more direct engagement with conceptual practices (Fricker 2019 243-244). The goal remains very much the same – to reveal the social function(s) behind our conceptual practices (Fricker 2019 243-244).

Rather than starting from the origins of a conceptual practice, one could look at it as it is now and try to pinpoint its role in our lives. This is what paradigm-based explanations do. 'Paradigm' refers to an aspect of the practice identified as its core, or most basic form, related to a function of the practice that is prototypical and came about to satisfy basic human needs (Fricker 2019 243-244). The process of these explanations begins with identifying such a paradigm form of the practice under investigation and then consider its role and purpose for us (Fricker 2016 165). To identify such a 'core' is perhaps the main challenge of this method, as Fricker herself notes, since the basic form of the practice inevitably evolves and multiplies into discrete variations that expand the meaning of the paradigm form (Fricker 2019 167). To make things more complicated, these evolutions happen spontaneously and implicitly over time as the practice is operative in society. In light of this, Fricker proposes a way to test whether the selected

paradigm form is truly representative of the function of the practice as a whole – whether the form is paradigmatic - by looking at how many other ancillary functions can be plausibly derived from or explained by it (Fricker 2016 165). A practice might serve several functions, and so the chosen candidate should be one from which many other functions can be derived. This is possible since the paradigm form will be at least in part present in all the derivative forms, whereas the various idiosyncrasies of the derivative forms will not be present in the basic form (Fricker 2019 167).

Consider her paradigm-based explanation of blame: Fricker here identifies the paradigm form of blame as 'Communicative Blame' (Fricker 2016 167). The point of Communicative Blame is primarily to evoke remorse in the wrongdoer, a deep moral recognition of one's wrongdoing. The key objective, crucial to the act of blaming, is to align the moral understanding of the wrongdoer with that of the person assigning blame (Fricker 2016 165, 167, 173). She goes on to explore the connections between Communicative Blame and other forms of blame, such as self-blame, noting that remorse, integral to Communicative Blame, inherently involves an element of self-blame (Fricker 2016 177). This, along with other examples, indicates that various manifestations of blame, including self-blame, can be understood as derivations of the paradigm form.

3. Models and Paradigms: A matter of interpretation

In this section I will explore Matthieu Queloz's arguments in favor of a dynamic interpretation of model-based explanations. Queloz identifies certain limitations in Miranda Fricker's interpretation of model-based explanations, which he rightfully perceives as the catalyst for her shift towards paradigm-based explanations (Queloz 2019 696). I will examine how Queloz's approach addresses these limitations, offering a compelling alternative that vindicates genealogical explanation and enriches our understanding of its complex landscape. This

examination not only sheds light on the evolution of Fricker's thought but also underscores the significance of critically assessing philosophical methods.

To start off, let's look at Fricker's interpretation of pragmatic genealogies, and briefly restate her paradigm-based method as detailed in section 2.1. According to Fricker (2019 244-245), when a pragmatic genealogist presents an account of the state-of-nature, detailing how some conceptual practice with X and Y features is operative, he is in fact describing that conceptual practice's core, or most basic form. This is easily missed, she argues, since the narrative element of fictional state-of-nature models can mislead us into thinking that what has been constructed is not a fictional account at all, but an attempt at a real history of how the conceptual practice in question came about. However, what is in fact going on, she continues, is that the state-of-nature model is a rhetoric device meant to make credible a philosophical claim about which features of our *real* conceptual practices are necessary (in a practical, "survival" sense, not in a metaphysical sense), and which are contingent (Fricker 2019 244-245). The proposed necessary features are subsequently assumed to remain in the real conceptual practice, though they may be hidden or understated. The social function of a conceptual practice that is revealed in a state-of-nature model, then, is not proposed to have temporal priority, but rather explanatory priority (Fricker 245). To be clear, on this interpretation, state-of-nature models are tools to discern the paradigm form of a presently operative conceptual practice.

If we now briefly restate Fricker's own paradigm-based method of explicating conceptual practices, it will be clear that it indeed aims to do the same thing but with greater efficiency. The paradigm-based method does not concern itself with origins and history, or any fictionalizing for that matter, but instead delves directly into our contemporary conceptual practices, testing a clearly stated hypothesis about their most basic form (Fricker 2019 245). It is, as she herself notes, "[…] a more straightforward and transparent way of achieving the very same explanatory pay-off […]" (Fricker 2019 243). Given Fricker's interpretation of pragmatic

genealogies, her development of, and move to, paradigm-based explanation is reasonable and inspiring.

So why bother with state-of-nature models and genealogies? In his 2019 paper titled "From Paradigm-Based Explanation to Pragmatic Genealogy," Matthieu Queloz presents an answer to this question. In it, he offers an arguably more nuanced view of pragmatic genealogies, enhancing their higher explanatory power in comparison to paradigm-based ones, and justifies their inherent fictionalizing and historicizing. He argues, in summary, that his interpretation of model-based explanation effectively handles conceptual practices that have been shaped by our history, and which lack both a clear paradigm-form and any obvious connection to basic human needs (Queloz 2019 684-685). Before presenting his arguments in full, I will compare Queloz's dynamic interpretation with Fricker's actualist interpretation, as Queloz calls it (2019 697), to highlight the important differences.

Queloz suggests that his interpretation of pragmatic genealogies can be understood as an elaboration of paradigm-based explanation (Queloz 2019 p687). While their goal remains the same – to explain the social function of our conceptual practices – pragmatic genealogies construct hypothetical models of prototypical forms of our conceptual practices and introduces a dynamic element in attempting to explain how we get from the prototypes to the conceptual practices that we actually have.

Dynamic interpretation (Queloz 2019 691, 698)**:**

- The movement from the early form of the conceptual practice (provided by the state-of-nature model) to the later, is one of idealization to de-idealization.

- We move from a highly idealized model with a prototypical form of a conceptual practice, to a less idealized situation by factoring in pressures from our history to reach the various practices that we now have.

- The prototypical form is not considered the core of the conceptual practice, but as a hypothetical solution to basic needs. It is similar to a simplified blueprint, which is then adapted and elaborated to reflect the complexities of real-world practices.

- This prototype is not necessarily one that ever existed.

Actualist interpretation (Queloz 2019 p698)**:**

- The movement from the early form of the conceptual practice (provided by the state-of-nature model) to the later forms is not a temporal movement. The model is a metaphor for what is explanatorily basic.

- The later forms are derivations of the basic form. They contain elements of it but have over time developed distinct features.

- The paradigmatic and non-paradigmatic form(s) are thought to represent our real conceptual practices.

3.1 Nietzsche's Challenge

Assuming the actualist interpretation, we are clearly better off turning to Fricker's paradigm-based method when we want to explain our conceptual practices, since it reaps the same explanatory rewards in a more efficient manner. If, however, we are to align ourselves with Queloz dynamic interpretation, and in so doing justify state-of-nature-models, we need good reasons to do so. There are indeed such reasons, which we find when faced with a problem that has haunted genealogists since the late 1800-hundreds. Queloz dubs this problem Nietzsche's challenge (Queloz 2019 693).

In his critique of genealogical methods, Nietzsche presents a problem for practical explanations. He contends that these approaches often err by assuming a static connection between our practices and certain basic human needs. In assuming such a connection, philosophers are thinking ahistorically. They are not taking into consideration that which lies between the

'Darwinian beast' and the modern human, namely a myriad of historical and cultural factors that has influenced and changed both our needs and our conceptual practices (GM, Preface 4, 6, 7, & Queloz 2019 693). The pitfall here is the potential misinterpretation of origin and function. This problem, initially directed at the "English genealogists", as Nietzsche calls them, and their way of hypothesizing by "[…] staring of into the blue […]" (GM, Preface, 7), we ought now direct at contemporary practical explanations. Queloz notes that Nietzsche's challenge amounts to two conditions: (Queloz 2019 694):

i. "The conceptual practice at issue must bear some instrumental relation to certain generic human needs—call this the *Generic Needs Condition*." (ibid 694)

ii. "A paradigm case of the conceptual practice must be available which exhibits this relation—call this the *Paradigm Case Condition*." (ibid 694)

He subsequently considers three cases (Queloz 2019 695), which I will present here; one where the first condition is met and the second is assumed, one where we question this assumption, and one where neither is fulfilled. Since Nietzsche's challenge is difficult to resolve, the present task is to see if any of the two interpretations of practical explanations considered in this essay can subvert it. Let's first consider the case where only the *Generic Needs Condition* is met.

Case 1

In this case there exists an instrumental relation between a conceptual practice and generic human needs, but no paradigm case that explains this relation. The issue here doesn't stem from a complete disconnection of a conceptual practice from generic needs due to historical changes. Rather, as Queloz points out (2019 695), the problem arises when a function that was previously performed by a single practice is now scattered among a variety of practices as a result of the original practice evolving over time. Additionally, a practice might evolve to serve multiple functions so intricately intertwined that pinpointing a single, defining paradigm case becomes

very difficult. Consequently, it might become impossible to determine the present purpose of the conceptual practice, or it's paradigm form, simply because the practice lacks the unity required for such definitive conclusions (Queloz 2019 695).

Recall that paradigm-based explanations (effectively synonymous with Fricker's actualist interpretation of pragmatic genealogies) work by identifying a paradigm form of a conceptual practice. Under these conditions, therefore, they fall short. Arguably, multiple paradigm-based explanations could be offered to explain the plethora of functions performed by the practice. This is a response that Queloz predicts, but ultimately deems ad hoc and unsatisfactory, noting that it also raises the question of how these functions relate to each other (Queloz 2019 696).

When a clear paradigm-form is absent, Queloz's dynamic interpretation of pragmatic genealogies fares better. Unlike paradigm-based explanations, it does not maintain that the move from the early stage of a conceptual practice to the late stage represents a move from paradigmatic to non-paradigmatic. Instead, it's a transition from an idealized model towards a de-idealized situation that more closely mirrors our current cultural circumstance (Queloz 2019 698, 699). Therefore, it doesn't require a discernable paradigm form, but allows for the construction of an idealized model to put in its place when history doesn't provide one. Pragmatic genealogy on this interpretation provides a platform from which to position and explain the various iterations a conceptual practice has adopted over time, and we can measure its success based on how well it performed this task.

Case 2

Let's consider the second case, where the *Generic Needs Condition* comes into question. This arguably gets to the heart of the matter since, as Nietzsche pointed out, we shouldn't assume that generic human needs remain static over vast swaths of time simply because we cannot imagine it otherwise. Paradigm-based explanations immediately hits a snag since they relate

the social function of a given conceptual practice to a specific set of needs (Queloz 2019 700). Fricker, for instance, argues that Communicative Blame, the paradigm form of blame, serves the generic need for interpersonal moral alignment (Fricker 2016 165, 167) and that the paradigm form of forgiveness, "Moral Justice Forgiveness", serves the generic need for "liberation from redundant blame-feeling" (Fricker 2019 249). These generic needs are taken as humanly necessary and static (Fricker 2016 180; 2019 245, 248), and ergo suffer from Nietzsche's Challenge. We have no way of establishing an instrumental connection between our conceptual practices and basic human needs.

The dynamic interpretation of pragmatic genealogy, on the other hand, is an "argumentative chain", meaning that it stresses the significance of the conceptual practice as a solution to an ongoing problem (Queloz 2019 700). As the genealogy unfolds it tracks the movement and evolution of our needs. Our need for A results in our need for B, …, resulting in a need for X. The later in the chain, the subtler the need, which in turn have evolved from increasingly obvious or basic needs the further back in the chain we go, culminating in needs we uncontroversially can be said to have. This way we can derive subtle and/or contingent needs from needs we continuously must meet (Queloz 2019 700, 701). Take *knowledge* as an example. We ascribe a social function to it that we perhaps didn't intuitively perceive, and then trace a chain of practical pressures from the very abstract to the more simple, human concerns, thereby showing a series of practical responses to ongoing needs. If we accept the ordering of needs from basic to complex, the process of deriving needs from other needs, and that conceptual practices arise as a response to these needs, Queloz maintains (2019 701, 702) that we can reasonably claim that there exist conceptual practices today that perform a social function that is instrumental to meeting the demands of generic needs, thus satisfying the *Generic Needs Condition*.

Case 3

If neither condition is met, we are dealing with conceptual practices that are local developments of history answering to needs present at a particular point in time, and so lack a clear connection to basic human needs (Queloz 2019 702). Pragmatic genealogy is luckily flexible enough to let us handle such cases by putting *local needs* in place of generic needs, to make sense of the local conceptual practice. As Queloz notes, these needs should be considered regardless, if we are committed to thinking historically (Queloz 2019 702). There is really nothing special at work here since conceptual practices are meant to accommodate needs in general. There is no inherent restriction in the method that confines it to universal and basic needs. Queloz notes (2019 703) that although paradigm-based explanations could be tailored to include local needs, pragmatic genealogy is particularly apt for addressing them.

Unlike paradigm-based explanations which, as it stands, relates current conceptual practices to current needs, the dynamic aspect of pragmatic genealogy lets it relate changes in practices to changes in needs. This is in effect the process of de-idealization, in which real history is factored into the dynamic model. It gives a "comprehensive view" (Queloz 2019 704), showing how a conceptual practice serves both basic and increasingly local needs. It also lets us tell them apart. We can differentiate between those aspects of the conceptual practice that are the product of basic facts about humans from those that are the product of particular historical contingencies.

In conclusion, when faced with Nietzsche's challenge, pragmatic genealogy, unlike paradigm-based explanations, retains its explanatory power. In the case of absent paradigm forms, pragmatic genealogy remains a productive method since it doesn't rely on them being present in the first place. In cases where it is unclear whether there is an instrumental link between our current conceptual practices and basic human needs, paradigm-based explanation suffers due to their relating current needs to current conceptual practices, while pragmatic genealogy works as an argumentative chain, linking our conceptual practices to generic needs. Lastly, in cases

where the link is completely severed, as in the case with local practices, paradigm-based explanations suffer from the same problem as in the second case, while pragmatic genealogy swaps generic needs for local needs - a feature present in the process of de-idealization.

4. An argument against paradigm-based explanations

In this section I aim to critically examine Miranda Fricker's approach to paradigm-based explanations. My argument centers on the process of selecting the paradigm form of a conceptual practice, which I contend is inherently subjective and discretionary. The crux of this contention lies in the idea that it is not possible to unveil the core or paradigm form of any current conceptual practice because different 'cores' can stand out depending on varying perspectives and intuitions of the individual inquirer. Such variability comes from the multifaceted nature of our conceptual practices, which often serve a large array of purposes. This inherent diversity means that convincing arguments could be made for different aspects of a practice to be its paradigm form, depending on how one chooses to emphasize and interpret these aspects. Therefore, while Fricker's paradigm-based explanation offers many valuable insights into practical explanation in general, and into the specific subjects (blame, forgiveness (see Fricker 2016; 2019)), it also raises questions about the possibility of defining what is fundamental in a current conceptual practice.

As mentioned in section 2.1, Fricker points to Communicative Blame as the paradigm form of blame, since it "displays blame's most basic point and purpose" (Fricker 2016 171). Additionally, she claims that:

> "While there may well be more than one point in blaming each other for wrongdoing (and
> allowing of course that people's actual motives, if any, in blaming may be different again)
> this overarching transformative function is offered as the core of the answer to the general
> question whether our practice of blame can be seen, when we step back from it, as serving

a positive purpose, or whether we would collectively do better to 'rise above' blame to some

other way of living with each other". (Fricker 2016 166)

She characterizes blame – in its core form - as an interpersonal, illocutionary speech act, where one person accuses another of wrongdoing with the intention of evoking in them a feeling of remorse. This, in turn, is done to reach "an increased alignment of moral understanding" between the blamer and the blamed (Fricker 2016 172-173). When characterizing Communicative Blame as an illocutionary speech act, Fricker says about these types of speech acts that "they cannot be fully successfully performed without the uptake of the hearer" (Fricker 2016 171), meaning that for the act of blaming to be successful, the blamed party needs to recognize the blamers intention to blame them.

Communicative Blame is surely representative of other cases of blaming, and it is indeed an interesting part of the practice that is worthwhile to investigate. What concerns me, however, is simply the crowning of it as the paradigm form, when other candidates are arguably equally plausible candidates. It could be argued, for instance, that blame's most basic point and purpose is to provide emotional release for the blamer – to blow off steam, so to speak – to avoid scaling up to aggression towards the blamed party *or anyone else*. Call this "Communicative Blame +". One could also argue that this element (blowing off steam) to varying degrees is present in every act of blaming.

Now, let's consider Fricker's claim that the paradigm form will be at least in part present in the derivative forms, and not vice versa. If I blame someone for something and they recognize my doing so, I have indeed blown off steam, as well as successfully communicated my disapproval of their behavior, hopefully moving towards an increased mutual moral understanding. However, if I, in a conversation with a friend, blame my boss for my subpar work environment, I have not communicated my disapproval to the blamed party for them to recognize this, and there is no shot at increasing any mutual moral understanding. Yet I have still blown off steam,

be it to a friend. This would imply that Communicative Blame is derivative in relation to Communicative Blame +, since the latter is present in the former, and not vice versa.

The second scenario, one might argue, doesn't adhere to the rules of illocutionary speech acts since there is no uptake in the blamed party. My answer is that it doesn't adhere to *certain* illocutionary speech acts. Following Searl (1975 356-357), simply expressing a psychological state (e.g., frustration) belongs to the class of illocutionary speech acts known as *expressives*. For expressives, Searle states that there is no "direction of fit", meaning that they are not about matching words to the world or changing the world to match the words. Instead, their *illocutionary point* is to express a psychological state. The truth of the proposition expressed in an expressive is *presupposed*, not subjected to the typical alignment or misalignment with the state of the world. In expressing feelings or attitudes, the speaker is neither describing the world nor trying to change it to match their words; they are simply articulating their internal state (Searle 1975 356-357). The main requirement is given by the sincerity conditions (Green 2021, see Searle 1969 62), which require that the speaker is in the psychological state that her speech act requires. Nowhere is it required that the particular act of blaming be addressed *to the blamed party*. Given this, why not call "Communicative Blame +" the paradigm form of blame? It seems plausible that other iterations of blame can be derived from it, and it aids to a possible vindication of the conceptual practice given that venting one's frustrations is something positive. Fully exploring that possibility here is not necessary, and it suffices to say that it intuitively is something positive *up to a point*.

We can in place of a paradigm-based explanation, outline a model-based explanation of blame along the lines of Queloz dynamic interpretation of pragmatic genealogy. Starting in a state-of-nature setting, we can assume the basic need in individuals to vent their frustrations – to blow off steam – to other members of the community. This in turn is aligned with another basic need for *keeping peace* in the community as a whole, understood as something like maintaining order.

If individuals instead opted for the opposite approach, that of 'bottling up', we can imagine the community would suffer from the inevitable instances of intense emotional discharge. Such instances would likely damage interpersonal relationships, weakening the community and the units within it (e.g., families). Blame then, performs the social function of blowing of steam and keeping the peace, possibly together with other conceptual practices. Both needs subsequently align with the need for cooperation, which in turn aligns with further and further needs. We can reasonably assume that the need for increasing interpersonal moral alignment evolves as a derivation of the social function of blame somewhere in this process. Addressing these needs through conventions recalls our valuing good listeners and confidants, the catholic practice of confession (venting feelings of resentment and guilt to a neutral party), sports with its inherent animosity between supporters of opposing teams, public trials, to name a few – all ways of blowing off steam. It seems reasonable to assume that such conventions would come about naturally and unconsciously. Sports (be it a fight to death in the Colosseum, or ping pong), for instance – explicitly entertainment, yet also serves the need for blowing off steam – certainly comes about intuitively and naturally. If we look at modern sports that are highly developed and organized, like football or boxing, they are surely the result of much conscious forethought. But more crude forms arguably emerge naturally, since the contrary would imply that the earliest form of something resembling football would have been meticulously planned[1].

The initial state-of-nature society here serves as the idealized model and starting point for inquiry. I proposed a prototypical form of the conceptual practice *blame*, and showed how it satisfied certain basic needs in carrying out its basic social function of blowing off steam. From here the prototypical practice starts to evolve as other needs are factored in, and derivations of

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[1] I find that the element of violence, prevalent particularly in older sports (most notoriously the games held in the Roman Colosseum, but also consider football in the 14th century, practically a bloodbath in comparison to what we have today (Russell & Kussan 2020)), telling of natural development. It is surely a form of blowing off steam, and to some extent a part of human nature considering its prevalence throughout history. It would therefore make sense to try to contain it in an organized setting – a sport – and gradually refine that setting towards a less violent one.

the practice forms. The dynamic element comes into play in the process of de-idealization, where I briefly considered conventions factored in from real history. Obviously, this was not an exhaustive genealogical explanation of blame since a full treatment would require immense time and effort. The point was rather to show what a genealogical explanation of blame could look like in place of a paradigm-based explanation I found wanting.

5. Conclusion

This essay has critically examined the utility of state-of-nature models in constructing practical explanations for conceptual practices, particularly in contrast to paradigm-based explanations. It has argued in favor of Queloz's dynamic interpretation of pragmatic genealogies over Fricker's actualist interpretation. A clear feature of pragmatic genealogy has been shown in its capacity to accommodate for the evolving nature of human needs and conceptual practices. This feature, largely absent in paradigm-based explanations, was the focus of section 3, and is illuminating enough to conclude that pragmatic genealogies, and therefore state-of-nature models, are indeed useful for practical explanations of conceptual practices. Fricker's dismissal of state-of-nature models therefore seems unwarranted, and her actualist interpretation of pragmatic genealogy appears underdeveloped at best. This is not to say that paradigm-based explanations are useless. In its current state, it functions as a practical explanation with a narrower scope, suitable for explaining our current conceptual practices. Fricker's explanations of blame (2016) and forgiveness (2019) offer fascinating insights into practical explanations in general, as well as into the respective subject matters. However, my own argument, presented in section 4, raised an important question about the possibility of defining what is at the core of any conceptual practice. Although the precise impact of the argument is hard to determine, it's fair to say that it deserves attention and that the subjectivity inherent in the process ought to be addressed.

Before concluding this essay, I want to address *very briefly* a difficulty for model-based explanations in genealogy, particularly in the construction and interpretation of state-of-nature models. Given that these models seek to explain human conceptual practices, it would make sense for genealogists to consider the *human* more extensively. This would entail a deeper engagement with history, ethnology, anthropology, and psychology. I believe this is possible while remaining largely within the domain of philosophy. An immediate gain would be models that more accurately reflect the variation inherent in human conceptual practices cross culturally, providing richer, more relevant, and more inclusive explanations.

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