

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

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BIOGRAPHY



Katie McShane is professor of philosophy at Colorado State University who specializes in environmental ethics and ethical theory. She has written articles on ecosystem health, the place of environmental concerns in theories of value, and the moral significance of our emotional engagements with nature. Her work has been published in journals such as *Philosophical Studies*, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, *Environmental Ethics*, *Environmental Values*, and *Ethics and the Environment*. She received her Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Michigan in 2002 and her B.A. from Northwestern University in 1993. She worked previously as an assistant professor at North Carolina State University.

AGAINST ETIOLOGICAL FUNCTION ACCOUNTS OF INTEREST

ABSTRACT

The etiological account of function defines a part's/trait's function as whatever that part/trait was selected for doing. Some philosophers have tried to employ this as an account of biological interests, claiming that to benefit an organism is to promote its etiological functioning and to harm it is to inhibit such functioning. I argue that etiological functions do not yield a good account of biological interests. I first explain the special role that etiological accounts of function have played within theories of biological interests, with particular attention to recent work on synthetic biology. I next describe the problems with allowing etiological accounts of function to play this role. Finally, I consider the theoretical alternatives to etiological function accounts of interests and assess the advantages and disadvantages of these alternatives.

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