



University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

Department of Philosophy

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Master Class

# The Progress of Inquiry

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Columbia University

12-13 October 2021

## Synopsis

People engage in inquiry not only when they attempt to gain factual knowledge, but in other domains of life as well. We ask what we should do, how we should live, what experiences would be worthwhile – and how we can improve our physical skills, tend an attractive flowerbed, or finish a poem. Traditional epistemology views the case of factual knowledge as paradigmatic, identifying inquiry as progressive insofar as it delivers the truth. The result of this stance is to raise difficult (if not intractable) issues with respect to other domains. If we make progress in moral inquiry or in mathematics or in cooking, how should we make sense of the notion of truth that undergirds our advances? Must there be realms of moral values, abstract objects, ideal skills represented in the discoveries successful inquiries yield?

Pragmatism, especially in the versions developed by William James and John Dewey, inverts the supposed relation between progress and truth. Instead of viewing progress as measured by our ever closer approximations to a pre-existent truth, pragmatists propose that truth is what emerges from well-conducted inquiry. The proposal opens up the possibility of treating the varieties of inquiry in a uniform fashion, and, within the overarching framework, of distinguishing the special features of particular domains.

This class will attempt to elaborate this approach with respect to the sciences, mathematics, morality, and ethics. Its aim will be to show how to reorient traditional questions in epistemology and metaphysics, so that well-known difficulties are dissolved.

## **Programme and Readings**

### **Tuesday, 12 October 2021**

#### **9:00 – 10:30: Varieties of Inquiry**

Kitcher, Philip: *Homo Quaerens*, draft, chapter 1.

#### **11:00 – 12:30: Progress**

Kitcher, Philip: *Homo Quaerens*, draft, chapter 2.

#### **13:30 – 16:00: Truth**

Kitcher, Philip: *Homo Quaerens*, draft, chapters 3 and 4.

#### **16:30 – 18:00: Scientific Progress**

Kitcher, Philip: *Homo Quaerens*, draft, chapter 5.

### **Wednesday, 13 October 2021**

#### **9:00 – 12:00: Mathematical Progress**

Kitcher, Philip: *Homo Quaerens*, draft, chapter 7.

#### **13:00 – 15:30: Moral Progress**

Kitcher, Philip: *Moral Progress*, OUP, 2021, chapters 1 and 2.

#### **16:00 – 18:30: Ethical Progress**

Kitcher, Philip: *Moral Progress*, OUP, 2021, chapter 9.

Registration: [phd@philos.uzh.ch](mailto:phd@philos.uzh.ch)

Details: [https://www.philosophie.uzh.ch/de/studies/doctorate/master\\_classes.html](https://www.philosophie.uzh.ch/de/studies/doctorate/master_classes.html)

Venue: University of Zurich

Ethik-Zentrum

Zollikerstrasse 115

8008 Zürich

Room: Kutscherhaus

No fees apply. Participants are expected to have read the texts.

PhD students at the UZH are required to book the module in order to get credit points.

Possible short-term changes due to Covid-19 will be announced in advance.