

## **What Makes a Hypothesis Ad Hoc?**

Ioannis Votsis

New College of the Humanities, London

Heinrich-Heine University Duesseldorf

[votsis@phil.hhu.de](mailto:votsis@phil.hhu.de) / [ioannis.votsis@nchum.org](mailto:ioannis.votsis@nchum.org)

[www.votsis.org](http://www.votsis.org)

Natural and social scientists alike, no matter whether they are experimenters or theoreticians, can hardly carry out research without having to think about ad hoc-ness. Given the concept's ubiquity, one would imagine that it is rather well understood. Not quite. Though there is certainly agreement on what count as clear-cut cases of ad hoc hypotheses, e.g. the much-maligned Ptolemaic systems of astronomy, confusion abounds regarding what exactly makes a hypothesis or manoeuvre ad hoc. In this talk I attempt to wade through this confusion and offer some lucidity. I begin with a brief examination of some notable conceptions of ad hocness. I then point out that there is a general problem afflicting these conceptions, namely intuitive judgments that are supposed to motivate them are not always consistent. Instead of getting bogged down in an attempt to give a full-fledged analysis of the concept, which may not even be possible given the aforementioned tensions, I shift the focus to one undesirable feature, which I label 'monstrousness', often present in alleged cases of ad hoc-ness. A formal account of this feature is put forth by specifying what it is about the internal constitution of a hypothesis that makes it monstrous. The talk concludes with a discussion of some examples.