

## Jacob Stegenga

### Understanding Sexual Desire

Sexual desire is the subject of numerous sciences, which deploy a fantastic range of empirical methods and articulate theories about many aspects of our sexual desires, such as putative male-female differences in desire, the causes of libido, and why men rape. However, critics—from constructivists to conservatives—claim that these sciences cannot teach us about the nature of sexual desire. That is because these sciences are infused with social values, the empirical methods are too crude, and perhaps there simply is no real sexual nature to discover. I develop a hybrid conception of sexual desire which recognises both its bodily and its psychological aspects, and which allows us to respect some criticisms of the sciences of sexual desire while still learning from those sciences.

#### Jacob Stegenga, University of Cambridge

is a Professor in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge. He has published widely on fundamental topics in reasoning and rationality and philosophical problems in medicine and biology. Prior to joining Cambridge he taught in the United States and Canada, and he received his PhD from the University of California San Diego. He is the author of *Medical Nihilism and Care and Cure: An Introduction to Philosophy of Medicine*, and he is currently writing a book on the sciences of sexual desire.