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Oxford Philosophy 2023





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WELCOME  
From the Chair of the Faculty Board

The last two years have seen a wealth of books on twentieth century Oxford philosophy: two books devoted to Elizabeth Anscombe, Phillipa Foot, Iris Murdoch and Mary Midgley, biographies of Derek Parfit and of J.L. Austin, and recently, a book engaging with the sweep of Oxford philosophy from 1900-1960, written by our own former student, Nikhil Krishnan. This term, we were able to discuss Nikhil’s book with him when he visited The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH), and we gathered to celebrate the memories of Philippa Foot and Iris Murdoch at events organised by the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board.

But we have not just been focussing on our past. In Hilary Term, we had the opportunity to showcase the richness and variety of the Faculty’s current work in a meeting with our new Vice Chancellor, Irene Tracey. Karen Margrethe Nielsen discussed Aristotle’s account of mixed action. Anil Gomes asked what we can learn from Descartes and Socrates about how to do philosophy, and what this might tell us about the value of the tutorial method. And Rachel Fraser set out a puzzle about the permissibility of making certain kinds of promises (e.g. of making a promise to give up smoking, when you know that the evidence suggests you are unlikely to succeed in keeping this promise).

This year we’ve had a packed program of academic visits, catching up on events postponed during the pandemic. Over the last four terms, there have been three series of John Locke lectures (Angelika Kratzer on ‘Reports of What We Say, Know, or Believe’, Susan Wolf on ‘Selves Like Us’ and Jennifer Nagel on ‘Recognizing Knowledge: Intuitive and Reflective Epistemology’). We’ve also hosted the Nellie Wallace Lectures and the Isaiah Berlin Lectures (Rachel Barney, ‘The Just Society and Its Enemies: Re-reading Plato’s *Republic* in 2022’ and Béatrice Longuenesse ‘Kant and Freud on the Mind’). And this year saw the resumption of the Gareth Evans Memorial Lectures, with a talk from John Campbell on ‘Singular Causation and Free will’.



As someone who set up an undergraduate philosophy society myself many years ago, I’m very happy to note the flourishing state of our current student-run philosophy societies. The undergraduate Oxford Philosophy Society has been organizing an exciting program of lectures, reading groups, and film nights. Philiminality, founded by our remarkable DPhil student, Lea Cantor, has gone from strength to strength, culminating with an international conference on the theme, ‘Questioning “Western philosophy”’. We also have Lea to thank for her help in establishing the Oxford Network in Ancient Philosophy (ONAP), which brings together academics and students across the University, working on ancient Chinese, Indian, Roman and Greek philosophy.

Becoming Faculty Board Chair has allowed me to see the huge amount of work behind the scenes that makes all this activity possible. We all owe an immense amount to our administrative team, under the expert leadership of Rachael Sanders. Finally, I would like to thank my predecessor, Chris Timpson, who led the Faculty with such considerateness and good judgement over the last four years.

**Ursula Coope**  
*Professor of Ancient Philosophy*  
*Professorial Fellow, Keble College*



# NEWS

## Edward Harcourt Appointed a MBE

Edward Harcourt, Professor of Philosophy and Fellow of Keble College, was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the New Year Honours List for 2023 for his services to interdisciplinary research whilst working as Director of Research, Strategy, and Innovation at the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council from 2018-22.



## Lea Cantor Wins *BJHP* Beaney Prize

DPhil student, Lea Cantor (Worcester College) won the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy's* Beaney Prize for her paper 'Thales – the “first philosopher”? A troubled chapter in the historiography of philosophy'. The Beaney Prize was established in 2021 and awards £1,000 for the best paper accepted for the journal in a given year that contributes to a broader conception of the philosophical canon.



## Fabian Pregel Wins *Mind* Graduate Essay Prize

DPhil student Fabian Pregel (St Cross College) won the third *Mind* Graduate Essay Prize. The topic for the competition was 'The Philosophy of Logic', and Fabian's winning essay is entitled: 'Neo-Logicism and Gödelian Incompleteness.' Fabian's essay was published in the October 2022 issue of *Mind*, the leading philosophy journal published in the UK. He also received a cash prize of £500 and £500 worth of books published by Oxford University Press.

## Blue Plaques Unveiled for Murdoch and Foot

The Faculty is delighted to have been able to offer its financial support, along with Somerville College, to the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Scheme for the installation of plaques to memorialise Oxford philosophers Iris Murdoch and Philippa Foot. They were unveiled at ceremonies on 26 May 2023 at the houses in which Murdoch and Foot lived, on Charlbury Road and Walton Street respectively.



## Timothy Williamson Awarded Lauener Prize

Timothy Williamson, Wykeham Professor of Logic and Fellow of New College, has been awarded the Lauener Prize for an Outstanding Oeuvre in Analytical Philosophy. The award ceremony will take place on Thursday 30 May 2024 in Haus der Universität, Bern, Switzerland. For more information about the prize, see <https://lauener-foundation.ch/award.php>



## Oxford Philosophy Tops Complete University Guide

The Faculty is pleased to announce that it has been awarded first place in the subject league table of the Complete University Guide for 2024 with an overall score of 100%. The Complete University Guide is one of the three annual rankings of UK universities and is produced by Mayfield University Consultants.



# WHY NO TWO OBJECTS CAN DIFFER ONLY NUMERICALLY

**Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra**, Professor of Metaphysics and Fellow of Oriel College, introduces us to his recent work on the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles.

The principle of Identity of Indiscernibles (PII) states that no two objects or things can differ only numerically – *solo numero*, in Leibniz's famous formulation. That is, whenever there are two objects, they must differ not only numerically (otherwise they would not be two), but extra-numerically too. The Stoics, Nicholas of Cusa, Leibniz, Bolzano, and a few others, thought that the Identity of Indiscernibles is true. But there have always been detractors and nowadays a prevalent attitude is that the principle is either trivially true or manifestly false. The idea behind this assessment is simple, but doubly confused. Objects differ with respect to their properties. If the properties with respect to which, according to PII, objects must differ

include properties of identity (e.g. properties like *being identical with Napoleon* and *being identical with Aristotle*), then it is thought that PII is true, but *trivially* true, since the fact that no objects can share their properties of identity is a triviality. On the other hand, it is often thought, if we exclude from our consideration properties of identity and similar ones, we are left with so-called purely qualitative properties, properties like *being an iron sphere* and *being two miles away from an iron sphere*, which are properties the having of which does not consist in being related to any object or objects *in particular*. And it seems false that no two objects can share all such properties, since there could have been just two iron spheres, two miles away from each other, both of exactly the same diameter, same colour, same temperature, etc. This possibility is, of course, the one imagined by Max Black in 1952 in his famous article on the Identity of Indiscernibles.

In my recent book *Two Arguments for the Identity of Indiscernibles*, I present two arguments whose conclusion is PII. But I also argue that the world imagined by Black is genuinely possible. So my arguments for PII do not establish that no two objects can share all their purely qualitative properties. But they do not establish a trivial version of PII either. What is wrong, then, with the view sketched in the previous paragraph?

Two things. The first is the presupposition that the statement that no two objects can share all their properties, *where no property of any kind is excluded from consideration*, is a version of PII. That statement is indeed a trivial statement. But it is not a version of PII, for PII requires that no two objects can differ only numerically, while the trivial statement is compatible with two objects differing only numerically. This should be clear since the trivial statement is compatible with objects differing only with respect to their properties of identity (and other similar properties), but this would be to differ only numerically. The second error is the presupposition that restricting our consideration to purely qualitative properties is the only way of formulating a non-trivial version of PII. This is false because there are impurely qualitative properties (properties the having of which consists in being related to an object or certain objects *in particular*) that do not render PII trivial.

Actually, there is no trivial version of PII. This is because trivializing properties (the properties that trivialize the principle that no two objects can share all their properties, where no property of any kind is excluded from consideration) are those such that differing with respect to them does not require differing extra-numerically. Trivializing properties include properties of identity, but they are not exhausted by them. Properties like *being numerically different from Aristotle*, *being green* and *being identical with Aristotle*, and others, are also such that differing with respect to them does not require differing extra-numerically (to differ with respect to the property of *being green* and *being identical with Aristotle* one need only differ with respect to *being identical with Aristotle*, that is, one need only differ numerically). So, PII, the principle that no two objects can differ only numerically, when expressed in terms of properties, must be formulated thus: No two objects can share all their non-trivializing properties (that is, all their properties

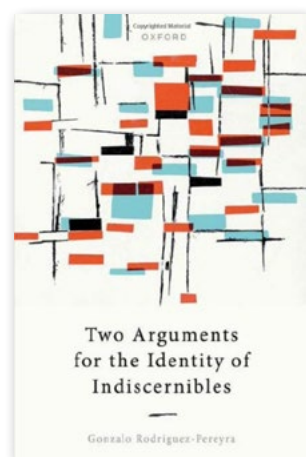
differing with respect to which requires differing extra-numerically). This shows that PII does not quantify over trivializing properties and so there is no trivial version of it.

But PII does not quantify over purely qualitative properties only, since some impurely qualitative properties are such that differing with respect to them requires differing extra-numerically. An example is the property of *being a teacher of Aristotle*. This is an impurely qualitative property since having it consists in being related in a particular way to an object in particular: *Aristotle*. But it is not a trivializing property, since differing with respect to it requires differing extra-numerically: two objects that differ with respect to it must differ not only numerically but also with respect to whom they teach.

As I implied above, I think that the world imagined by Max Black is possible and therefore two objects can share all their purely qualitative properties. Indeed, in the book I offer a novel argument against the principle that no two objects can share all their intrinsic purely qualitative properties, and a novel argument against the principle that no two objects can share all their purely qualitative properties, both intrinsic and extrinsic, thereby showing that a world like Black's is possible.



But the book also contains two novel arguments for PII, the principle that no two objects can differ only numerically or, in other words, the principle that no two objects can share all their properties which are such that differing with respect to them requires differing extra-numerically or, yet in other words, the principle that no two objects can share all their non-trivializing properties. The arguments are different in character. For instance, one of them establishes that no two objects can share all their non-trivializing properties by establishing that every object must have an unshareable non-trivializing property of a certain kind; the other one establishes that no two objects can share all their non-trivializing properties without requiring that objects must have unshareable non-trivializing properties. Also, one of them appeals to broadly Humean considerations ruling a certain type of necessary co-variation between objects; the other appeals to ideas about what grounds the having of certain properties by objects. I shall not summarise these arguments here; instead, if you want to know about them, I invite you to read the book.



*Two Arguments for the Identity of Indiscernibles* was published by Oxford University Press in 2022 and is available from all good booksellers.



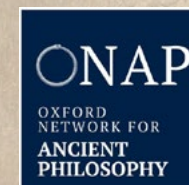
## Oxford Network for Ancient Philosophy

Academic year 2022–23 saw the launch of an exciting new research initiative in Oxford, spearheaded by the Faculty of Philosophy.

The Oxford Network for Ancient Philosophy (ONAP) brings together faculty and students specializing in ancient philosophy across the University. Oxford is an extraordinarily rich environment for the study of ancient philosophy, with leading researchers working on ancient Indian, Chinese, Greek, and Roman philosophy, across a range of Humanities faculties – including the Faculties of Philosophy, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Classics, and Theology and Religion. ONAP will support the vibrant community of staff and students working in all areas of ancient philosophy by providing up-to-date, cross-faculty resources and information geared to the study and teaching of ancient philosophy within Oxford.

The Network currently consists of twenty ‘core members’ who have permanent academic positions in Oxford, nine college lecturers and research fellows, and almost thirty doctoral students. ONAP’s Director is Professor Ursula Coope. ONAP’s first Graduate Assistant, Lea Cantor, has made an invaluable contribution in setting up and maintaining the website.

Interested readers of *Oxford Philosophy* can keep up to date with news and events by visiting the ONAP webpage and following ONAP on Twitter.





The Isaiah Berlin Lectures  
Michaelmas Term 2022

# KANT and FREUD on the MIND

Béatrice Longuenesse  
Silver Professor, Emerita  
Department of Philosophy  
New York University

Immanuel Kant and Sigmund Freud offer surprisingly parallel views of the structures of our mental life in cognition and in moral motivation. The structures Freud calls ‘ego’ and ‘super-ego’ play a normative role similar to those of what Kant calls the ‘transcendental unity of apperception’ in cognition and the ‘categorical imperative’ in moral motivation. This is not as surprising as it initially seems: Freud is the heir of a nineteenth century school of naturalistic philosophy of mind which called itself ‘physiological Kantianism’.

In all fairness, the very idea of a naturalistic descendant of Kant’s critical philosophy seems like an oxymoron. A central tenet of Kant’s system is that human beings’ normative capacities – their capacity to acquire beliefs that meet norms of justification and truth as well as their capacity to set moral norms for their own actions – escape the causal laws of the natural world. To borrow John McDowell’s terminology, the distinction between the ‘space of reasons’ and the ‘realm of law’ is the most distinctive feature of Kant’s philosophy

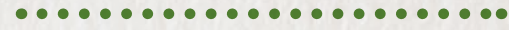
And yet, I submit that we have good reason to take seriously Freud’s explicit references to Kant and to examine the forces within Kant’s critical system that plausibly connect Kant’s and Freud’s respective views of the mind. New salience is thereby given to aspects of each thinker’s work that may otherwise have remained underestimated.

A central concept in Kant’s view of the mind is that of the ‘unity of consciousness’. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*,

Kant claims that the unity of consciousness makes us persons and puts us above all other living beings. In contrast, a chapter of Freud’s *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* is called ‘The psychical division of personality’ (*Die psychische Zerlegung der Persönlichkeit*). Freud describes human minds as torn between three structures, ‘the ego’ (*das Ich*), ‘the superego’ (*das Über-Ich*), and the ‘id’ (*das Es*). The ‘secondary processes’ characteristic of the ego, governed by the reality principle and logical rules, are disrupted by non-rational concatenations of mental contents obeying rules of their own, the rules of ‘primary processes’ at work for instance in dreams and in neurotic symptoms.

The analysis of the primary processes and their specific modes of concatenation of mental contents is certainly original to Freud. But Kant arguably is an ancestor of Freud when he insists on the contrast between the merely associative rules of imagination, on the one hand, and, on the other, the laws of transcendental logic by which the understanding imposes its own ordering on the contents of imagination to generate an objective cognition of the world. In other words, the unity of consciousness, for Kant, is not a given unity. It is to be conquered against the competing rules of the imagination, against the flights of fantasy and against the distorting influence of feelings and emotions. Those conflicting modes of concatenation of mental contents are expounded at length in Kant’s *Anthropology*. Putting Kant’s thinking to the test of Freud’s is pushing us toward a more systematic understanding of the entrenched and systematic forces competing with the rational organization of our mental





contents. Putting Freud's thinking to the test of Kant's is pushing us to a more systematic understanding of the laws of 'ego' with its 'reality principle' and elementary logical rules.

Another example of the parallels and contrasts between Kant's and Freud's respective views is the concept which Freud claimed to be his greatest discovery: the concept of 'the unconscious'. Freud was not the first to assert that many of our mental representations are unconscious. Many philosophers of the early modern and modern period defended the idea that many of our representations are representations of which we are not conscious. Kant was one of them. He also held that we are, for the most part, not conscious of the operations of our imagination, even though they are indispensable to the exercise of our understanding. But if unconscious representations and unconscious mental processes hold such an important role in Kant's view of our mental life, what is so new in Freud's view of 'the unconscious'? What is new is that unlike Kant's, Freud's focus is not on individual occurrent representations and their variable degrees of clarity or obscurity. The terrain on which Freud develops his concept of 'the unconscious' is that of memory. His focus is on the ways in which drives and affects interfere with the organization of memories and their role in cognition and volition. Attention to the workings of memory in connection to physiological and emotional drives, is the core novelty of Freud's view of the mind and the core novelty of his psychoanalytic therapeutic method. But it also offers tools for a genealogy of our normative attitudes which

is of profound philosophical import. A salient example is Freud's genealogy of our moral attitudes. Freud notoriously says that 'Kant's categorical imperative is the direct heir of the Oedipus complex.' It is often thought that Freud means thereby to reduce any type of self-described moral motivation, including Kant's purely rational categorical imperative of morality, to the expression of non-rational drives. But another way of understanding Freud's claim is the following. The very idea of categorical, unconditional imperatives is imprinted in human infants in virtue of primitive attachments to their parental figures. Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative is a late, historically conditioned form taken by the categorical structure of moral motivation. It is made possible by the advent of the Enlightenment and its ideals of freedom and rationality. While the unconditional character of moral imperatives is rooted in universal developmental features of human infants, the call for the rational justification of moral commands is, for its part, rooted in history. Pointing to that twofold origin does not decide the question whether moral commands *can* be rationally justified or *what* their justification might be. Questions of justification are not Freud's questions. They are Kant's.

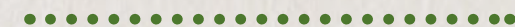
Freud's tracing back Kant's categorical imperative to structures of primitive attachment is in tune with his maintaining, in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, that love is the only civilizing factor. Love alone, Freud urges, is the origin of altruism and of what he calls 'the ego ideal'. Here Freud claims the ancestry of Plato's 'eros'. Just as, for Plato, the lover ascends



from the love of beautiful boys to the love of beautiful souls to the love of the Idea of Beauty and the Good, so, for Freud, love is at the core of human beings' capacity for developing altruism and civilization. It is, however, also the source of the most dangerous individual and social pathologies – a kind of autoimmune disease of human lives.

Now if, as Freud claims, love is foundational for human beings' ethical attitudes and Kant's categorical imperative is a historically and developmentally conditioned, rational formulation of moral imperatives, then Freud's

insights might herald Bernard Williams's claim that the 'morality system' can be superseded by an ideal of ethical life where rational deliberation is itself rooted in love. If so, Freud's developmental view of the structures of our mental life might offer a path, not only to naturalizing (and historicizing) Kant's view of normativity, but also to an enlarged view of ethical life.





# Can We Avoid Committing A SOCIAL SCIENCE?

**Alexander Prescott-Couch**, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Fellow of Lincoln College, tells us about his research into the relation between different methods in the social sciences and his work on introducing a new finals paper in philosophy of social science.

**Thou shalt not answer questionnaires  
Or quizzes upon World-Affairs,  
Nor with compliance  
Take any test. Thou shalt not sit  
With statisticians nor commit  
A social science.  
– W. H. Auden, ‘Under Which Lyre’**

Contemporary social science is in the midst of important changes. Increased quantities of data, new methods of causal inference, and more sophisticated computational models have ushered in a broad paradigm shift, which Harvard Political Scientist Gary King describes as a ‘[move] from the humanities to the sciences in terms of research style, infrastructural needs, data availability, empirical methods, substantive understanding, and the ability to make swift and dramatic progress.’ Developments in artificial intelligence promise to accelerate these trends.

This paradigm shift raises interesting and important philosophical questions. First, there are philosophical questions arising within this new paradigm. For instance, are the assumptions made about causation and explanation in these contexts sound? Second, there are philosophical questions to be raised about the paradigm itself and how it fits into the history of social science. Not all social science fits this paradigm – for instance, anthropologists often concern themselves with ‘meanings’ of events rather than their causes and historically inclined social scientists put events in historical perspective through narratives or ‘genealogies’. How do these aims connect to the new paradigm’s key aim of understanding the causal structure of the social world? And can pursuing these aims be aided by the new tools of ‘scientific’ social science, or must they be pursued (at least partially) in a different, more ‘qualitative’ way?

My own research picks up on both of these strands in the philosophy of social science. First, I’ve long been interested in assumptions about causation that structure much work in this new paradigm. Methods of causal inference in statistics, computer science, sociology, political science, and psychology are typically based on what is called an ‘interventionist’ or ‘manipulationist’ view about causal structure. This is a counterfactual view of causation according to which, roughly, C is causally relevant to E if and only if a ‘surgical intervention’ (an exogenous and isolated change) to C would lead to a change in E. Imagine the Hand of God swooping in to tweak C in isolation. If E changes under such a scenario, then C is causally relevant to E.

This view is popular in the social sciences because it can be embedded in an elegant formal framework, connects directly to the logic of experiment, and provides a plausible practical background story for why we care so much about causal knowledge. According to this background story, we care about the difference between causation and correlation because we are agents rather than mere observers, and causal information is crucial for exercising agency via manipulative control of our environment.

***While revamping the philosophy of social science curriculum, we are trying to be mindful of Oxonian W.H. Auden’s famous admonition about the social sciences in ‘Under Which Lyre’.***

Because this framework is powerful and influential, exploring its limits and normative implications is important. While the framework faces all sorts of challenges, I am particularly interested in those rooted in features of social metaphysics. Take the fact that many activities in the social world are only possible in virtue of a background of institutions and rules – for instance, the institutional rules of marriage need to be in place in order for saying ‘I do’ to count as legally marrying someone. This fact about social metaphysics can give rise to problems for interventionism because it allows for non-causal dependence relations among social properties that have distinct causal roles. The rules about who may marry whom may affect an individual’s well-being by multiple causal paths: via enabling her to get married and via other paths such as the rules’ content expressing something about her status in society. Disentangling these causal



paths (according to manipulationism) requires imagining a controlled experiment in which we manipulate the rules while holding fixed (controlling for) that marriage. However, this is impossible: we cannot hold fixed a particular instance of marrying while manipulating the institutional rules that enable that very act of marrying.

In addition to facing such theoretical challenges, the manipulationist view can also structure research in the social sciences in a limited and normatively problematic way. In particular, it encourages what Tommie Shelby calls ‘the medical model’ of social science, according to which social problems are understood from the perspective of an administrator, someone interested in knowing which targeted interventions could be used. This model seems to leave out important forms of social analysis, and, to put it dramatically, it encourages us to think of others as objects of manipulative control, as problems to be solved rather than persons to be addressed.

This thought that the manipulationist view is rooted in an administrative way of thinking has led me to become interested in other parts of social science that are more interpretive and historical. At the moment, I am working on a project concerning the epistemic aims of ‘interpretive’ social sciences and their importance for politics. This project takes its inspiration from a long-running dispute whether ‘understanding’ in the so-called ‘human sciences’ (*Geisteswissenschaften*) denotes the same kind of cognitive achievement as understanding in the natural sciences. However, rather than generalizing about the social science as a whole, I focus on particular parts of social science, those that are more ‘interpretive’ or

‘humanistic’ such as anthropology, cultural and historical sociology, and certain qualitative parts of political science. The project investigates their distinctive aims and why achieving them might be important for us practically.

For instance, I am particularly interested in what certain ethnographies are doing when they purport to help us to ‘understand the point of view’ of individuals (and groups) that might be of political importance. To take a politically charged example, there was a lot of social scientific interest in understanding the perspectives of those attracted to populist politics in the wake of Trump and Brexit. This work was somewhat controversial because aiming at such understanding was sometimes thought to objectionably require some kind of sympathy, empathy, or agreement with populists. To understand and make progress in these disputes, we need a clearer grasp of what kind of understanding is at issue.

My own view is that there are at least two quite different things that go under the heading ‘understanding a point of view’ in these contexts. One kind of understanding – which I label ‘rational understanding’ – concerns a grasp of the rational support structure of others’ social and political opinions, analogous to the kind of understanding we might have of an argument or a theory. The other, which we might call ‘empathetic understanding’, concerns affective engagement with other citizens’ situations and insight into their lived experience.

Interestingly, these two kinds of understanding can sometimes be difficult to possess together – since a clear-headed view of the logic of an objectionable viewpoint might impede empathetic identification – and (I believe) they

are politically relevant for distinct reasons. Rational understanding is crucial for citizens’ views being effectively considered within public deliberation (widely construed), while empathetic understanding is crucial for facilitating identification with others in the political community, thereby promoting civility and civic friendship. Moreover, the distinction is helpful for clarifying normative questions about political understanding – for citizens may be owed rational consideration of their viewpoint without being owed identification.

In thinking about these distinct forms of understanding in interpretive social science, I’ve recently become interested in social scientific use of narrative structure. A common view among those defending narrative social science is that it is useful for facilitating empathetic understanding, or at least something like it. I am skeptical of this defense but aim to offer an alternative in its place, which is a focus of some of my current thinking.



Finally, besides my own research, I have been happy to work on revamping the philosophy of social science curriculum at Oxford with my colleague Jean Baccelli. While we are doing this, we are trying to be mindful of Oxonian W.H. Auden’s famous admonition about the social sciences in ‘Under Which Lyre’. Auden wrote that poem for the 1946 Harvard commencement when he was worried that the university was being overtaken by an administrative ethos, symbolized by the god Apollo, that crowded out more chaotic and undisciplined forms of intellectual life, symbolized by the god Hermes. Both Apollo and Hermes were necessary for a well-functioning society, thought Auden, although it wasn’t hard to see where his sympathies lay. Oxford tends to be a pluralistic place, with the social sciences being pursued in a wide variety of ways, and the new philosophy of social science paper should help students appreciate that spirit and thus avoid committing a social science.



THE JOHN LOCKE LECTURES  
Trinity Term 2022

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# *Reports of what we* **SAY, KNOW, *or* BELIEVE**

**Angelika Kratzer**

Professor Emerita, Department of Linguistics, the University of Massachusetts Amherst

**M**y lectures were an inquiry into the combinatorics of conceptual building blocks languages use to construct reports of what we say, know, or believe. Attitude ascriptions and speech reports were at the center of attention when Alonzo Church and Rudolf Carnap became interested in natural language and began to develop the semantic frameworks we rely on today. We owe to Church the idea to use a  $\lambda$ -calculus to model meaning composition. Carnap gave us an intensional semantics based on possible worlds. Both Church and Carnap were aware of the challenges presented by attitude ascriptions and speech reports for a compositional semantics in the spirit of Frege.

Possible worlds semantics is committed to identifying propositions that are true in the same possible worlds. 1(a) and (b) – which are variations of examples by John Bigelow – express the same proposition, assuming that winning, losing, and not competing exhaust the logically possible options.

- (1)      a.        Robin won.
- b.        Everyone who didn't compete, or lost, did something Robin didn't do.

There are cases like (2) that require such course-grained propositions:

- (2)      Loudspeakers announced in the local language that everyone who didn't compete, or lost, did something Robin didn't do – but that was just a complicated way of announcing that Robin won.

Yet (2) also illustrates that the contribution of sentences to semantic composition can't always be a mere course-grained proposition. If it was, (2) would be saying of one and the same course-grained proposition that announcing it was a complicated way of announcing it. Minimally, possible semantic values for sentences must include intensional structures – nested sets of intensions mirroring syntactic structure. (2) says of an intensional structure that it was a complicated way of expressing a particular course-grained proposition.



As Max Cresswell has warned us over the years, if the truth of a speech report can depend on the intensional structure of an embedded sentence, there is the danger of paradox. The danger comes from a strict version of Fregean compositionality that dictates that the semantic value of an expression is a function of the semantic values of its parts and the way they are put together. If semantic values can be intensional structures, then, the semantic value of *say* in configurations like (3) might have to be a function that operates over a set that contains a set that contains a set that contains itself.

- (3)      Lee says that Robin says that ...

The strict version of Fregean compositionality has no empirical basis. Meaning composition doesn't have to be simple and uniform to explain our ability to compute the meanings of expressions from their parts.

In lecture two I argued that languages allow limited violations of Fregean compositionality in speech reports. Those violations all seem to come from a single conceptual building block *SAY* that may surface as a particle, but may also attach to intransitive verb roots to create verbs of speech. Drawing on work by Guy Deutscher, Travis Major, and Harold Torrence, I gave illustrations of various instantiations of *SAY* from English, Akkadian, and the Kwa language Avatime.

Lectures three, four, and five were dedicated to identifying the conceptual building blocks for knowledge ascriptions. I showed that it's the concealed question interpretation illustrated in 4(a) that provides a generalizable recipe for constructing knowledge ascriptions of all kinds, including 4(b) to (d).

- (4)      a.        They know the director of 'Wings of Desire'.
- b.        They know (the fact) that Wim Wenders directed 'Wings of Desire'.
- c.        They know who directed 'Wings of Desire'.
- d.        They know who directed which movies.



Maribel Romero and Ilaria Frana worked out, and defended, individual concept analyses of concealed questions. Individual concepts are commonly taken to be partial functions from worlds to individuals. A person knows such a concept if its value for all of their epistemic alternatives is the same as that for the actual world. I extended the individual concept analysis to cases like 4(b) to (d) by extending the notion of an individual concept to also cover functions from worlds to truth-values, to sets of individuals, or to relations between individuals.

The root of the verb *know* picks out epistemic states – mental states representing the totality of a person’s memories and perceptual experiences. Epistemic states can serve as actual anchors for projecting epistemic possibilities: We can think of my epistemic possibilities as the set of possible worlds where I am in the exact same epistemic state I am actually in. This way of projecting epistemic modal domains comes from David Lewis and leads to a ‘knowledge first’ account of knowledge ascriptions: Knowledge and belief can be independent of each other. Lectures three and four showed that projecting epistemic domains in this way also leads to novel solutions for three puzzles that are distinctive of epistemic modals. The first is why I can point at a young woman in the distance and truthfully say that this might be Greta Thunberg, even though that woman is not, hence (in a metaphysical sense) cannot be, Greta Thunberg. The second puzzle was discovered by Seth Yalcin. Yalcin wondered why we can’t consistently assume that it isn’t raining but might be. Even if it isn’t actually raining, isn’t there still a merely possible world where it is? The third puzzle was brought into the discussion by Lauri Karttunen, who asked himself why my saying that it’s raining makes a stronger claim than my saying that it must be raining. How can this be if *must* is an epistemic necessity modal?

Lecture five derived the meanings of knowledge ascriptions from three principal building blocks: a verb root, an all-purpose necessity modal, and a simple or complex individual concept. For an individual concept to be able to combine with a modal, though, it has to be shifted into a proposition by an operation that delivers the set of worlds where the concept has the same value as in the actual world. This operation is known to play the key role in the interpretation of questions, and Zhiguo Xie showed that the Austronesian language Acehnese has a visible reflex of that operation in all types of knowledge ascriptions.

The sixth and final lecture began by emphasizing some differences between knowledge and belief ascriptions. I then went on to show that belief and knowledge ascriptions also have an important property in common: By their very nature, they are *De Re* about actual individuals or situations, possibly the actual world as a whole. This has consequences. If I know that I am cold, I know something about a physical state of mine. If I know that I know that I am cold, I know something about a mental state of mine. In line with Timothy Williamson, then, my account does not validate positive introspection: Knowing that I am cold does not imply knowing that I know that I am cold. Nor does my account validate negative introspection: If I don’t know something, it doesn’t follow that I know that I don’t know. Relying on work by Keir Moulton, Jeffrey Runner, and Amy Rose Deal, I ended the lecture, and the series as a whole, with examples from English and the Sahaptian language Nez Perce, documenting how the grammars of natural languages have found clever ways to syntactically single out the *Res* of attitude ascriptions.

## EXHIBITION

# PORTRAITS of WOMEN in PPE

**Celebrating 100 Years of Women in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at the University of Oxford**

A new series of photographic portraits of women academics who teach Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) has gone on permanent display at Manor Road Building was officially unveiled on March 2023.

The portraits were captured by Oxford-based Photographer, Keiko Ikeuchi, who has contributed the photography and design for *Oxford Philosophy* since the first edition in 2009.



The display was initiated to mark the shared centenary of the University of Oxford admitting women to its degrees and the launch of the PPE Honours School, both of which began in 1920. Over the past century, women involved in the PPE degree at Oxford have been responsible for some of the most important contributions to its component disciplines. Celebrating that century of women in PPE, this exhibition presents portraits of some of those who carry the PPE torch today.

From the Faculty of Philosophy: Anita Avramides, Cecile Fabre, Ursula Coope, and Hilary Greaves are pictured

Twelve women from across the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR), and Department of Economics feature, representing a group of world-leading academics whose research and teaching illuminate PPE and provide inspiration to its students.



Display on the first floor of the Manor Road Building

 [keikoikeuchi.com/pp portraits](https://keikoikeuchi.com/pp portraits)



# FROM PPP TO THE NEWSROOM

PHILOSOPHY PSYCHOLOGY PHYSIOLOGY

**Martha Gill** read PPP at Magdalen College. She has worked as a political journalist for *The Economist* and *The Times* and is now a weekly columnist at *The Observer*. She reflects below on her time as a student and its relationship to her career.

I spent my first year at Oxford trying to switch to philosophy. My original subject was medicine – a very different discipline – in which students get up early for day-long lecture programmes, commit long lists of useful things to memory, and do practical experiments on sedated ferrets.

I was very jealous of students who instead spent their days discussing Kant in tutors' personal rowing boats and whose only contact with brains in vats was theoretical. I considered switching to other humanities subjects, but to me the most interesting part of any discipline was where it strayed closest to philosophy – where theories were formed and the specific became general. I felt, too, that philosophy was at the intersection of the humanities and the sciences – I had always liked both. After trudging through my medical exams, I wrote two stressful philosophy essays and persuaded the college to let me switch.

I was now officially enrolled as a PPP (Philosophy, Psychology, and Physiology) student – no, not PPE, as I always find myself explaining to journalist colleagues

and political contacts who, I'm afraid, tend to have taken that now much stigmatised subject. Thank goodness I steered clear of it. PPP – now replaced with Philosophy, Psychology and Linguistics – was an interesting and eclectic selection of subjects, with, admittedly, only the mildest overlap in styles of thought. You chose two. I took as many philosophy papers as I could: history of philosophy, aesthetics, Aristotle, philosophy of mind, and post-Kantian. The rest of my time I devoted to neuroscience – a fascinating subject full of lecturers with their own carefully-nurtured theories about how the brain worked, each deeply suspicious of the 'crack-pot' ideas of the others.

I had two fantastic philosophy tutors at Magdalen – Lizzie Fricker and Ralph Walker. Dr Fricker, an expert in epistemology, taught philosophy of mind which became my favourite subject. I enjoyed coming up with theories of my own, something that tends not to be appreciated in undergraduates. 'Please stop banging on about third possibilities', Dr Fricker once said in despair – something I always did when presented with a choice of two competing theories.



Lizzie Fricker



Ralph Walker



Roger Scruton

Dr Walker was a Magdalen 'institution' – rumoured to have featured in Iris Murdoch's *The Book and The Brotherhood*. He would host thoughtfully chosen groups of undergraduates for dessert, which consisted of tottering piles of fruit, chocolate and cheese. Half way through the event he would rise to his feet and hesitantly announce he had an algorithm by which we would all swap places. The evening would end with snuff, properly consumed from the back surface of the hand, held pinched between thumb and index finger (though I remember one guest trying to snort some off the table).

A brilliant friend of mine had a baby at the end of her second year, an event which revealed her to have great strength of character – and served as a bit of a character test for those around her. Dr Walker would listen with great respect to the baby's contributions in tutorials, treating a bout of vomiting with the forbearance usually reserved for the essays of under-prepared students.

I was lucky enough to have the great Roger Scruton as an aesthetics lecturer one summer. I particularly remember one lecture on Taste which consisted of a sample of 'Lola' by The Kinks played from a portable stereo, followed by an excerpt from Gustav Holst's 'Jupiter'. 'Well – that's all there is to say', he concluded firmly, waving us from the room. I did all my aesthetics reading in the Botanical Gardens opposite the college, looking up thoughtfully at the profusion of roses to consider the nature of Beauty. My university friends all seem to recall their tutorial partners for aesthetics being particularly stunning (perhaps just the result of awakened sensibilities). But every new paper was exciting.



Rather than just accumulating knowledge, we were being taught how to think. The post-Kantian philosophers required an entirely different approach to the history of philosophy, say, or logic.

I revelled in philosophy until my third year, when I became absorbed in my neuroscience thesis, which I wrote on the subject of hallucinations. It took up most of the year – and I left all my philosophy revision until the last couple of weeks. But it was all alright in the end.

My worst quality as a student was that I tended to write all my essays at the very last minute – but this turned out to be excellent preparation for a career in journalism. Strangely, it was the neuroscience background that proved most useful in finding my way into the trade: few journalists study the sciences so it was seen as a novelty. But in my current job as a columnist it is philosophy that helps the most.

Three years studying the methods and structure of argument is still endlessly useful in the task of coming up with opinions about politics or current events. It also helps you identify if you have got into a rut – repeating the same sort of column week after week, say, and just switching around the subject. And it serves as a handy reminder that however clever you think your ideas are, someone has almost certainly come up with them before.

But of course a subject that tackles life's great questions is useful beyond transferable skills for work. It is the philosophers who dealt with life's practical and ethical questions – rather than, say, theories of linguistics – that I have found myself rereading, and finding therapeutic. Perhaps it's not surprising that Aristotle so often referred to the similarities between medicine and philosophy. They are not so different after all.



# LONG MAY HE PONDER

**Simon Saunders**, Professor of Philosophy of Physics and Fellow of Merton College, retired in October 2022.

**Harvey Brown**, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Physics and Fellow of Wolfson College, offers us his insights into the distinguished career of his long-time colleague.

**S**imon Saunders' retirement in October 2022 marked the completion of twenty six years of teaching in the Faculty (earlier Sub-Faculty) of Philosophy. Simon was appointed in 1996 as Rom Harré's successor in the role of University Lecturer in Philosophy of Science and Fellow of Linacre College. He was promoted to Reader in 2001 and Professor of Philosophy of Physics in 2008, and in 2013 he became a Tutorial Fellow at Merton College. During this later part of his career he was also President of the British Society for the Philosophy of Science (2017-2019).

Simon came to Oxford from Harvard University, where he taught in the Department of Philosophy for six years. But Oxford figured prominently in his earlier life. He studied Physics and Philosophy here, graduating in 1976, and he was a Junior and then Senior Research Fellow at Wolfson College in the period 1985 to 1989. I was a colleague of Simon for well over two decades. What follows is a brief account of some of the principal research achievements which have led to his status as a world-renowned figure in the philosophy of physics.

Simon's doctoral thesis, under the supervision of the eminent philosopher of physics Michael Redhead at the University of London, was in the foundations of relativistic quantum field theory. Simon was one of the first philosophers to delve into this advanced area

of physics; he sought to understand why the marriage of Einstein's relativity theory to quantum mechanics made such a profound difference in the mathematical depth of the equations. By the early nineties, he turned to more trodden ground in the philosophy of physics, namely the foundations of non-relativistic quantum mechanics. This led to a series of papers over many years for which Simon is probably best-known. A review of Simon's work in this field (and that of other Oxford philosophers of physics) appeared in my article 'The Many Worlds of Quantum Philosophy' in the 2013 (5th edition) of this magazine.

What I want to emphasise here is that much of the current lively interest in the so-called Everett ('many worlds') interpretation of quantum mechanics on the part of philosophers is a result of Simon's work starting in the 1990s. This was a time when Everett's work, dating back to 1957, was largely and ignominiously ignored by most philosophers. Simon's influence is seen today both in the broadly successful attempt to understand within the quantum formalism how Everett's 'worlds' form and persist ('decoherence theory'), and the still controversial issue as to what the probability governing quantum processes means in a theory in which the universe's evolution is strictly deterministic and everything that can happen (according to the theory) does happen.



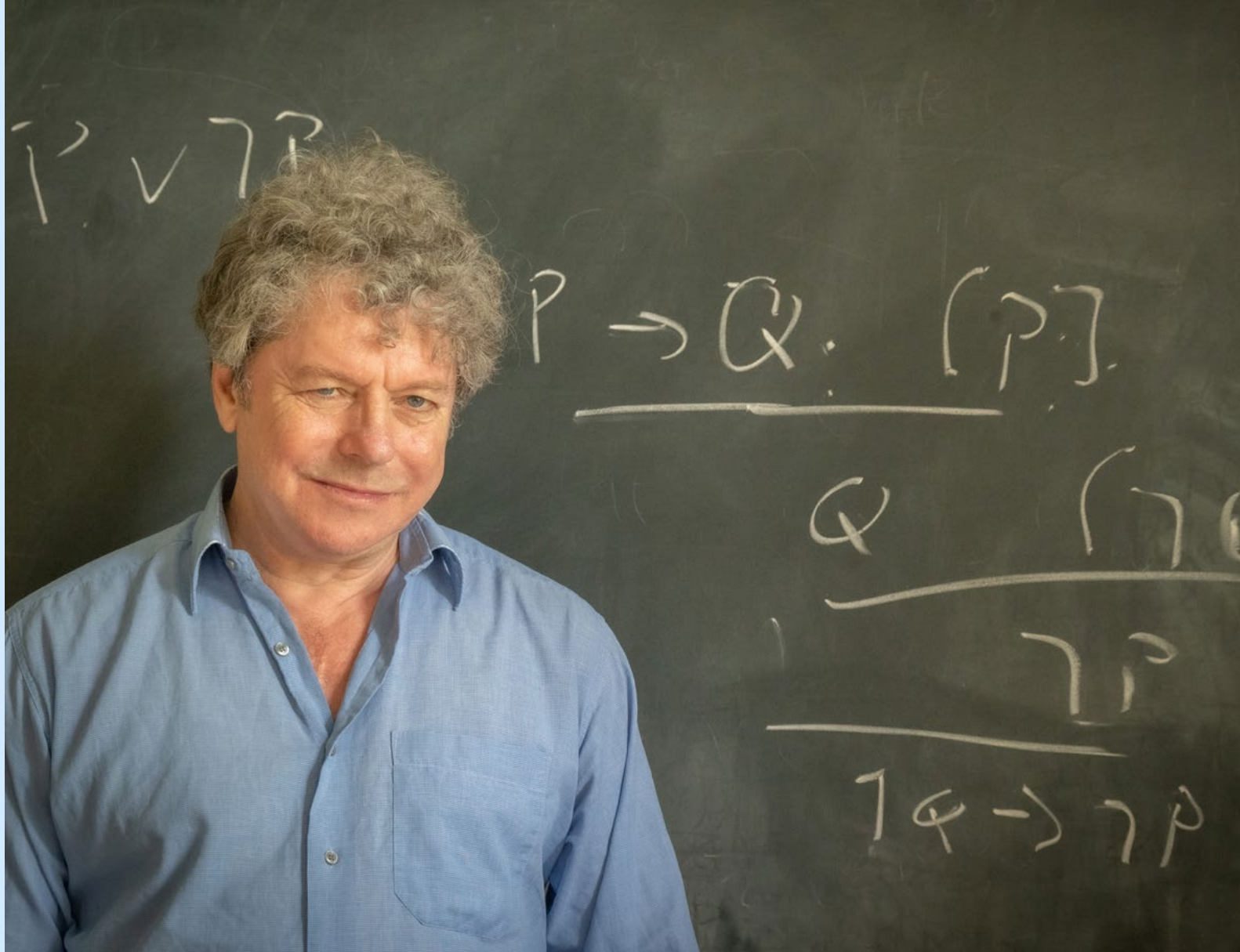


These delicate issues demand on the part of investigators technical skills, subtle conceptual analysis, and I think intellectual courage. Simon's many pioneering publications on quantum foundations, some in collaboration with David Wallace (whose DPhil Simon supervised), have consistently provided all of these things. Never at rest, Simon has recently found himself questioning some of his early ideas on the nature quantum probability in favour of a more objectivist account inspired by an analogy with classical statistical mechanics.

Simon is unusual amongst current philosopher of physics in regard to the range of his interest in the history of physics, and it is the history of quantum mechanics that has most intrigued him. Here his major contribution has been a striking 2020 re-evaluation of Einstein's arguments in 1905 in support of his revolutionary hypothesis that light has both wave and particle properties, in itself arguably the true beginning of the quantum revolution. Simon was able to demonstrate an inconsistency in Einstein's arguments which was not resolved for two decades. This conclusion has deeper implications than just correcting the historical record.

Simon relied on extensive research he had already done on the conceptually thorny issue of whether or not quantum mechanics is needed in order to account for the thermodynamic behaviour of large collections of identical (indistinguishable) particles. His negative conclusion, though almost certainly still the minority view amongst physicists and probably philosophers, was argued forcefully in a series of papers starting in 2003 and culminating in his profound 2018 study of the the long-standing 'Gibbs Paradox' in statistical mechanics. I have yet to read a more compelling treatment of this subtle issue, or of Einstein's 1905 treatment of the revolutionary 'light quantum'.

The fact that nature provides us with abundances of microscopic bodies which individually appear to be entirely indistinguishable in terms of their intrinsic properties poses a prima facie threat to Leibniz' famous Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles (PII). Attempts have been made by a number of philosophers to probe the extent of this threat; most have concluded that the principle is refuted by the quantum mechanical description of composite systems comprised of similar systems. These are 'fermions' (an example of which is the electron) and 'bosons' (an example being the photon, which is what Einstein's light quantum became when properly understood). Simon's contribution to this literature began in 2002; inspired by Quine's analysis of different kinds of discernibility, he developed in a number of papers the now influential notion that fermions at least are in quantum mechanics 'weakly



discernible', and thereby present no challenge to the PII. The most ramified formal account of this logically intricate position appeared in a joint 2008 paper with the Dutch philosopher Fred Muller.

The philosophy of space and time has also long been a keen interest of Simon's. For example, in 2002 he published a much-cited paper on the question (posed prominently by Hilary Putnam, inter alia) as to whether Einstein's special relativity theory of 1905 is in conflict with 'presentism': the notion that events occurring at the present time are somehow more 'real' than those in the the past or future. In 2013, Simon published a provocative study of the nature of the geometric space-time structure associated with the physics of Newton's *Principia*. Newton arguably misunderstood that structure by proposing the existence of a unique frame of reference, relative to which the solar system is at rest and the motions of bodies are 'absolute'. The standard modern view is that there is an infinity of such privileged ('inertial') frames of reference, resulting in a geometric structure called 'Galilean space-time'. Motivated by known

problems that arise when the Newtonian universe is either infinite or sufficiently large — neither possibility being inconsistent with what is known about the actual universe — Simon argued that a more appropriate, leaner geometry in this context is what he called 'Newton-Huygens' spacetime, in which the usual notion of inertial frames may not even be defined. His paper is, characteristically, historically rich, technically sophisticated, and elegantly written; it is a major development in the field.

There is much more in Simon's opus in philosophy of physics than can be covered here. In particular, I have in mind his views on the significance of symmetry principles in physics, which hopefully will be the basis of a future book. As regards philosophy of science more generally, Simon is one of the pioneers in the development of the doctrine of structural realism, and this work alone deserves a separate entry by someone with more expertise than me.

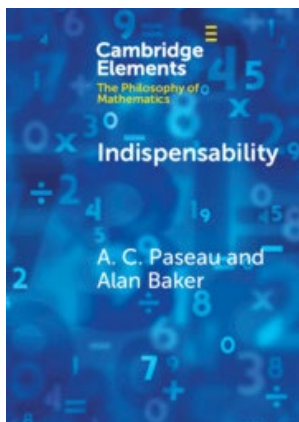
***Much of the current lively interest in the so-called Everett ('many worlds') interpretation of quantum mechanics on the part of philosophers is a result of Simon's work starting in the 1990s. This was a time when Everett's work, dating back to 1957, was largely and ignominiously ignored by most philosophers.***

Simon's retirement will happily not see a significant slow-down in his research. Several books are in the pipeline, and he is currently principal investigator on a John Templeton Foundation project on quantum biology with Jim Al Khalili. (Between 2011 and 2014 Simon was PI on a similarly funded project related to the philosophy of cosmology.) In the coming years I personally look forward to the continuation of a stimulating philosophical dialogue with Simon stretching back many years. I am privileged to have worked alongside one of the modern giants in the philosophy of physics. Long may you ponder, Simon.



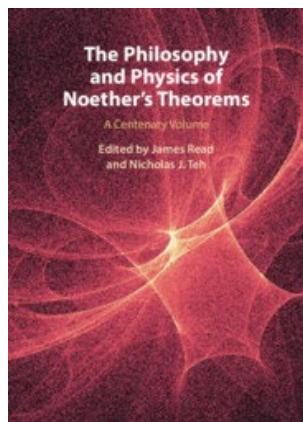
**Indispensability** (CUP)  
**Alex Paseau and Alan Baker**

*Indispensability* is co-authored by Alex Paseau and Alan Baker. Paseau is a current Faculty member, and Baker (Swarthmore College) taught at Oxford and Wadham briefly in the early 2010s and is the son of the late Oxford philosopher Gordon Baker. The book is devoted to the Indispensability Argument. In a nutshell, the argument states that since our most successful and widely believed scientific theories make ample use of mathematics, they should be seen as confirming its truth, and perhaps even seen as confirming the existence of abstract mathematical objects such as numbers and sets. The book’s first half traces the evolution of the Indispensability Argument from its origins in Quine and Putnam’s works, taking in naturalism, confirmation holism, Field’s program, and the use of idealisations in science along the way. Its second half examines the explanatory version of the Indispensability Argument, and focuses on several more recent versions of easy-road and hard-road fictionalism.



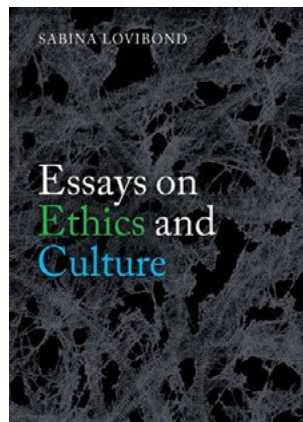
**The Philosophy and Physics of Noether’s Theorems** (CUP)  
**Edited by James Read and Nicholas J. Teh**

In 1918, Emmy Noether, in her paper ‘Invariante Variationsprobleme,’ proved two theorems (and their converses) on variational problems that went on to revolutionise theoretical physics. 100 years later, the mathematics of Noether’s theorems continues to be generalised, and the physical applications of her results continue to diversify. This centenary volume brings together world-leading historians, philosophers, physicists, and mathematicians in order to clarify the historical context of this work, its foundational and philosophical consequences, and its myriad physical applications. Suitable for advanced undergraduate and graduate students and professional researchers, this is a go-to resource for those wishing to understand Noether’s work on variational problems and the profound applications which it finds in contemporary physics.



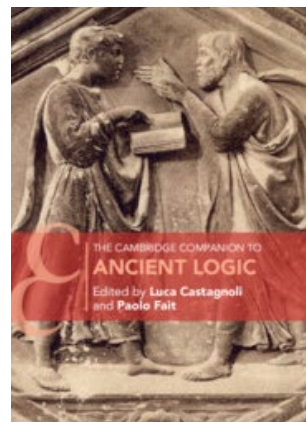
**Essays on Ethics and Culture** (OUP)  
**Sabina Lovibond**

These essays discuss various questions in moral philosophy, drawing on ideas from Platonic-Aristotelian ethics, the later Wittgenstein, and Iris Murdoch. The general approach is realist or objectivist, paying some attention to the role of imaginative literature (especially the novel) in ethical formation. A common theme is the lived experience of the socially situated subject, including our capacity for engagement with the values present in an inherited tradition or ‘form of life’. Such engagement, once raised to consciousness, may contain elements both of affirmation and of cultural critique. In the book as a whole, the critical theme predominates, with a certain emphasis on discourses of social disruption. But it is always assumed that the right place to stand as an observer of the domain of value is within that domain, and that moral critique will be immanent with respect to the culture addressed – that is, it will make do with just the conceptual and linguistic resources available to ordinary participants in moral, political, or aesthetic conversation.



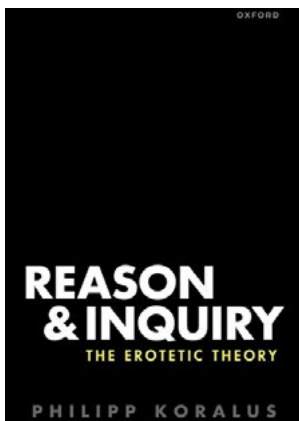
**The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Logic** (CUP)  
**Edited by Luca Castagnoli and Paolo Fait**

This Companion provides a comprehensive guide to ancient logic. The first part charts its chronological development, focussing especially on the Greek tradition, and discusses its two main systems: Aristotle’s logic of terms and the Stoic logic of propositions. The second part is a systematic exploration of the key concepts at the heart of the ancient logical systems: truth, definition, terms, propositions, syllogisms, demonstrations, modality, and fallacy. The intersections between logic, mathematics and rhetoric are also explored. The third part of the volume discusses the reception and influence of ancient logic in the history of philosophy and its significance for philosophy in our own times. Comprehensive coverage, chapters by leading scholars and a critical overview of the recent literature in the field make this volume essential for students and scholars of ancient logic.



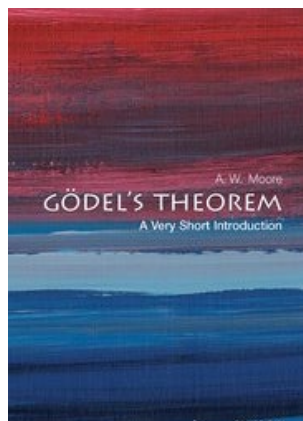
**Reason and Inquiry: The Erotetic Theory** (OUP)  
**Philipp Koralus**

In this book Philipp Koralus presents a unified theory of the human capacity for reasoning and decision-making. The erotetic theory accounts for a diverse range of empirically documented fallacies and framing effects. It shows how the same mental processes that yield fallacies can yield what logicians call first-order validity and probabilistic coherence in reasoning, as well as rational decision-making as conceived by economists. The book’s central idea is that our minds naturally aim at resolving issues, and if we are sufficiently inquisitive in the process, we can avoid mistakes. The erotetic theory holds that both the successes and the failures of reason are due to this aim. Rationality is secured if we reach what is described by the theory as erotetic equilibrium.



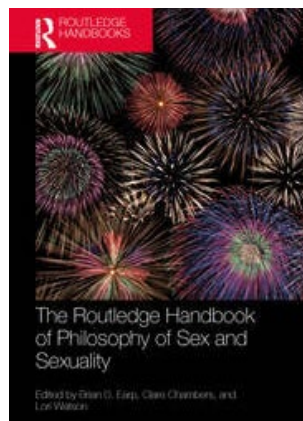
**Gödel’s Theorem: A Very Short Introduction** (OUP)  
**Adrian Moore**

When Kurt Gödel published his celebrated theorem, showing that no axiomatization can determine the whole truth and nothing but the truth concerning arithmetic, it had a profound impact on mathematical ideas and philosophical thought. Adrian Moore’s Very Short Introduction places Gödel’s famous theorem in its intellectual and historical context, while explaining the key concepts in an accessible way. Moore provides two proofs of the theorem, considers common misunderstandings associated with the theorem, and discusses the theorem’s most important philosophical implications.



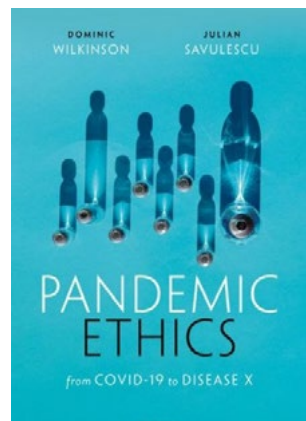
**The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Sex and Sexuality** (Routledge)  
**Edited by Brian Erp, Clare Chambers, and Lori Watson**

This Handbook covers the most urgent, controversial, and important topics in the philosophy of sex. It is both philosophically rigorous and yet accessible to specialists and non-specialists, covering ethics, political philosophy, metaphysics, the philosophy of science, and the philosophy of language, and featuring interactions with neighboring disciplines such as psychology, bioethics, sociology, and anthropology. The volume’s forty chapters includes sections on topics as: Sexual Orientations; Sexual Autonomy and Consent; Pathologizing Sex; Objectification and Commercialized Sex; and Technology and the Future of Sex. The broad scope of coverage, depth in insight and research, and accessibility in language make it a comprehensive introduction for newcomers to the subject as well as an invaluable reference work for advanced students and researchers in the field.



**Pandemic Ethics: From COVID-19 to Disease X** (OUP)  
**Edited by Julian Savulescu and Dominic Wilkinson**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a defining event of the 21st century. It has taken over eighteen million lives, closed national borders, put whole populations into quarantine and devastated economies. Yet while COVID-19 is catastrophic, it is not unique. Children who have been home-schooled during COVID-19 will almost certainly face another pandemic in their lifetime – one at least as bad, and potentially much worse, than this one. The WHO has referred to such a future (currently unknown) pathogen as “Disease X”. In this timely and vital collection, Dominic Wilkinson and Julian Savulescu bring together a global team of leading philosophers, lawyers, economists, and bioethicists to review the COVID-19 pandemic, by asking not only ‘did our societies make the right ethical choices?’, but also ‘what lessons must we learn before Disease X arrives?’





# OBITUARIES

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**Justin Cyril  
Bertrand Gosling**  
1930-2022

Justin Gosling won an exhibition in Classics at Wadham College, where he obtained a first in Mods (1951) and a first in Greats (1953), and then took the BPhil. He was appointed to a Fereday Junior Research Fellowship at St John's College (1955-1958) after which he was Lecturer in Philosophy at Wadham and Pembroke Colleges (1958-1960), and then Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at St Edmund Hall until he was appointed Principal from 1982 until his retirement in 1996.

Gosling worked both on ancient authors and on philosophical topics related to ancient themes. His primary historical interest was in Plato, whilst the philosophical topics on which his modern interests centred were desire and pleasure. His notable account of false pleasure was developed first in his translation of and commentary on the *Philebus* (1975), one of Plato's most puzzling dialogues, and later (1982) in *The Greeks on Pleasure* (written jointly with C.C.W. Taylor). This was the first work in English to offer a comprehensive account of ancient Greek theories of pleasure, from the pre-Socratics to the Stoics and Epicureans. Other major works are his comprehensive account of Plato (1973) in the influential Routledge *Arguments of the Philosophers* series, and *Weakness of the Will* (1990), in which, as in his earlier work, ancient insights are put to work on modern conceptual problems.

Gosling's image is frozen in stone in the Front Quad at Teddy Hall as possibly the last working gargoyle in Oxford, and it is reported that he was much amused to hear tour guides claiming that the carving represented Hall alumnus Robin Day.



**William Herbert (Bill)  
Newton-Smith**  
1943-2023

Bill Newton-Smith received his first degree in Mathematics and Philosophy at Queen's University in Ontario and then took an MA in Philosophy at Cornell. He earned his DPhil in philosophy at Balliol College, where he was Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy for thirty-five years (1970-2005), and Praefectus of Holywell Manor (1989-97), home to Balliol's MCR community. He published several books, including *The Rationality of Science* (1981), *Logic* (1985), and, perhaps the most significant, *The Structure of Time* (1980).

Newton-Smith also devoted significant portion of his career to fighting against authoritarian regimes in East and Central Europe. He set up the *Jan Hus Education Foundation*, an underground educational network in Czechoslovakia, which sent scholars to Prague to lecture at illegal clandestine seminars and smuggled books into the country, which was then behind the Iron Curtain. After his retirement from Oxford, Newton-Smith became Chair of the Executive Committee – the predecessor of the Board – of the Central European University (CEU) and was *de facto* Rector before Alfred Stepan was elected as the first Rector in 1993. He then served as a CEU Trustee between 1995 and 2016.

A much-loved tutor, Newton-Smith was described by Istvan Rev, Director of Blinken OSA Archivum and Professor at CEU's Department of History, as 'a modest, unpretentious, and good person, who always downplayed his central role in fighting authoritarianism with the force of pure reason, by establishing clandestine, illegal, or legal educational institutions.'

Photo: vegeldaniel.com



**Paul Snowden**  
1946-2022

Paul Snowden read PPE at University College (1965-68) and then took the BPhil. He was Tutorial Fellow in Philosophy at Exeter College for thirty years (1971-2001) when he moved to UCL to take up the Grote Professorship until his retirement in 2015.

Snowdon was author of *Persons, Animals, Ourselves* (2014), and co-editor of a collection, *Animalism*, with Stephan Blatti (2016). As well as his views on personal identity, Snowdon was well-known as one of the key contributors to debates about sense perception and was an early exponent of the controversial doctrine of disjunctivism. A collection of his essays on perception is in production from OUP.

To watch Snowdon give a talk or seminar was to witness someone engaging with a question as if for the first time, and thinking about it as slowly and carefully as possible. His audiences invariably found themselves drawn into this activity of doing philosophy together. Generations of students were caught up in this activity of philosophising through his key influence. He taught a generation of philosophers of mind in Oxford through the 1980s and 1990s and did the same again at UCL after he arrived at the turn of the millennium.

*Mike Martin, Wilde Professor of Mental Philosophy, Fellow of Corpus Christi College*

Photo: Craig French



**Robert (Bob)  
Frazier**  
1960-2022

Bob Frazier received a BA in philosophy from Western Washington University in 1981 before moving to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst where he obtained an MA (1986) and PhD (1990). He came to Oxford in 1992 where he was College Lecturer at Magdalen (1992-94) and then at Christ Church from 1994 until his retirement in 2022.

Frazier's PhD thesis was entitled *Right-Making Characteristics and Morally Right Acts* and he was the author of journal articles on topics in ethics in journals such as *Utilitas* and *Ratio*. He also gave tutorials for Christ Church and other colleges in a wide range of subjects, and was a much respected tutor who was always ready to offer steadfast support to students and colleagues alike.

An early proponent of the personal computer and the internet, in his spare time Frazier was also a keen amateur photographer and cyclist. Perhaps most notably he enjoyed making watches from spare parts and dials that were his own construction. As he once observed 'Most of the watches I construct are labelled "F&J", which abbreviates "Flotsam and Jetsam"'.





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