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Cover: Statue of G. W. Leibniz in the Museum of Natural History, Oxford
Issue six of Oxford Philosophy sees the Faculty on the verge of some exciting opportunities: we are in the process of appointing to no less than five joint posts (each associated with a college fellowship) – two in ancient philosophy, two in ethics and/or political philosophy, and one in the philosophy of language. In addition, following John Hawthorne’s announced departure for the University of Southern California, the Waynflete Chair of Metaphysical Philosophy is about to be advertised. And Michaelmas Term 2014 already saw the Faculty adding to its number the new White’s Professor of Moral Philosophy, Jeff McMahan, who joined us from Rutgers University in New Jersey. We are confident that we will take the opportunity these vacancies offer to add still further to the extraordinary quality, depth and diversity of the Faculty, some of which is showcased in the pages that follow.

With these opportunities, however, also come certain challenges. It speaks for the high standing of philosophy as a discipline that some extravagantly funded overseas universities see expanding their philosophy programmes as a quick way to enhance their status – as one US colleague put it ‘more effective than expanding in literature, and cheaper than expanding in physics’. Moreover, now that more and more universities outside the English-speaking world – in Scandinavia and the Low Countries, for example – are offering philosophy courses in English, the market for Anglophone philosophers is getting larger all the time. Oxford therefore has to fight hard to retain, as well as to recruit, outstanding philosophers on what is now a highly competitive and highly internationalized scene.

In this context it is pleasing to note that yet another of the Faculty’s permanent positions – this time a tutorial fellowship at Balliol – has recently been fully endowed by a private donation together with match-funding from the University’s Teaching Fund. This adds to similar recent Teaching Fund posts at Worcester, Trinity, St Anne’s and Somerville. It is equally pleasing to note the Faculty’s recent success in attracting external funding, from bodies including the European Research Council, the Templeton Foundation and the Welcome Trust (to name but a few), on subjects ranging from the metaphysics of entanglement in nature and in the divine, to population ethics, the philosophy of mathematics and the philosophy of psychiatry. Oxford is fortunate to have a number of college-funded junior research fellowships in philosophy, but external funding also helps to maintain and enhance the Faculty as a place for post-doctoral research, critical as that is not only to the intellectual vitality of the Faculty but also to bringing on the next generation of philosophers. We are certainly succeeding in that.

As Brian Leiter was putting the finishing touches to the 2014 Philosophical Gourmet Report – an international ranking of philosophy departments in which Oxford was recently ranked a close second in the world – he contacted me to ask who was new in Oxford philosophy and who had moved on. Aided by several colleagues I assembled a list, including no fewer than 35 Faculty members holding full-time but fixed-term appointments, either in a research project based in the Faculty or in one of the colleges: an impressive example of Oxford philosophy’s strength at the post-doctoral level. In the end Leiter refused to list a single one of them, seemingly out of mere disbelief that any philosophy department could be that big. Well, ours is, and in a comprehensive website redesign scheduled for later this academic year we plan to do much more to draw attention to the range of research activity by our fixed-term as well as our permanent members.

On a more personal note, the sixth issue of Oxford Philosophy sees the Chair of the Faculty Board installed for the first time in a dedicated office in the Radcliffe Humanities building – holders of this post have, until now, been itinerant players, perching in the office of whichever administrative officer has been prepared to host them. Notwithstanding the inevitable contract furniture, it is a magnificent space, with Delft tiles in the fireplace, eighteenth-century graffiti on the window-panes and, as I have not yet tired of telling my children, a ceiling higher than our house is wide. Former students of the Faculty, whether graduate or undergraduate, are very welcome to come and knock on the door.

Welcome from the Chair of the Faculty Board

Edward Harcourt
Keble College
NEWS

Ofer Magidor awarded Leverhulme Prize

Congratulations to Ofer Magidor, Fellow of Balliol College, who has been awarded a Philip Leverhulme Prize. Awarded since 2001, the Leverhulme Prizes recognise ‘the achievement of early career researchers whose work has already attracted international recognition and whose future career is exceptionally promising’. The scheme makes up to thirty awards a year, across a range of academic disciplines. Ofer’s current research ranges over philosophy of language, metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of mathematics, and she is particularly interested in connecting recent debates in these cognate fields to classical questions in the foundations of language.

Ian Phillips appears in The Philosopher’s Annual

Congratulations to Ian Phillips, Fellow of St Anne’s College, whose paper ‘Atheism and Sensibility’ has been chosen as one of the ten best pieces published in philosophy in 2013 by the editors of The Philosopher’s Annual and appears in the 2014 edition of the journal. We would also like to congratulate Andrew Bacon (now Assistant Professor at the University of Southern California, but who recently studied for his BPhil and DPhil at Oxford) and was a Junior Research Fellow at Magdalen) whose paper ‘Quantificational Logic and Empty Names’ also appears in this edition of The Philosopher’s Annual.

John Broome Honoured Twice

We are pleased to note two honours accorded to Professor John Broome, who retired as White’s Professor of Moral Philosophy in 2014.

John has been elected in the class of 2014 to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences as a Foreign Honorary Member of the Academy, one of America’s most prestigious honorary societies and a leading centre for independent policy research. The current membership includes more than 250 Nobel laureates and more than 60 Pulitzer Prize winners.

John was further the recipient of the State of Nebraska Prize, otherwise known as The Philosophers’ Stone, which is awarded by the University of Bayreuth. The Stone is, in at least one sense, the weightiest philosophy prize in the world, and is awarded particularly for work that makes a connection between philosophy and economics.

John is particularly interested in connecting recent debates in these cognate fields to classical questions in the foundations of language.

Susanne Bobzien and Cecilia Trifogli elected Fellows of the British Academy

The Faculty is delighted at the election as Fellows of the British Academy of two of its members, Susanne Bobzien and Cecilia Trifogli. Both are fellows of All Souls College. The Fellowship comprises over 900 scholars elected for their distinction in the humanities and social sciences. Each year, the Academy elects up to 42 outstanding UK-based scholars who have achieved scholarly research activity and publication.

Susanne is famous for her work on ancient philosophy, freedom and determinism, and the philosophy of logic and language and is author of Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy. Cecilia’s reputation is founded on her work in medieval philosophy: she has a particular interest in the reception of Aristotle’s philosophy in the middle ages, and the natural philosophy, metaphysics, and epistemology of the period. She is the author of Oxford Physics in the Thirteenth Century.

The Metaphysics of Entanglement

In 2014 the Faculty became host to the ‘Metaphysics of Entanglement’ project. Funded by the Templeton World Charity Foundation, this multidisciplinary research program is investigating the viability of power ontology as a metaphysics that can provide a fresh approach to our philosophical understanding of the phenomena of entanglement and superposition.

The project is directed by Anna Marmodoro. It involves Christopher Hughes, Brian Leftow and Andrew Steane (as Co-Investigators) and four Postdoctoral Research Fellows: George Darby (Philosophy of Physics), Daniel Kodaj and Erasmus May (Metaphysics), and Martin Pickup (Philosophy of Religion). Research will concern a wide range of philosophical questions, ranging from philosophy of physics to metaphysics in general and philosophy of religion. Ideas that prove fruitful for understanding entanglement in the quantum realm may also be applied to provide fresh insights for a philosophical/intellectual understanding of the metaphysics underlying the Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity.

The project webpage is at: www.metaphysics-of-entanglement.ox.ac.uk

Oxford Philosophy Top in 2014 REF

Oxford’s Faculty of Philosophy performed outstandingly in the 2014 Research Exercise Framework, which is a national assessment of the quality of research in UK universities.

With 51% of overall research activity assessed at the top grade of 4*, Oxford was placed ahead of all other UK philosophy departments. This achievement was especially notable given that the work of over 70 Faculty members was submitted for consideration - which was by far the largest number nationally for a philosophy department.

The Faculty is grateful to our REF co-ordinator Adrian Moore, Tom Moore, Bryn Harris, the members of the Faculty’s Research Committee, and to all those who contribute to the Faculty’s outstanding result.

35th White’s Professor of Moral Philosophy

The Faculty is delighted to welcome Jeff McMahan who succeeds John Broome as the new White’s Professor of Moral Philosophy. The White’s chair was endowed in 1821, and since 1877 has been associated with a fellowship at Corpus Christi College. Previous holders of the professorship include T. H. Green, J. L. Austin, R. M. Hare and Bernard Williams.

Jeff first came to Oxford in 1976 as a Rhodes Scholar. After initial undergraduate work in the US in English literature, he began the study of philosophy by doing a second BA in PPE in two years at Corpus Christi College. He then started work on his DPhil thesis on issues in population ethics under the supervision of Jonathan Glover and Derek Parfit but exhausted his funding at Oxford after one year. He thus moved to St. John’s College, Cambridge, first on a research studentship and then as a research fellow, where he completed his PhD in 1986 under the supervision of Bernard Williams. While he was a graduate student at Cambridge, he was an active member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and published two non-philosophical books, one on British nuclear weapons policy (for which Williams wrote the preface) and another on the Reagan administration’s foreign policy. After leaving Cambridge he taught first at the University of Illinois and then at Rutgers University. He has published two books with Oxford University Press – ‘The Ethics of Killing. Problems at the Margins of Life and Killing in War’ – and coedited two others – ‘The Morality of Nationalism and Ethics and Humanity: Themes from the Philosophy of Jonathan Glover. As these titles indicate, Jeff’s work has focused on issues of life and death. He has written on the metaphysics of personal identity and death, abortion, infanticide, stem cell research, the morality of causing people to exist, disability, euthanasia, the distinction between killing and letting die, the moral significance of intention, the moral status of animals, and a variety of related issues. In recent years his work has concentrated mainly on the morality of killing in self-defence and in war. He is happy to be able to return to Britain, to Oxford, and to his old college, Corpus.
Climate change is a moral problem. Each of us causes the emission of greenhouse gas, which spreads around the Earth. Some of it stays in the atmosphere for centuries. It causes harm to people who live far away and to members of future generations. Moreover, the harm we cause, taken together, is very great. As a result of climate change, people are losing their homes to storms and floods, they are losing their livelihoods as their farmland dries up, and they are losing even their lives as tropical diseases climb higher in the mountains of Africa. We should not cause harms like these to other people in order to make life better for ourselves.

It is chiefly for moral reasons that we inhabitants of rich countries should reduce our emissions. Doing so will benefit us (particularly the young among us) to an extent, but most of the benefit will come to the world’s poor and to future generations. Our main reason for working to limit climate change is our moral duty towards those people.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recognizes that climate change is a moral problem or, to use its cautious language, it “raises ethical issues”. The authors of the IPCC’s recent Fifth Assessment Report therefore included two moral philosophers. I am one of them. I recently returned from the “Approval Session” of IPCC’s Working Group 3 in Berlin. This was one of the most extraordinary experiences of my academic life.

During the three years I worked for the IPCC, I had many experiences that are not typical in the life of a philosopher. There is the travel, for one thing. To fight climate change, the IPCC finds it necessary to hold meetings in remote corners of the world. Its own resources are small, so it goes wherever a government offers to fund a meeting. I have been to IPCC meetings in Lima, Changwon in South Korea, Wellington and Addis Ababa. In Europe, the IPCC has taken me to Vienna, Geneva, Oslo, Utrecht, Berlin and Potsdam. Kuala Lumpur and Copenhagen are still to come. I hope the other authors offset the emissions caused by their travel to these meetings. I am pleased to say that the British government pays to offset mine. All this travelling is not much fun; IPCC work is relentless, so it goes wherever a government sends delegations of the IPCC. and Addis Ababa. In Europe, the IPCC has taken me to Vienna, Geneva, Oslo, Utrecht, Berlin and Potsdam. Kuala Lumpur and Copenhagen are still to come. I hope the other authors offset the emissions caused by their travel to these meetings. I am pleased to say that the British government pays to offset mine. All this travelling is not much fun; IPCC work is relentless, so it goes wherever a government sends delegations of the IPCC.

Then there is the joint authorship. Before signing on to the IPCC, my only joint work was one brief article written with another philosopher. In Changwon I found myself in a room with fifteen other authors from various disciplines, with whom I was to write a chapter jointly. Many of them were puzzled at first by the presence of philosophers; they were unclear what our discipline had to do with their work. I expected some confrontations. I thought some economists in particular might resent my philosophical outlook on economics. But actually my colleagues were tolerant and willing to cooperate. We achieved harmony. I was able to put into the chapter several of the points about the ethics of climate change that I thought most important.

The writing process was exhaustive and exhausting. The report went through three full drafts before the final version. Each was sent out for comments to very large numbers of people, including academic experts and representatives of governments. We authors were required to take note of every comment, and to record what we had done about it. I myself dealt with about 600 comments in this way; Working Group 3 as a whole dealt with 38,000. The aim was to produce the broadest possible consensus, reflecting the state of knowledge about climate change. I think we did that. It inevitably meant we had to be conservative in our judgements.

The outcome was a 2000-page report, which has been published on the internet. Because no one will read a report of that size, our efforts in the last few months of the project went into writing two summaries. A subgroup of authors from Working Group 3 hammered them out over several months. The fuller and more reliable one has the unfortunate title of the ‘Technical Summary’. This name puts people off reading it, but actually it is not particularly technical. It is simply a summary of the main report. The shorter, 30-page précis known as the ‘Summary for Policymakers’ (SPM) attracts more attention but was subject to political influence in the way I shall describe.

The whole idea of the Approval Session is extraordinary. Every single sentence of the SPM has to be either approved or rejected by delegates from governments. At the Plenary meeting, the draft is projected on a screen by sentence. As each sentence comes up, the chairman asks delegates for comments on it and proposed amendments. Delegates propose amendments and the authors then consider whether they can be supported by the underlying main report. The rule is that a sentence is approved only if it is supported by the main report, and only if there is a consensus on approving it among the delegates. When the haggling on a sentence is concluded and a consensus obtained, the chairman brings down the gavel, the approved sentence is highlighted on the screen in green, and discussion moves to the next sentence. Very gradually, green highlighting spreads through the report. Five days – Monday to Friday – were set aside for approving the whole 30 pages by this means. In effect, the text is edited by several hundred people sitting together in a big room. One hundred and seven countries sent delegations of
Norway’s Climate Change

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters is a private, non-profit, independent organization that functions as a bridge between science, academia and Norwegian society. The Academy’s mission is to promote and encourage science and scholarship. The Academy’s work is guided by the principle that the advancement of science benefits all people and should be open to all. The Academy is committed to promoting a more inclusive and equitable science system.

Our mission

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Our future

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The Minds of Others

Anita Avramidès | St Hilda’s College

Philosophy’s interest in what sometimes gets referred to as the “problem of other minds” has waxed and waned. The American philosopher and cognitive scientist Jerry Fodor has written the following: “When I was a boy in graduate school, the philosophy of mind had two main divisions: The mind-body problem and the problem of other minds... Philosophical fashions change. It’s gotten hard to believe that there is a special problem about the knowledge of other minds (as opposed to knowledge of anything else).” Fodor was a graduate student in the late 1950’s – early 1960’s; he made this observation in 1994. Fodor correctly reflected the philosophical state of play in both periods. Questions regarding our knowledge of the minds of others had gone from being an important topic for philosophical discussion – to be found in every undergraduate textbook in both philosophy of mind and in metaphysics – to being a neglected one. No one much was thinking or writing about the problems surrounding it. In Oxford, there wasn’t a single lecture on the issue, and exam questions on it, if set at all, received a pretty standard reply (a reply that hadn’t changed much in over 50 years). When asked how we know about the minds of others, students appealed to: (i) the argument from analogy (I know from my own case that my mind is responsible for my behaviour, I see you behaving in a similar manner and I conclude, by analogy, that your behaviour is likewise the result of your mind); and (ii) the argument from best analogy (I know from my own case that my mind is responsible for my behaviour, I see you behaving in a similar manner and I conclude, by analogy, that your having a mind is the best explanation of what I see).

Fodor’s judgment that philosophical fashions change was clearly correct, but it seems unlikely that he would have predicted the way in which they have changed once again. Not long after Fodor made his observation two books with the same title, Other Minds, were published, one by the Australian philosopher Alec Hyslop and the other was mine – each book developing a very different approach. In 2007 Quassim Cassam published The Possibility of Knowledge of Other Minds. Cassam wrote his 2007 book, the time was ripe for the idea to catch on. While Cassam drew on the work of McDowell, he also drew on the work of the American philosopher Fred Dretske. When, as long ago as 1967, Dretske had suggested we perceived other minds, almost nobody picked up on the idea. In Seeing and Knowing, Dretske was proposing a change in philosophy of such importance to epistemology that its implications for the particular problem of other minds were overlooked. His work was an early statement of an idea that has come to be known as externalism in epistemology. Externalism challenges Cartesian epistemology. It aims to understand our knowledge of the world in terms that exclude both (internal) justification and the idea that knowledge must by infallible. Epistemology had moved on, and now the idea that one could know – in this externalist sense – the mind of another by looking and seeing also began to take hold.

So, do we know about the mind of another in the same way that we know about the inanimate world around us? Arguably we do not. I have, along with others, begun to develop a critique of the perceptual model here, based on a simple idea: our knowledge of other minds and our knowledge of objects in the world are importantly different. What this difference amounts to is a difficult story to tell, but the basic idea is an old one.

It is safe to say that the topic of other minds is once again a flourishing one. Indeed, the impact of this revival of fortune has become truly international in its reach and new applications are being found for recent conceptual innovations in the subject. Philosophers all over the world are eager to hear more. I recently returned from China, where I attended an international conference on the Philosophy of Cognition in Taiyuan and gave a keynote paper devoted to this topic. Here I shared the platform with the American philosopher Michael Tye who addressed in his talk the question of whether fish can feel pain. Of course, the problem of other minds is not one confined to the human mind. The question of our knowledge of the minds of non-human animals is also on the agenda – not to forget the problem of whether we can build a robot that feels pain. Furthermore, the topic of other minds is an important part of philosophy’s partnership with subjects such as psychology and psychiatry as we try to form an understanding of such puzzling conditions as autism and schizophrenia. Talks on these topics are on the agenda for the Summer School in Philosophy and Psychiatry: Mind, Value and Mental Health to be held in Oxford in 2016.

Philosophical fashions do change, and we are now seeing a revival of interest in the topic of the minds of others. And a good thing too, as it is arguable that our understanding of the minds of others holds the key to the understanding of our own minds. This is because, while it is true that we individually enjoy rich mental lives, we are also, importantly, social creatures.
Women of Distinction

Many people who have spent time at the Philosophy Faculty will be familiar with the Faculty’s gallery of portrait photographs. First put together at our previous home at 10 Merton Street, the collection comprises portraits of noted Oxford philosophers, including two particularly well-known images, of Gilbert Ryle (seated in a deckchair) and of Peter Strawson (smoking contentedly).

In 2015, the Faculty will add to the collection six more portraits of women philosophers who have worked with distinction both at Oxford and in the wider world. The addition of these portraits represents a long overdue recognition of the contribution made to our community by women.

Those portrayed show philosophical strength across a range of fields, and three made significant contributions in the wider, public world. All are inspiring figures that today’s young Oxford philosophers can look to for testament and for inspiration.

The Faculty expresses warm gratitude to those who have helped us find and produce the portrait photographs.

Martha Kneale
Co-author of a major history of the development of logic; former tutor at Lady Margaret Hall

Mary Warnock
Moral philosopher and public intellectual; formerly tutor at Lady Margaret Hall and St Hugh’s College

Philippa Foot
Renowned moral philosopher and co-founder of OXFAM; former fellow of Somerville College

Dorothy Edgington
Emerita Waynflete Professor of Metaphysics; the first woman to hold one of the named chairs in philosophy at Oxford

Kathy Wilkes
Philosopher of mind who helped foster the free study of philosophy in communist Europe; former fellow of St Hilda’s College

Susan Hurley
First woman to be elected a fellow of All Souls College; noted for her contributions in philosophy of mind, ethics, and political philosophy

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Susan Hurley
First woman to be elected a fellow of All Souls College; noted for her contributions in philosophy of mind, ethics, and political philosophy
How did you find your visit to Oxford to give the lectures? And how did you enjoy your other visits around the UK while you were here?

I found the visit terrifically stimulating. I got so many really great comments and questions, in both the question periods after the lectures and at the seminars, and all of that improved my work tremendously, so I’m grateful to all who participated. I also found Oxford very beautiful in the spring, and greatly enjoyed running in the University parks, and on Port Meadow. I had such a lovely flat in Jericho, so I was equidistant from the two best running places.

I also had a wonderful time on my visits to St. Andrews, Durham, and London (University College), all being extremely stimulating symposia on different parts of my work. I’m so grateful to the philosophers who organized those symposia and gave me marvelous hospitality.

Your lectures were, in part, about reasons why anger is not worthwhile. Do you think philosophy has much to offer us on how we might avoid anger, or learn somehow to transcend it? More generally, should philosophy as a profession (or at least moral philosophy) move back towards the folksier view of it, as the thinking about the different ways one might live well?

I think what philosophy offers, at its best, is clear analysis and the intensive consideration of different normative theories. This takes hard work and really a lifetime of effort. In the case of an emotion such as anger, the philosopher needs to care about what psychologists have found, and in the normative part of the inquiry I feel the need to think about history and law, as well as philosophy. But I think if the philosophy is well done it can give reasons for law and policy, as well as for personal choices. I don’t myself feel that these goals are best served by what you call a “folksier” view of the subject. My models are thinkers such as Aristotle, the Stoics and Adam Smith, who were not folksy at all, but quite academic, and very interested in theory, and yet at the same time very interested in human beings and human psychology, as well as in the shape of social and political institutions. I try to follow their lead as best I can.

You are definitely asking the wrong person! Although I gave permission for the live blogging, I’ve made it a policy not to read blogs or write for them, and not to use any social media beyond email. This choice works for me. It protects my writing time, and gives me more time to read novels and listen to music, which I greatly prefer to blogs. But also, think about anger: if you are engaged with social media, then you encounter so many temptations to anger every day. Instead of having twenty colleagues whose idiosyncrasies you have to learn to deal with without anger, you have many thousands of such “colleagues.” Not surprisingly, the blog world is consumed by anger, not least in philosophy. I think the right update of Seneca’s advice to steer clear of irritating situations would be, at least for me: don’t read blogs and don’t write for them.

Have you explored much of the utility and/or coherence of other emotions than anger?

Oh yes. My first book on the emotions, *Upheavals of Thought* (2001) focused on grief, compassion, and love. In *Hiding From Humanity* (2004) and *From Disgust to Humanity* (2010), I focused on disgust and shame. In *The New Religious Intolerance* (2011) I focused on fear. And in *Political Emotions* (2013), in addition to approaching that entire prior list from a new viewpoint, that of normative political theory, I also talk about envy and jealousy. But I had never dealt with anger at length, and the brief things I did say about it now seem to me quite wrong. It was very exciting to discover, on thinking things through, that I had been wrong. Just today, a young colleague partly convinced me that I had been wrong in some things I wrote a long time ago about grief, so I may have to write another book on that emotion to respond to her challenge.
Did you follow much the Scottish referendum on independence, and the build-up to it? Despite politicians’ claims of the contrary, there was a lot of acrimony in public debate. How might the people overcome this acrimony following the result?

I did follow it. As a fan of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, I do have a soft spot for the distinctive aspects of Scottish institutions. Smith emphasized that free compulsory elementary education was a Scottish commitment in the late 18th century, when little children in England were still made to do factory labour. And of course that went on for almost a hundred years after he wrote that. Mill’s Rector’s Address at St. Andrews in 1867 points out distinctive features of the Scottish (as contrasted with the English) system of higher education that are very precious to me: basically, it was (and is) a liberal arts system, emphasizing critical thinking, study of world history, and what Mill called “aesthetic education.” So, loving all that history, I tended to want them to separate themselves. But my friends in Scottish universities had grave fears, well grounded, for the health of the Scottish universities if they lost UK research funding, and the confrontation between Salmond and St. Andrews’s Principal Louise Richardson did not reassure one. So, I defer to those who know more than I do, and think it was probably the right result. I hope that people will quickly move beyond acrimony to create reconciliation.

While visiting the UK, you spoke to school audiences. What was your impression of the appetite for philosophy among the young here? How does the UK compare to the US?

Actually, I spoke at only one school, Bedales. I had an invitation from Eton, but didn’t have time left to accept it. So I am hardly going to be in a position to comment in a general way, since Bedales is a very special school. I lectured to the whole school here. At the time of the five lectures, I already had a seven-chapter book, and I put the draft on the website so people could read it; the two seminars were on parts I did not present as lectures. The parts omitted from the lectures were, first of all, just a lot of detail in each chapter; but then the whole discussion of anger in the workplace and casual interactions, and the whole historical discussion of forgiveness. I am now getting all that in shape, and just trying to make everything better.

Beyond that, a colleague and I are planning a set of essays on aging that will form a book called something like Aging: Contrarian Conversations. We will each write separate essays, embodying our different methodological perspectives (he’s an economist), and then each of us will reply to the other. This is the way we have had great fun working together before, and we are having huge fun working on it now. I am also planning a book on the Mozart operas. I have already written on three of them: The Marriage of Figaro in my recent book Political Emotions; On Clementina di Tito in a piece I wrote for a new production at the Belgian National Opera, and just recently, on Don Giovanni in a program note I wrote for a new production at the Lyric Opera of Chicago that opened this week. The issues that obsess me (forgiveness, mercy, relations between women and men, how to transcend anger and revenge) make me obsessed with these operas, and with the others (especially Idomeneo, Così Fan Tutte, and Die Zauberflöte) as well. Next year I’ll be teaching a course on opera with Anthony Freud, the Artistic Director of the Lyric Opera, so that will be a learning phase during which I’ll store up insights for the eventual book.

What projects do you have coming up?

My first project is to finish the book version of the Locke Lectures, which is due to Oxford University Press in May 2015. At the time of the five lectures, I already had a seven-chapter book, and I put the draft on the website so people could read it; the two seminars were on parts I did not present as lectures. The parts omitted from the lectures were, first of all, just a lot of detail in each chapter; but then the whole discussion of anger in the workplace and casual interactions, and the whole historical discussion of forgiveness. I am now getting all that in shape, and just trying to make everything better.

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THE LECTURES

ANGER AND FORGIVENESS

The Locke lectures took place over a period of five weeks in Trinity Term 2014. The following are outlines of the individual lectures themselves.

Lecture 1

Furies into Eumenides

Anger is not just ubiquitous, it is also popular – even among philosophers. Many people think it is impossible to care sufficiently for justice without anger at injustice. Many also believe that it is impossible for individuals to vindicate their own self-respect adequately without anger. The lectures will argue that anger is conceptually confused and normatively pernicious. It is neither normatively appropriate nor productive in either the personal or the political life. Lecture one introduced core ideas, using as a metaphor the end of Aeschylus’ Oresteia, in which goddesses of retribution are transformed into guardians of social welfare. It also introduces a sub-argument concerning forgiveness: rather than being the normatively benign alternative to anger that many people believe it to be, forgiveness (at least as standardly defined) is too often an obvious substitute for anger, rendering those who engage in it to be, forgiveness (at least as standardly defined) is too often a covert form of anger, extracting humiliation as a condition of forgiving angry attitudes.

Lecture 2

Anger: Down-ranking, Weakness, Payback

This lecture analyzed the cognitive content of anger, starting from, but not totally agreeing with, Aristotle’s definition. With the help of an example, Nussbaum argued that anger is almost always normatively flawed in one of two ways. Either it wrongly supposes that punishing the aggressor could make good a past damage – an idea of cosmic balance with deep roots in the human psyche but nonsensical – or, in the case where the angry person focuses exclusively on offense to relative status, it may possibly make sense (a relative lowering of the offender does effect a relative raising of the victim), but the exclusive focus on status is normatively problematic. Although anger may still be useful as a signal, a motivation, and/or a deterrent, its flaws compromise even this instrumental role. Nussbaum then discussed a concept that she called the Transition: a constructive segue from backward-looking anger to constructive thought about the future. And she identified one species of anger that she does consider normatively unproblematic, Transition Anger. Nussbaum also discussed the connection between anger and a displaced sense of helplessness, and examine a possible role for empathy in extricating oneself from the trap of anger.

Lecture 3

Anger in the Personal Realm

It is commonly thought that people who have been wronged by intimates ought to be angry, because they owe it to their self-respect so to react. This lecture contested that claim, discussing anger between intimate partners and anger between adult children and their parents (but focusing on the latter for reasons of time). Nussbaum ended with a discussion of self-anger. In all cases she pursued her sub-theme of forgiveness, arguing that generosity, and not the extraction of apologies, is what we need.

Lecture 4

The Political Realm: Everyday Justice

Many people think that the institutions of the legal system ought to embody the spirit of (justified) anger, and they defend a picture of criminal punishment along these lines. In keeping with the forward-looking and constructive attitude she has defended previously, Nussbaum criticized criminal law retributivism and defend a Millian (not exactly Benthamite) form of welfarism, looking at the implications of these ideas for several specific aspects of the criminal justice system (victim impact statements, shame-based penalties, juvenile justice conferencing, mercy at the sentencing phase). Nussbaum insisted, however, that the ex post focus of the criminal justice system is actually a narrow part of the task of a good society in dealing with crime. Forward-looking strategies should focus above all on education, health care, nutrition, and inclusion in the political process.

Lecture 5

The Political Realm: Revolutionary Justice

When there is great injustice, it is very tempting to think that righteous anger is the best response, and even a necessary response. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the three most successful revolutionary freedom movements in the past century have been conducted in a spirit of non-anger (distinct from, though sometimes joined to, non-violence). Gandhi’s independence movement, Martin Luther King, Jr’s work in the U.S. civil rights movement, and Nelson Mandela’s freedom movement in South Africa. Studying the thought and practice of these three leaders, in this lecture Nussbaum argued that non-anger is both normatively and practically superior to anger.
That's an... interesting combination

Laura Simmons | Philosophy and Modern Languages, Merton College 2010

That's an... interesting combination! A phrase which punctuated my four years at Oxford about as regularly as my bike's tyres were punctured. It was the usual reaction to my telling someone what I studied: Philosophy and Italian. The next response I would often hear was 'Oh! Machiavellian!', but my reynder was 'No! The Philosophy and Modern Languages course at Oxford doesn't require, and in fact doesn't even encourage, any crossover between the two subjects. So my four years at Oxford were neatly divided down the middle, with half of my mental exertions spent on Philosophy, and the other half on Italian. I have a particular affection for Philosophers such as Descartes (French), Kant (German) and Berkeley (British) – not one Italian among them. (Not one woman either, but that's another debate.) I took a break from the devilish difficulty of my logic exercises in first year to concentrate on the sort of philosophy I found interesting – and, once I had read the Meditations (Latin) and I was always surprised at his 'mauvais génie' becoming an 'evil demon' in the English version: unimportant for the philosophical implications perhaps, but giving off quite a different mental image of what such a genie, or demon, wos. (Note: There exists a French word for 'demon', 'démon'.)

Perhaps one of the most important parts of my degree was my third year, which I spent abroad. Try studying Theory of Politics for a term and then going to work in the Italian press; there's nothing quite like Berlusconi's cat-and-mouse game with the Italian justice system to shed a sharp light on the theory I had been working out from the comfort of Oxford's thick walls. Nothing like the resignation of a Pope, down the road to Rome, with a practical aspect, those theoretical insights I'd got from studying philosophy of religion and political philosophy. My five months working in an English-language newspaper by the Vatican turned out to be of more use for my philosophy than I could have thought; while of course reading Dante's sharp criticisms of the papacy resonated particularly strongly when sitting in Saint Peter's Square itself.

My year abroad, designated initially entirely for my Italian studies, turned out to be in many ways a practical assessment of my theoretical philosophical studies. Back from eight months surrounded by twenty-something Italians who were struggling to find any kind of employment, despairing at their politicians and frequently taking to the streets in protest, I had more reason than ever to undertake a study of Ethics. Utilitarianism's 'containers of happiness' were no longer the 'milk bottles' some have criticised them as being, but young and fiery Italians, desperate for the employment their education system had promised them.

So what sort of employment has my education promised me? Not a particularly easy career path, that's for sure. Four years of trying to reason critically and developing the foundations of my ethical beliefs have left me with a very strong conviction that, whichever workplace I end up in, it must be one with values I believe in.
Nolloth Professors
Then and Now

Brian Leftow
Oriel College | Nolloth Professor in the Philosophy of Religion

If you want to know the place of the Nolloth Professorship in the philosophy of religion, consider this: it is the only chair with a section to itself in Blackwell's Companion to Philosophy of Religion.

In prehistory an idealist and a psychologist held it; the psychologist writing what for a long while was a standard work on the Christian doctrine of the atonement. But the Nolloth became a chair in analytic philosophy of religion as soon as there was such a thing: in 1951, with the third Nolloth, Ian Ramsey.

The Chair had been restricted to members of the Church of England; Ramsey refused the post till the stipulation was removed. In 1951, logical positivism and ordinary language philosophy ruled the roost, and the main question for analytic debate was whether religious language was "empirically meaningful." Ramsey tried to meet the positivists on their own terms: in Christian Empiricism and 12 other books, he argued that religious language gained a distinctive "empirical" meaning through its connection with religious experience. This was a legitimate move. But it proved more important to question the question. Ramsey's scientific training led him to emphasize similarities between scientific and religious discourse - a move which proved more enduring - and so eventually Oxford's Centre for Science and Religion was named for him.

From a chair one can ascend only to a throne; Ramsey left in 1966 to become Bishop of Durham.

Basil Mitchell held the chair 1968-1984. By then analytic philosophy of religion no longer obsessed on religious language. It had broadened out to consider most questions undergraduates now study: arguments over God's existence and nature, the possibility of an afterlife, etc. This was partly due to the Metaphysicals, a dissident group of Oxford philosophers Mitchell co-founded.

Mitchell wrote five philosophical books, but his most significant contribution came with his 1973 The Justification of Religious Belief. He there introduced the notion of a cumulative case for theism, the idea that arguments individually weak might join together to form a stronger whole. Antony Flew memorably ridiculed it: put one leaky bucket inside another, he wrote, and the water still pours through. But this needn't be so. It all depends on where the holes are and how tightly the buckets fit. Cumulative case arguments are now standard fare in philosophy of religion. Mitchell thought that if successful, such arguments bring about a paradigm shift, in Kuhn's sense - a change of view rational and justifiable but not simply "read off" the evidence.

Within Oxford, Mitchell was instrumental in the founding of the Ramsey Centre and helped establish the undergraduate paper in philosophy of religion, but his main legacy is the Joint School of Philosophy and Theology, which he brought to be over the opposition of A.J. Ayer. Ayer, of course, thought theological language nonsense, and did not want to see philosophy yoked to it. To hear Mitchell tell it, he won the day by talking long enough about the most boring bits of the proposal that the opposition fell asleep: the most boring bits of the proposal that the opposition fell asleep. To Mitchell, this needn't be so. It all depends on where the holes are and how tightly the buckets fit. Cumulative case arguments are now standard fare in philosophy of religion.

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In Oxford, Swinburne took up the Chair on Mitchell's departure. He had already made his mark with The Coherence of Theism (1977) and The Existence of God (1979). Coherence was the first book-length argument that it is possible that God exists. Before that, there had been discussions of individual divine attributes; Swinburne was the first analytic philosopher to argue that the whole package could be instantiated.

Existence made Swinburne's most far-reaching contribution. Swinburne was Bayesian before being Bayesian was cool. He applied Bayes' Theorem in a cumulative-case argument for theism, contending that construed inductively, the various individual arguments of natural theology raise the probability that theism is true, and coupled with considerations about religious experience make theism more likely than not to be true. Before Existence, it was rare to find probability theorems invoked in philosophy of religion. They are everywhere now, and Swinburne is the reason.

In Oxford, Swinburne worked at a torrid pace, turning out a new book every second or third year throughout his tenure - even while lumbered with chairing his Faculty Board. His oeuvre eventually reached 14 scholarly and two popular books. Swinburne's main project while holding the Chair was a tetralogy providing an analytic-philosophical defense of the main lines of orthodox Christian doctrine. A reviewer not known for overstatement called it the only thing in the 20th century that could stand comparison with Aquinas' Summa Theologiae. Within Oxford, Swinburne's legacy is the Master's program in Philosophical Theology.

Lastly we come to me. I succeeded Swinburne in 2002. So far I have worked on the metaphysics of theism, with books on God's relation to time (Time and Eternity) and modality (Modality and Necessity). God and Necessity also offers a new sort of argument for God's existence, from the parsimony of theistic metaphysical theories. I hope to develop a cumulative case based on this.

My next books switch to history, something new for Nolloths. Aquinas on Metaphysics and Anselm's God are both forthcoming. OUP I will next take my whack at the biggest question. Anselm's Proofs (currently in submission) defends three ontological arguments. I argue that the only point that stands up against any is that their premise that possibly God exists is unsupported. The Possibility of God (in progress) argues, well, guess what. The Goodness of God (in progress) will see off (so I hope) the latest version of the problem of evil - oddly, one that does not even suppose that there is any evil.

Within Oxford, I took an active role in the 2006 governance debates, writing repeatedly against the reforms that were being introduced by the then Vice Chancellor John Hood. Programme in the Oxford Magazine.
A Tribute to My Friend

Grahame Lock

In 2014 the Philosophy Faculty was shaken by the sudden and unexpected death of Grahame Lock, Faculty Fellow and Fellow of The Queen's College. We are grateful to Professor Etienne Balibar for his permission to reprint this tribute, which he wrote for Grahame’s funeral.

I was shocked and deeply saddened by the totally unexpected news of Professor Grahame Lock’s death. Although I did not see him so much in the last years, because our moves were hardly compatible, we kept corresponding, making plans to collaborate, and I believe that we remained as close as ever to one another. Grahame was one of my oldest and dearest friends, with whom I shared commitments, speculations, and worries. In a sense we were extremely similar, because of our backgrounds, histories, and characters - which is why I learned so much from him and treasured conversations with him. Together with our common colleague and friend Professor Herman van Gunsteren from (then called the “Catholic University”) where he had been appointed in the meantime, after we had collaborated for one full year in the Department of Political Theory at the University of Leiden. These are some of the reasons why I would like to add a tribute of gratitude and admiration to that of other colleagues. I hope it can be of some value for his family and his friends.

I met Grahame for the first time in the early ‘70s, when he came as visiting student to the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris (where I had graduated myself some time before). He soon became a direct interlocutor for my own master, the Marxist Philosopher Louis Althusser, who at the time was at the height of his creativity and reputation, but also engaging in bitter and complex controversies within what was still called the “International Communist Movement”. It is due in particular to the conversations with Grahame Lock that – for better or worse – we owe one of Althusser’s most well-known pamphlets, the Reply to John Lewis (1972).

It is my certainty that Grahame remained a communist all his life, not in the “organizational” but in the ethical and intellectual sense. In any case he was unflinching in his conviction that the effects of capitalism on our lives and societies and the injustices of class domination, which cause so much despair and suffering, must be opposed without recess. Before being opposed, however, they must be understood: sad intelligere, one of his preferred philosophers, the Dutch-Portuguese materialist Baruch Spinoza, had famously written. Incidentally, the beginning of the phrase speaks of non lugere, non ridere, neque rebus indignare. I never saw Grahame complain or cry (perhaps he did), but we remember his laughter was beautifully contagious, and his soft irony could be devastating. This leads me quite naturally to something I want to insist on: Grahame was not a man of blind faith. He was perfectly aware of the crimes and horrors that (among other extremities, which perhaps the 21st century will even surpass) have been committed in the name of Communism in the 20th century. To analyze their roots and imagine their remedies was one of Grahame’s recent essays has the allegoric title Oikoumenes promachoi ("fighters for the planet") (Leiden 2004). In a moment like this, in which we may have the impression that Europe as a historic project of its own citizens is falling apart, with financial imperatives trumping scholarly research, and demagogic nationalisms overwhelming cosmopolitical ambitions, this, I believe, is invaluable. We will miss him badly, but also remember his witty courage, and keep moving along the same lines. Farewell, comrade and friend.

He had an exceptional gift for bridging gaps and inventing dialogues.

I had a lifelong interest in the Wittgensteinian critique of “systems”. Among his many publications are a book on Wittgenstein: Philosophy, Logic, and Therapeutics (in French), as well as his original contribution to the problem of ideology and subject-formation, inherited from Althusser: The State and I: Hypotheses on Juridical and Technocratic Humanism.

Students and auditors from Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, but of course especially The Netherlands (where he held three successive positions, with great success and earning the respect of his colleagues) keep an enthusiastic memory of his lectures, seminars and supervisions (to which I had the honor of being associated for some time). Grahame was immensely learned and ever more curious of matters ranging from logic and epistemology to law and political theory, economy and administrative technologies, following their latest developments in several languages. He had an exceptional gift for bridging gaps and inventing dialogues. Together with his “internationalist” convictions, this made it possible for him to be a pioneer in the development of something that we now call "European philosophy" - not only in a geographic, but in an institutional, intellectual, and historical sense. Increasingly, he started working from this point of view, thinking across boundaries of languages and schools, rejecting sectarianism as well as eclecticism.

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Etienne Balibar

Professeur émérite, philosophie morale et politique, Université de Paris-Ouest

Anniversary Chair in Modern European Philosophy, Kingstone University, London


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NEW BOOKS A selection of the books published by members of the Oxford Philosophy Faculty over the last year.

Nothingness and the Meaning of Life: Philosophical Approaches to Ultimate Meaning Through Nothing and Reflexivity
Nicholas Waggon (Bloomsbury, 2014)
What is the meaning of life? Does anything really matter? Nicholas Waggon provides a sustained and rigorous elucidation of what it would take for lives to have significance, focussing on the idea of ultimate meaning, the issue of whether a life can attain meaning that cannot be called into question. In the process of relating our ideas concerning nothing to the problems of life’s meaning, Waggon’s book touches upon a number of fundamental themes, including reflexivity and its relation to our conceptual limits, whether religion has any role to play in the question of life’s meaning, and the nature and constraints of philosophical methodology.

Aristotle on Perceiving Objects
Anna Marmodoro (OUP, 2014)
How can we explain the structure of perceptual experience? What is it that we perceive? How is it that we perceive objects and not disjoint arrays of properties? By which sense or senses do we perceive objects? Are our five senses sufficient for the perception of objects? Marmodoro’s book offers a reconstruction of the six metaphysical models Aristotle offered to address these and related questions, focusing on their metaphysical underpinning in his theory of causal powers. It breaks new ground in offering an understanding of Aristotle’s metaphysics of the context of perceptual experience and of the composition of the perceptual faculty.

Leibniz’s Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles
Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra (OUP, 2014)
Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra presents an original study of the place and role of the Identity of Indiscernibles in Leibniz’s philosophy. The book aims to establish what Leibniz meant by the Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles, what his arguments for and from it were, and to assess those arguments and Leibniz’s claims about the Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles. The book includes discussions of the use of the Identity of Indiscernibles in Leibniz’s arguments against the Cartesian conception of the material world, atoms, absolute space and time, the Lockean conception of the mind as a tabula rasa, and freedom of indifference, with Rodriguez-Pereyra arguing that the Identity of Indiscernibles was a central but insential principle of Leibniz’s philosophy.

The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality
Luciano Floridi (OUP, 2014)
Who are we, and how do we relate to each other? Luciano Floridi, one of the leading figures in contemporary philosophy, argues that the explosive developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is changing the answer to these fundamental human questions. As the boundaries between life online and offline break down, and we become seamlessly connected to each other and surrounded by smart, responsive objects, we are all becoming integrated into an “infosphere”. Persons are adopt social media, for example, fed into our “real” lives so that we begin to live, as Floridi puts it, “inside”. Following those led by Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud, this metaphysical shift represents, according to Floridi, nothing less than a fourth revolution.

Berkeley’s A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge: An Introduction
Peter Kail (CUP, 2014)
George Berkeley’s Principles of Human Knowledge is a crucial text in the history of empiricism and in the history of philosophy more generally. Its central and seemingly astonishing claim is that the physical world cannot exist independently of the perceiving mind. In this book, Peter Kail explains the meaning of this claim, the powerful arguments in its favour, and the system in which it is embedded, in a highly lucid and readable fashion and placed in their historical context. Berkeley’s philosophy is, in part, a response to the deep tensions and problems in the new philosophy of the early modern period and the reader is offered an account of this intellectual milieu.

Oxford Philosophers at 3:AM
In 2009, intrigued by what he had heard about Oxford philosopher Timothy Williamson’s views on vagueness, Richard Marshall invited him to do an interview for the online magazine 3am. To his surprise, Williamson agreed.

Five years and over 150 interviews later, the series is still going strong, and includes discussions with a number of Oxford philosophers.


The idea behind the interviews is to bring to the broader reading public what contemporary philosophers working at the top of their game are doing. My feeling was that readers were hungry for fresh and up to date philosophy and that there was little for the general reader out there. My approach is to try and get the philosophers to discuss their work in a way that gives people access to what they are thinking without dumbing down. It seems that they just needed a venue to let rip on their philosophical obsessions. Indeed, traffic on the 3AM site has grown because of the series. I’ve tried to be very inclusive, and this is not without its dangers. Fast research into each individual’s work and getting up to speed on the area in question means that I often get the issues upside down and inside out. There are 164 posts so far and we have many in the pipeline, so it’s a project that seems to still have legs!

Visit www.3ammagazine.com for the full interviews.

OXFORD PHILOSOPHERS AT 3:AM

On the Intrinsic Value of Each of Us
Cecile Fabre

Leibniz: Strange Monads, Esoteric Harmony and Love
Paul Lodge

Category Mistakes
Ofra Magidor

Powers, Aristotle and the Incarnation
Anna Marmodoro

Classical Investigations and Modality and Metaphysics
Timothy Williamson

Truthmaking
Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra

Ninety-four Pages & Then Some
Roger Teichmann
Oxford Philosophy

Faculty of Philosophy
University of Oxford