OP 2021

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Oxford

oxford philosophy
2021

Welcome

From the Chair of the Faculty Board

It has been, of course, a topsy-turvy year. Last I wrote, our finalists – and examiners – were girding themselves for that foray into the dark unknown which was online, open-book, examinations. The former group were under injunction from the latter even more fierce than usual to answer the actual question posed, the hope thereby being to reduce any temptations to cut-and-paste material prepared earlier, or worse still, hastily downloaded. Meanwhile, examiners had carefully been over their questions to weed out any which might easily be addressed by means of a quick web-search.

In the event, the examiners pronounced themselves (in so far as that redoubtable band would ever admit to being in such a state) largely satisfied with how students had approached the exams, and with how they had done. I think students and examiners alike are to be commended for how they dealt with the trying and unusual circumstances.

Following detailed planning, Michaelmas began in a highly organised, but constrained, fashion. The advantages to Oxford of the college system, and of our high-powered and accomplished Medical Sciences Division, were readily evident. As inevitable, Covid cases rose with the influx of students at the beginning of term, but quarantining and isolating in pre-designated small groups ('households') as organised by colleges meant that numbers quickly started dropping again. The university's bespoke 'Early Alert' testing service meant monitoring was highly efficient, whilst isolating student groups could much more easily be looked after within the small and manageable settings of colleges. So far as we know, there were no cases of transmission from students to staff. Lectures and large-group teaching were online, but we were able still to give tutorials and graduate supervisions, and smaller class teaching, in person (if bemasked, and distanced). Still, we all missed the joys, smaller and larger, of our usual *modus vivendi*.

We all missed the joys, smaller and larger, of our usual modus vivendi.

Hilary term's reversion to a state of fuller lockdown was dispiriting, and brought considerable extra demands. But by now our habits of online teaching were well established, and Hilary prelims were able to go ahead online, as in any case had been planned. Spring and the steady march of the vaccination programme eventually brought the welcome in-person return of students, first graduate students, and then, by part-way through Trinity, the great majority of students. We now have the peculiar, but welcome, circumstance of Freshers' Dinners, or other familiar autumnal social events, busily being organised only a few weeks before Trinity prelims.

We have felt great appreciation of, and (at a distance) no little pride in, the marvellous work our Medical Science colleagues have been doing (both clinical and research) in response to the pandemic. Philosophy has had its own part to play too, with colleagues in the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics taking a leading role in discussion of the multi-faceted and urgent ethical questions the pandemic response has raised. Julian Savulescu, Dominic Wilkinson and Jonathan Pugh have been closely involved in the UKRI Pandemic Ethics Accelerator Project, whilst Jo Wolff has also been extensively involved in ethical discussions around resource distribution, and balancing individual liberties with public health.

Much more prosaically, the end of March saw, after months (years!) of preparation, the Faculty's submission to the government's Research Excellence Framework trundle off. It seems a moderate-sized van was required to transport the necessary boxes and boxes of hard-copy materials from the Radcliffe Humanities building. We hope that the assessors on the REF subject panel for philosophy enjoy their reading!

This academic year marked the centenary of the establishment of PPE in Oxford. Many of our celebratory plans had to be abandoned, but colleges held, or are holding, an number of online events, and the year started with an interesting panel discussion alongside publication of an enjoyable report on the history and development of PPE over the years (https://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/article/report-and-panel-discussion-marks-100th-anniversary-of-ppe#/). We look forward to the next hundred flourishing years for PPE!

We were sad not to be able to hold the traditional dinner to mark the occasion of Anita Avramides' retirement, to thank her for all her contributions to the Faculty over the years, but we are glad that she continues as a Senior Research Fellow at St Hilda's. We were delighted to welcome a good number of new colleagues, particularly in such a trying year in which to move institutions. We wish them all well, and as one we look forward, fingers crossed, to a much more ordinary year next year.

Chris Timpson
Professor of the Philosophy of Physics
Tutorial Fellow in Philosophy, Brasenose College

The Inaugural Dr Joyce Mitchell Cook Memorial Lecture

In May 2021, St Hilda's College launched the annual Joyce Mitchell Cook Lectures. Professor Cook, a St Hilda's alumna, was the first Black American woman to receive a PhD in philosophy in the United States.

The College was delighted to welcome, Professor Anita L. Allen, JD, PhD of the University of Pennsylvania as the first Lecturer.

The lecture and discussion, chaired by Anita Avramides, is available on YouTube

Alex Kaiserman Wins *Journal of Applied Philosophy* Prize

Alex Kaiserman (Associate Professor and Tutorial Fellow at Balliol College) has been awarded the annual prize for the best paper in *The Journal of Applied Philosophy*.

Co-authored with Helen Beebee (Professor of Philosophy at The University of Manchester), 'Causal Contributions to War' approaches the question of whether civilians on the unjust side of a conflict are legitimate targets of defensive attack by developing a novel theory of the causal contributions that they make.
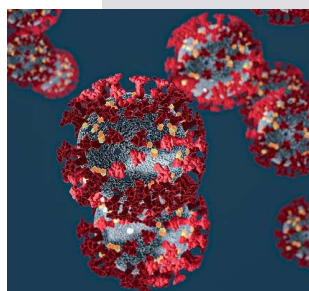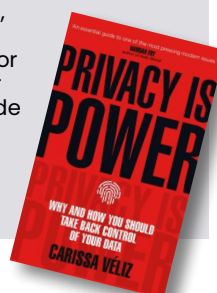
Uehiro Centre Leads on Pandemic Ethics

COVID-19 policy-makers often claim to be science-led, but many decisions turn on values. Throughout the pandemic, The Oxford Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics has been at the forefront of promoting ethics in pandemic responses through a series of initiatives with UK Research and Innovation, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the World Health Organisation, in collaboration with national and international collaborators.

The Centre's academic, policy, and public engagement outputs are available online at: https://www.practicalethics.ox.ac.uk/article/covid-19-pandemic-ethics#/
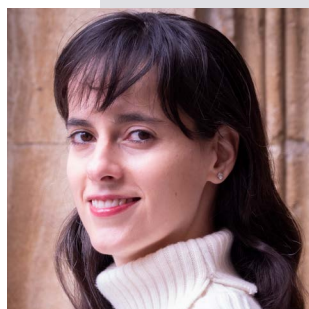
Privacy Is Power one of *The Economist's* Books of 2020

Privacy Is Power (Bantam Press) by Carissa Veliz (Associate Professor and Tutorial Fellow at Hertford College), which examines ethical issues surrounding data collection, was chosen by *The Economist* as one of the best books of the year for 2020. The judges commented: 'Her solutions, such as banning the trade in personal data, may be extreme, but she galvanises an urgent conversation.'

Returning *to* Oxford *again*

On returning for a second time, as the first Director of the Institute for Ethics in AI, **John Tasioulas** reflects on the significance of Oxford, culturally and personally.

Oxford University has been part of my life for almost as long as I can remember. I first learnt of its existence from my late father, during one of the many intense conversations I used to have with him as a boy sitting in his old Hillman. I was around six years old and I was interrogating my father about where students go after they're finished with school, and then with high school, and he mentioned institutions called 'universities'. The conversation then took a Sheldon Cooper-esque turn in which I pressed him on the names of the universities in Melbourne, and their relative academic standing, and then on which were the best universities in the world.

My father, a Greek immigrant to Australia, had not himself had the benefit of formal education beyond primary school, but he was highly intelligent and unusually well-informed, and listed the usual places – 'Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Berkeley...'. 'Yes, but which of these is the best?', I insisted. 'Probably Oxford', he replied. I immediately silently formed the ambition to study at Oxford one day, an ambition that would intermittently surface to consciousness over the years when I would ask myself what was the point of the hard work I was doing at school. This ambition was eventually fulfilled when I came to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in 1989. Nine years after that, I became a fellow of Corpus Christi College, something that surpassed even the demanding albeit ill-defined aspirations of my six year-old self.

This anecdote illustrates various truths. One of them is the obvious dependence of ambitions on knowledge of available options. It has always struck me that one of the most crushing forms of disadvantage is the simple lack of awareness of alternative ways in which a life might be lived. Often, the failure to inform is driven by the prejudice that a given option is not in the relevant sense genuinely 'available' to the young person in question. But it wasn't simply a matter of the supply of information. It was also the reverential tone in which my father spoke about universities. This was a tone very different from that which he used when, as a man of the left, he would speak of the various manifestations of institutionalised power. The picture he conveyed was of universities as oases devoted to the disinterested search for truths that benefit all humanity, free of the grubby deceptions, self-seeking, and dishonourable compromises that disfigured politics and other aspects of life. Of course, this was an idealised portrait, but not for that reason entirely lacking in truth. And of the various great universities I have been fortunate to be associated with, none comes closer to it than Oxford.

I believe that a culture of participation in deliberation and decision-making is valuable in itself, an aspect of equal standing in a shared community.

Key, I believe, to Oxford's success is the way in which the aspiration for academic excellence, and the intellectual and moral virtues bound up with its fulfilment, is fostered by the heavily democratic and dispersed nature of decision-making in Oxford. Like other democrats, I believe that a culture of participation in deliberation and decision-making is valuable in itself, an aspect of equal standing in a shared community, and that it also tends to promote better decisions. One can of course appreciate this proposition in the abstract, but this appreciation becomes much more vivid after having experienced the rigid hierarchies, micro-management and faux corporate mind-set that prevail in other universities. In saying this, of course, I don't wish to suggest that Oxford is immune to these systemic deformations. Nor to deny that it remains vitally important to scrutinize the material pre-conditions that enable Oxford's enviable academic culture to endure, something that I personally had to grapple with early on, in the decision to accept a Rhodes Scholarship. But this is the main reason I am delighted to be back at Oxford – because it is the closest thing I have known to the ideal of a self-governing community of scholars devoted to the disinterested pursuit of truth.

John Tasioulas
Professor of Ethics and Legal Philosophy and Director of the Institute for Ethics in AI

🐦 @JTasioulas

John and his father in 1991, two years after he became a Rhodes scholar

New People

Louise Hanson St Hilda's

Louise joins the faculty from the University of Durham, and prior to that, the University of Cambridge. She did her undergraduate degree at King's College London, followed by the BPhil and DPhil at Oxford.

Louise's research spans metaethics, aesthetics, and epistemology, as well as analogies and overlaps between these domains. She has written on moral realism and related debates including evaluative testimony and evolutionary debunking arguments, and topics in aesthetics including artistic value and conceptual art. Louise is currently writing a book on robust realism about beauty.

Nick Jones St John's

Nick re-joins the Faculty from the University of Birmingham, where he taught for seven years as a Birmingham Fellow, Senior Lecturer, and then Reader. He holds a BA and MA from the University of Leeds, a PhD from Birkbeck, London, and was a Research Fellow at both King's College London and Merton College.

Nick's research interests lie at the intersection of metaphysics with the philosophy of logic and the philosophy of language. Much of his current work concerns the metaphysical status of the languages of higher-order logic, as well as applications of those languages to the problems of mainstream metaphysics, especially problems about the nature of particulars, universals, propositions, and possibility.

Kate Kirkpatrick Regent's Park

Kate joins the faculty from King's College London, where she was Lecturer in Religion, Philosophy and Culture from 2018–2020. Before that she held positions at St Peter's College and the University of Hertfordshire. She has a doctorate from Oxford.

Kate's research interests are broad, encompassing French phenomenology, feminism and philosophy, and the philosophy of religion. Her publications include *Sartre on Sin* (OUP 2017), *Sartre and Theology* (Bloomsbury 2017), and, with George Pattison, *The Mystical Sources of Existentialist Thought* (Routledge 2018). She is also author of a a highly acclaimed biography, *Becoming Beauvoir: A Life* (Bloomsbury 2019). Her current project is a philosophical commentary on Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, supported by a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship.

Mark Wynn Oriel

Mark joins the Faculty as the Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion from the University of Leeds, where he was Professor of Philosophy and Religion (2013-20). He has also held appointments at the University of Exeter, the Australian Catholic University, and KCL, as well as a Gifford Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Glasgow. He has a BA in Philosophy and Theology and a DPhil from Oxford.

Mark's current research interests include philosophical perspectives on ritual and liturgy, and the interactions between representations of the sacred and accounts of human wellbeing. His publications include *Spiritual Traditions and the Virtues: Living Between Heaven and Earth* (OUP, 2020), and *Renewing the Senses: A Study of the Philosophy and Theology of the Spiritual Life* (OUP, 2013).

Carissa Veliz Hertford

Carissa joins the Faculty after being a Research Fellow at the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics and the Wellcome Centre for Ethics and Humanities at Oxford.

Carissa completed her DPhil at Christ Church. Her research interests are in practical ethics and political philosophy. Her main focus is on privacy and the ethics and governance of technology (especially AI). She is the author of *Privacy Is Power* (Bantam Press 2020), and the editor of the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Digital Ethics*.

Milo Phillips-Brown Jesus

Milo joins the Faculty from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he spent eight years, first as a PhD student and then as a Distinguished Fellow in Ethics and Technology.

Milo's main research interests are in the ethics of technology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind. His main focus right now is on the nature of bias within computer systems – in particular, within search engines – and on the relationship between desire and decision theory.
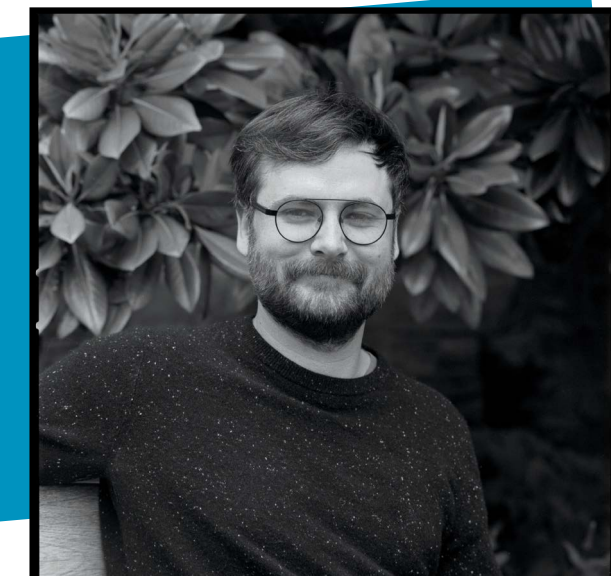
West *meets* East

Indian Philosophy in Oxford

In 2020 the Faculty introduced a new undergraduate paper in Indian Philosophy. **Jessica Frazier**, one of its architects, tells us about the paper and the history of Indian Philosophy in Oxford.

'The arguments of the ancients are sinuous…' wrote Bimal Krishna Matilal in 1986 in his room at All Soul's, 'but they contain important philosophical insight.' A former student of Peter Strawson and Michael Dummett, Matilal had also gained a traditional Tarkatirtha 'Master of Reasoning' degree in classical Indian Epistemology from the University of Calcutta. He predicted a time when philosophical terms derived from Sanskrit would be as central to contemporary philosophical analysis as those that have grown out of Greek.

This year, Oxford's first undergraduate course in Indian Philosophy has opened up a wealth of such ideas to students in the Faculty of Philosophy. Together students explored the philosophical potential contained in distinctive Indian theories of identity, mind, matter, causation, scepticism, idealism, aesthetics, and ethics. They found that much is familiar, but much is also surprising in this 'looking glass world' where whole cultures lived out philosophies as yet undreamt of in western thought. No prior knowledge was needed: in this course students are introduced to the ideas then encouraged to run a fine toothed comb through their arguments, weighing their success and pinpointing flaws, hunting out new insights and making contributions of their own.

There are many philosophical roads to India. When I first came to the subject through an interest in German thought, what attracted me to Indian philosophy was the rich metaphysics of the Vedantic tradition that, over two thousand years, devised ever-new ways of explaining the basic ontological substrate of reality. In the face of fierce critique, it argued that there must be a unified material, efficient, and formal cause of everything based on the coherence and causal interaction we see in the world. I wasn't alone in my fascination: Spinozists, Hegelians and panpsychists have often felt drawn to Indian thought, as have those attracted to problems of powers, grounding and 'goo.' But at the other end of the spectrum, many prefer the bold radical scepticism of the Madhyamaka tradition: Jan Westerhoff, who led half of the classes this year, is a key proponent of Madhyamaka's anti-foundationalist model of a world freed from essences or foundations.

When I was a student in Cambridge my own lecturers loved Indian thought for its notorious 'holistic' philosophy of meaning, and its novel form of philosophical theism – and more recently India's distinctive 'direct-realist' account of reference, its yoga-influenced attempts to change the phenomenological structure of experience, and its emergence-based explanations of mind, have all moved into the spotlight.

India's philosophical history is incredibly diverse – a fact shaped by two powerful forces: On the one hand, Hinduism's three-thousand year old Vedic tradition was metaphysically multi-curious, generating atomisms, hylomorphisms, monisms and phenomenologies that grew under the demanding tutelage of sophisticated logical, semantic, and epistemic traditions. But on the other hand, around the fourth century BCE these were challenged by the scepticism of Buddhism, Jainism, and 'materialist' traditions. Together, these two 'metaphysical' and 'sceptical' strands refined each other over the centuries. The Hindu schools of thought developed ever-more sophisticated theories of reality and our methods for understanding it, while Buddhism's successive waves of scepticism questioned first concrete identities, then the constitution of personal subjectivity, and finally all determinate essences or ontological foundations. Conversation flourished in an 'argumentative' India (to borrow Amartya Sen's phrase) where no view was silenced. As a result every philosophy thrived according to its merits – from the substance-monists to theistic atomists, to ontological nihilists and hedonist materialists. For a western analogy, one might imagine Humeans and Spinozists, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Strawson, Chomsky – and Nietzsche – all debating furiously in a single cafe, overlooked by eagle-eyed epistemologist arbitrators.

Contemporary philosophy has made immense progress but it has sometimes found itself hitting the same dead-ends, using the same ill-defined ideas historically rooted in Greek thought.

Max Muller
(photo by Lewis Carroll, 1857)

The philosophical yield of this was astoundingly rich, and western philosophers have long been fascinated with it – Arthur Schopenhauer was instrumental in promoting Indian philosophy's willingness to think in terms of 'representations' rather than 'things'. In his 1818 preface to *The World as Will and Representation* he wrote that access to Indian philosophical sources is …

the greatest advantage which this still young century has to show over previous centuries, since I surmise that the influence of Sanskrit literature will penetrate no less deeply than did the revival of Greek literature in the fifteenth century.

In England, Hume and Locke both made reference to Indian ideas, whilst in Germany Indophile and Sanskrit scholar Friedrich Schegel revered India's metaphysical and moral holism or 'Allheit,' which incorporated mind and matter, fact and value, and what we call 'good' and 'bad' into a complete theory. Hegel would take up this idea and read Hinduism's Vedantic monism as 'pure being without any concrete determination' as a stab at the kind of system that he himself sought to develop.

18th-century Sanskrit manuscript of *Harivamsa* from the Indian epic *Mahabharata*.

Here in Oxford, interest in India began with the establishment of the Boden Chair of Sanskrit in 1832. Initially, it was aimed primarily at converting and controlling the Indian subcontinent; but academic appointments have a curious way of subverting their original intentions. Over the subsequent decades, Sanskritists began to extol the value of India's own culture to a global audience. Max Muller, one of the most prolific early translators of Sanskrit texts, was an apologists for both sides, upholding the special dispensation of Christian culture whilst shouldering severe criticism for championing an Indic worldview over church orthodoxy. In an 1879 preface to his *The Sacred Books of the East*, he wrote of Indian works that:

Plato is strange till we know him… so it is with these ancient sages… [T]o the patient reader these same books will, in spite of many drawbacks, open a new view of the history of the human race, of that one race to which we all belong, with all the fibres of our flesh, with all the hopes and fears of our soul.

Of course most translators lacked the philosophical training for a rigorous analysis; and most philosophers lacked the textual resources for detailed study, or their prejudices got in the way. But the paradigm shifted with the arrival of Bimal Krishna Matilal as the Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at All Souls in 1977. Educated both by logicians working in the Indian tradition and Western analytic thinkers like Willard van Orman Quine, Matilal had done his PhD on innovations in early-modern Indian logic. He worked hard to inspire a culturally neutral form of analytic philosophy that drew on all relevant sources, regardless of where they came from. His massive output embraced logic, language, epistemology, and ethics, and his students were part of a new wave of global Indian philosophers who today can be found in Universities around the world.

Contemporary philosophy has made immense progress but it has sometimes found itself hitting the same dead-ends, using the same ill-defined ideas historically rooted in Greek thought, and making the same assumptions generation after generation. Untapped traditions also exist, full of ideas. They point to new directions, offer new tools, and turn past assumptions on their heads. Whilst the pandemic was changing world history this year, Oxford Philosophers were changing the world in their own way, showing that they're ready to see what can be done with fresh material.

Jessica Frazier
University Research Lecturer in Theology and Religion
Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies
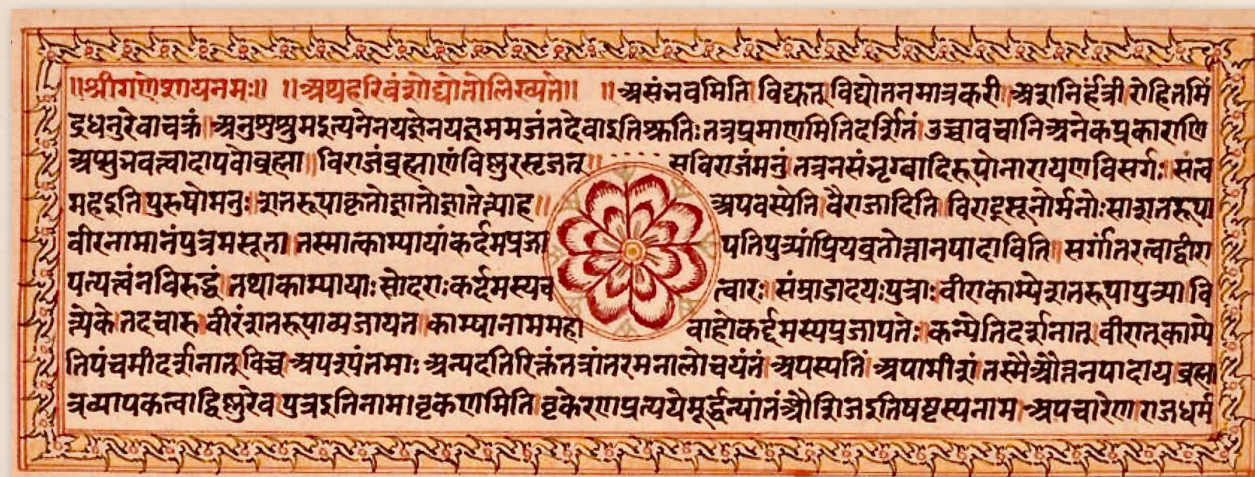
MDCXXI

Celebrating 400 Years of
the White's Chair
of Moral Philosophy

MMXXI

The 400th anniversary of the White's Chair of Moral Philosophy is being marked across the University this year. In a university of Oxford's long-standing, 400th anniversaries are celebrated surprisingly regularly. But this one has extra meaning: when the White's Chair was first established in 1621, it became Oxford's first professorial post in philosophy and it has since come to be regarded as one of the most prestigious positions in moral philosophy in the world.

The long list of White's Professors have shaped the field of philosophy over four centuries. Their names ring out today as touchstones of rigorous, humane and urgent philosophical enquiry. They have stoked revolutions in our philosophical and moral understanding, and have trained generations of research students to the highest of standards.

The White's Chair has a broad job description. The occupiers lead the study and development of moral philosophy within Oxford, and play a key role in developing the next generation by supervising doctoral students and students on the two-year BPhil graduate degree. As moral philosophy is one of the most popular areas of graduate study in philosophy at Oxford, this gives them oversight of a significant number of the Faculty's doctoral students each year. They also chair research seminars such as the high-profile Oxford Moral Philosophy Seminar, at which virtually every major anglophone moral philosopher in the 'analytic' traiditon has spoken over the last couple of decades.

Alongside this institutional workload, holders of the Chair have made significant contributions to the biggest challenges facing humanity.

The anniversary will be marked in various ways over the course of the year. The Faculty will hold a small internal celebration – in person if Covid-19 measures allow, online if not. A series of articles will be published on the Faculty and Humanities Division websites, including an article by the current White's Chair Jeff McMahan on his work. And philanthropic support is being sought for a range of opportunities connected to the Chair and the Faculty, including new graduate scholarships.

Here's to the next 400 years!

Henry George Liddell
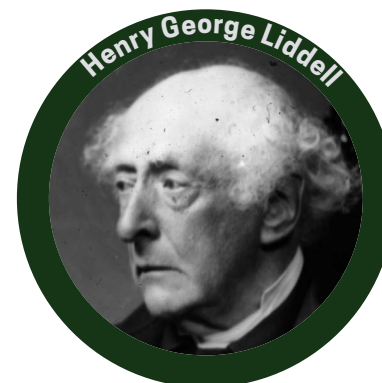
1811-1898 (Chair 1845-1846)
As well as serving as Oxford's Vice-Chancellor, Liddell co-edited the Liddell and Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* which was published in 1843 and is still widely used by students of Greek today.

Richard Mervyn (RM) Hare

1919–2002 (Chair 1966-1983)
Famous for his 'prescriptivism', Hare moved the focus of academic moral philosophy toward meta-ethical theory, and became one of the dominant forces of his generation in anglophone moral philosophy.

Thomas Hill (TH) Green
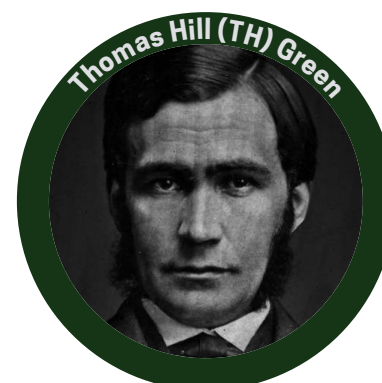
1836 – 1882 (Chair 1878-1882)
The founder of British Idealism, Green was also leading light in the radical liberal politics of the day and helped found the City of Oxford High School for Boys. After his untimely death in 1882 aged 45, his funeral was attended by over 2000 local people.

Bernard Williams

1929-2003 (Chair 1990-1996)
Widely regarded as one of the most original anglophone philosophers of the post-war period, Williams also worked on royal commissions and government committees, including on drug abuse, gambling, social inequality and obscenity.

John Langshaw (JL) Austin

1911–1960 (Chair 1952-1960)
Austin was a central figure in the 'ordinary language philosophy' movement that was dominant in Oxford at the time. He is best known for his theory of 'speech acts', which is highly influential to this day.

John Broome

1947- (Chair 2001-2014)
An economist by training, Broome has made seminal contributions to the field of population ethics and the ethics of climate change. He served as a lead author on the report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as featured in the 2014 edition of *Oxford Philosophy*.

Holders of the Chair

1621 William Price
1630 Thomas Ballow
1634 Edward Fulham
1638 George Gisbey
1643 John Berkenhead
1648 Edward Copley
1649 Henry Wilkinson
1654 Francis Howell
1657 William Carpender
1660 Francis Palmer
1664 Andrew Crisp
1668 Nathaniel Hodges
1673 Abraham Campion
1708 Edward Thwaytes
1829 William Mills
1834 Renn Hampden
1836 William Sewell
1841 Charles William Stocker
1842 George Johnson
1845 Henry George Liddell
1846 John Matthias Wilson
1874 John Richard Turner Eaton
1878 Thomas Hill Green
1882 William Wallace
1897 John Alexander Stewart
1923 William David Ross
1928 Harold Arthur Prichard
1937 Herbert James Paton
1952 John Langshaw Austin
1960 William Calvert Kneale
1966 Richard Mervyn Hare
1990 Bernard Williams
1996 James Griffin
2001 John Broome
2014 Jeff McMahan

LEGALLY OXFORD

Three members of the Faculty discuss their research and recent innovations in the philosophy of law at Oxford.

PHILOSOPHY, LAW, & POLITICS AT OXFORD

Ruth Chang

As the new Professor of Jurisprudence, I may be a bit of an outlier. I have the legal credentials necessary to train budding lawyers, advise clients about their rights and duties, and argue cases in various US courts. However, I have spent the last twenty years as a philosophy professor in a US philosophy department. And I have yet to publish any work squarely in the philosophy of law.

I take some solace in the fact that when Herbert Hart took up the Chair of Jurisprudence in 1952, he had only one article published in the philosophy of law, and when Ronald Dworkin took it up in 1969, he had only two. Things improved when my immediate predecessor, John Gardner, took up the post in 2000, having already published important articles in the field that Hart and Dworkin helped to establish. With my appointment, Oxford has now reverted to its bad old ways.

Fortunately, the excellent research and teaching of my colleagues in the philosophy of law ensures that Oxford's global preeminence in the field will continue well into the future. Because of this existing strength, I see my appointment as an invitation to open up and encourage new directions of research.

My own research explores foundational topics such as the structure of normativity, the ground of value and reasons, and what it is to be a rational agent. While this work is quite abstract, it has implications for concrete matters, such as how judges should decide cases, whether cost-benefit analysis can justify governmental regulation, which metrics hospitals should use to apportion health care, the right way to think about affirmative action, how to approach climate change in a way that respects competing values, and how we should design AI. Foundational work of this kind also has potential implications for downstream theoretical matters, such as how we should think about egalitarianism, democracy, individual freedom, and fairness.

My hope in coming to Oxford is to make space for philosophical investigation of foundational issues that have interesting implications for downstream issues in philosophy, law, politics, and beyond. Currently this type of work is scattered across these three fields with little cross-disciplinary interaction. Work in law on political legitimacy and authority, for example, remains relatively siloed from work on these very subjects in political philosophy.

Philosophical work on welfare and individual well-being makes no real dent in behavioural and welfare economics. Social philosophers have long complained about the inadequacies of theories in law and politics that pay no heed to the normative implications of existing social structures and cultural norms, but their complaints fall mostly on deaf ears. Philosophical insights into the nature of value that trace back to Aristotle continue to be ignored by rational choice theorists and decision theorists, whose basic models still presuppose the existence of *homo economicus*.

Since arriving at Oxford, I have worked with others to institute a number of initiatives that attempt to enrich the intellectual nexus of philosophy, law, and politics.

First, as of this year, there is a new, explicit progression from the BPhil in Philosophy to the DPhil in Law. Many philosophy students come to philosophy as a pit stop on their way to law school and legal academia, and an Oxford law doctorate may be the right advanced degree for those seeking an academic career at the nexus of philosophy, law and politics.

Second, there is a newly-instituted interdisciplinary graduate course, 'Philosophy, Law, & Politics', which is open to graduate students from the philosophy and law faculties and from the department of politics and international relations. It is great fun – and quite unique at Oxford – to have students from all three disciplines engage with one another.

Third, there is the Oxford Colloquium in Philosophy, Law, & Politics. This Colloquium invites distinguished visitors from across a number of disciplines to share their work with students and faculty at Oxford and beyond. Starting this year, the Colloquium will be co-convened by Cecile Fabre (Politics), Kate Greasley (Law), Alison Hills (Philosophy), Cecile LaBorde (Politics), and myself.

Fourth, in an attempt to spark new conversations at the nexus of philosophy, law, and politics, Amia Srinivasan and I are co-editing a volume that brings together scholars from all three fields and across different generations to write papers in pairs that constitute a kind of conversation about a topic of general interest to all three fields. That volume will soon be coming out with OUP.

Fifth, there is a seven-institution-wide Philosophy, Law & Politics Graduate Forum, which will be run online by graduate students from Oxford, Cambridge, UCL, Queen Mary, Kings, LSE, and Surrey. The idea behind the Forum is to provide a venue for our leading doctoral students from any of the three fields to present papers to an interdisciplinary audience for feedback and commentary. We have asked faculty from all seven institutions to commit to participate and have an impressive list of scholars throughout the south of England who have agreed to do so.

Finally, beginning in Trinity Term 2022, there will be a new, endowed DPhil dissertation prize, the Berggruen Prize for Best DPhil dissertation in Philosophy, Law, & Politics. This prize mirrors the famous $1 million dollar Berggruen Philosophy & Culture prize, but with fewer zeros. The winning dissertation, drawn from any of the three faculties, will receive £1,000 and plaudits from both Oxford and the Berggruen Institute in Los Angeles. Nicolas Berggruen, the generous benefactor, shares our vision of creating a space for philosophy that is transformative for thinking about issues in philosophy, law, politics, and beyond.

Ruth Chang
Professor of Jurisprudence
Professorial Fellow,
University College

DEGREES OF RESPONSIBILITY

Alex Kaiserman

Here's something you might not have known about our criminal justice system: every year, thousands of people are convicted of murder without killing a soul, of theft without pilfering a penny, and of dangerous driving without ever leaving the passenger seat.

Yet this is no miscarriage of justice; it's black-letter law. Via the mechanism of accomplice liability, defendants can be convicted of crimes they helped or encouraged others to commit, even if they did not commit the crime themselves.

There are several problems with this way of criminalising accomplices. One problem is its lack of sensitivity to different degrees of involvement in the commission of a crime. If D knowingly helps or encourages P to commit a crime, D is guilty of that crime, however minor or trivial D's assistance or encouragement was. Recent case law has confirmed that D is guilty of theft if she holds P's baby while he steals cash from a register; of supplying class A drugs if she points to the location of a bag of heroin during a drug transaction; and of working without a permit if she attends a concert by a musician who has outstayed their visa. This strikes many people as deeply unjust.

A second problem with accomplice liability is it makes the guilt of the accomplice parasitic on the guilt of the principal. Suppose D encourages P to kill V. If P is found to have committed murder, then D can be found guilty of murder as an accomplice. But if P can't be convicted of a crime, for example if he is below the age of criminal responsibility, then D cannot be found guilty of murder as an accomplice either, for the simple reason that no murder has been committed. Yet again, this seems like the wrong result.

In recent work, I have argued on these and other grounds that accomplice liability should be abandoned. But this raises the question of what should replace it. And the problem here is that, whereas those who help or encourage others to cause harm seem to bear partial responsibility for those harms, liability in the law is typically all-or-nothing. This difficulty manifests itself in different ways throughout the legal system. Consider a different kind of case, this time not involving complicity. Suppose D non-fatally stabs V, who subsequently refuses the blood transfusion that would have saved her life and dies. With what crime should D be charged: murder, or just grievous bodily harm? Neither option seems quite right. D didn't

kill V, intuitively, but his action clearly contributed to V's death. The right thing to say seems to be that D is partially, but not fully responsible for V's death. Yet the law lacks the conceptual resources to make sense of this distinction.

Over the past few years, I have tried to develop a systematic account of the ways in which responsibility comes in degrees and begun to explore what this might mean for how we should organise our systems of criminal and private law. The project started when I was a graduate student ostensibly working on the metaphysics of causation. My transition into philosophy of law was unexpected, and wouldn't have been possible without the kindness of all the lawyers who gave up their time to patiently explain basic legal concepts to me (starting with the lawyer at a conference in Austin who first told me about Palsgraf, still my favourite legal case and proof that real life is often wilder than even the most recherché of philosophers' examples).

I'm grateful to them, and to the proper legal theorists featured here for continuing to tolerate an imposter in their midst!

Alex Kaiserman
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Tutorial Fellow in Philosophy,
Balliol College

THE LEGAL TURN

Maximilian Kiener

Philosophers have gone to great lengths to explain the concept of moral responsibility. They developed a plethora of different theories and approaches and even reached out to other disciplines to supplement their views, such as neuroscience or physics. Yet, legal scholarship was not among those other disciplines. In fact, philosophers have given very short shrift to the law and how people are held legally responsible. If not ignored, legal responsibility has been seen as a contingent construct, subject to peculiar constraints inherent to the law, and therefore unable to advance our understanding of responsibility more generally, let alone moral responsibility.

In my current research on John Hyman's ERC Project 'Roots of Responsibility', I suggest that the philosophical neglect of legal responsibility is misguided. More precisely, I pursue the hypothesis of a legal turn, i.e. the idea that an inquiry into legal responsibility can in fact guide, in some important respects, an inquiry into moral responsibility and not just the other way around. Three aspects receive particular attention in my work.

Firstly, I investigate Antony Duff's bipartite scheme of legal

responsibility in the criminal law, divided into answerability and liability. Following Duff, I define answerability as an obligation to explain one's (harmful) conduct to others and liability as being appropriately subjected to legal redress or moral criticism. I hypothesise that, once we adapt answerability and liability to moral contexts in particular, moral philosophers can benefit from Duff's scheme in at least two ways.

To begin with, being answerable in Duff's view, unlike in its philosophical equivalents (e.g. in David Shoemaker's work), does not already imply being an appropriate target of so-called reactive attitudes, e.g. disapproval, and could therefore allow us to disentangle various ethical questions that have so far been grouped together. Moreover, Duff's scheme explains numerous connections between answerability and liability and could therefore lead us to a richer understanding of responsibility more generally, compared with current philosophical debates, where answerability and liability (or some equivalent term) are mostly presented as distinct 'types' of responsibility without a similarly detailed explanation concerning their connections.

Secondly, legal theorists explicitly discuss the possibility of negotiating responsibility, e.g. in the context of plea deals or when people agree to take on certain liabilities. Accordingly, (legal) responsibility is not just a fact to be discovered, not even after some harmful event happened, but also, at least partly, something that people negotiate and take at will. Philosophers have not thought about moral responsibility in this way. But I wonder whether they should. In particular, I ask

whether philosophers should make greater room for the idea that taking responsibility (either retrospectively or prospectively) could be a genuine normative power, i.e. that one can take responsibility for something simply by communicating the intention to do so, just as one can (via consent) give permission for something simply by communicating the intention to do so.

Finally, when philosophers discuss moral responsibility, they almost exclusively focus on a single person, i.e. the person whose responsibility is in question. By contrast, in the law, questions of responsibility are often part of wider social or political practices. These practices include settlements outside of court, liability insurances, and immunities. Hence, in a third strand of inquiry, I ask whether these practices could tell us something important about moral responsibility too, namely that moral responsibility, like legal responsibility, should be understood more practically and socially, rather than just metaphysically and individually.

These three points suggest that an inquiry into legal responsibility could in fact advance our understanding of moral responsibility too. But if so, the debate on moral responsibility needs a legal turn.

Maximilian Kiener
Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy,
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Enslaved To One's Nature

Some ancient puzzles about freedom

Ursula Coope tells us about her recent work on approaches to freedom in ancient philosophy.

How is freedom related to goodness? And what are the kinds of condition that constitute a threat to one's freedom? The Stoics had a perfectionist view of freedom: all and only those who are perfectly wise and good are free. If you are perfectly good, then there is nothing that can threaten your freedom. Perfectionist views of freedom are sometimes criticized as being a kind of cheat. The charge is that such views conflate freedom with goodness. They thus provide a spurious justification for paternalistic policies. The advocates of such policies claim not merely to be making you better, but also to be making you freer. But why should we suppose that becoming good necessarily makes you free? The Stoic sage is, by definition, wise and good, but is he thereby free?

The Stoics have an answer to this question. Being free, they suggest, requires meeting the following two conditions, both derived from the contrast between freedom and slavery: first, to be free is to have the power to act as you wish (unlike slaves who must do their master's bidding and rarely get to act as they wish); second, to be free is to be someone who is not vulnerable to being controlled by others (unlike a slave who is under a master's control). The Stoics argue that the sage, and only the sage, meets these two conditions.
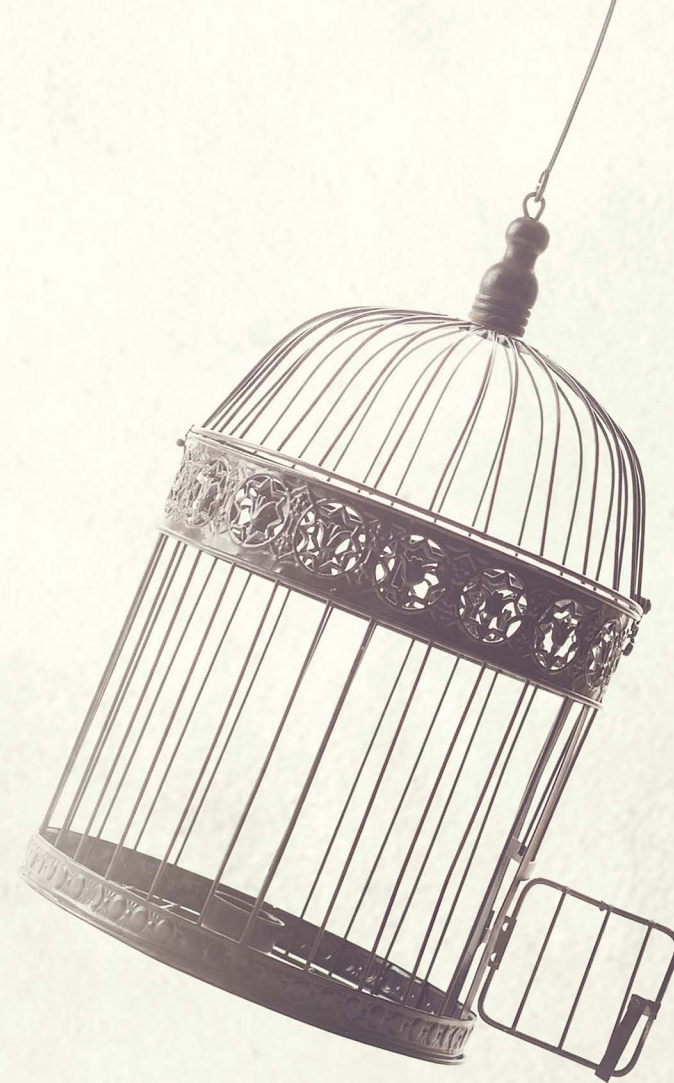
First, the sage, and only the sage, acts as he wishes. To justify this, the Stoics appeal to a Platonic view about what it is to act as one wishes. On this view, we all have an overriding wish for the good; we do not really 'act as we wish' when we pursue things that are not in fact good. A drug addict does not act as he wishes when he acts so as to satisfy a craving that he would rather not have. Similarly, you are not acting as you wish when you act in pursuit of a goal you would reject if only you had a better understanding of your own interests. By contrast, the sage is guaranteed never to make such mistakes. He does not have unruly passions or cravings that might lead him to act contrary to his best interests. He has perfect knowledge of what is good, so never finds himself acting unwittingly against his own interests. He alone has the capacity to act as he wishes, because he alone has the capacity to correctly identify what he really wishes.

Second, the sage cannot be dominated by others. The Stoics' argument for this depends partly on their view about what is truly valuable. Virtue, they hold, is the only true good. Other people can deprive you of external things. They can imprison you and they can take away your belongings. But they cannot deprive you of what is truly good: they cannot prevent you from being virtuous. The sage understands this, and so cannot be coerced by threats into doing something he does not want to do. For the sage, any such threats will be empty.

Of course, there is much to disagree with here. One might object to the Platonic account of 'acting as one wishes'. And one might object to the view that only virtue is truly valuable. Both of these would be ways of objecting to the Stoic claim that sages – and only sages – succeed in meeting the two conditions on freedom. But there is a rather different way of criticizing the Stoics. This is a criticism of the claim that these two conditions – acting as one wishes and not being dominated by others – are sufficient for freedom. Certain ancient philosophers argued that even if we agree that the Stoic sage is someone who acts as he wishes and cannot be dominated by others, this is still not sufficient for showing that the Stoic sage is free. Something is missing from this account of freedom. Two different ancient suggestions about what is missing are made by philosophers in the 3rd century AD. According to the first, being free requires having the capacity to act otherwise; according to the second, being free requires being an entity that makes itself what it is.

The first suggestion can be found in the works of the Aristotelian philosopher, Alexander of Aphrodisias. Alexander finds fault with the Stoic view that the actions of a sage are fully determined by the sage's character together with the circumstances in which he finds himself. This view, he thinks, undermines the Stoic claim that the sage is free. If the sage is free, then he must not only be able to act as he wishes and be able to resist the attempts of others to dominate him; he must in addition be able to act otherwise than he in fact does. Thus, Alexander insists that if the Stoic sage is to be free, then his character together with his circumstances cannot fully determine how he acts. A sage might even choose to demonstrate his freedom by refraining from acting in the way it would have been reasonable to act. Alexander's thought seems to be that unless the sage has this kind of capacity to act otherwise, he will be trapped or constrained by his own character, and hence not really free. Thus, being free requires not only being able to act as one (truly) wishes and being able to resist the domination of others; it also requires a kind of freedom from one's own character or nature.

The second suggestion comes from the Neoplatonist philosopher, Plotinus. He also raises the worry that a perfect being would fail to be free if such a being were constrained by (or 'enslaved to') its own nature. But he gives a very different answer to this worry. He rejects Alexander's suggestion that being free entails having the ability to act otherwise. By providing a perfect being with the ability to act otherwise, we would be providing it with the ability to act imperfectly. We would not be enhancing its freedom, but instead would be opening up the possibility that it might fail to act in accord with its true wishes, and hence might fail to be free. Thus, Plotinus rejects the claim that one can only be free if one's nature (together with one's circumstances) does not fully determine how one will act. How, then, does Plotinus answer the worry that a perfect being would be enslaved to its own nature, and hence fail to be free? His answer has two parts. First, a free entity must be identical with its nature. Second, this nature is itself a kind of self-determining activity. On this view, a free entity just is a kind of self-determining activity. This activity is not enslaved to its nature, because it itself is identical with, and determines, this nature. For Plotinus, a paradigmatic free entity is not a virtuous human being, but rather a kind of intellectual activity. Virtuous human beings are free only to the extent that they succeed in uniting themselves with such free intellectual activity.

These two lines of thought raise several questions that are taken up by later philosophers. Does it make sense to worry that an entity might be 'enslaved to its own nature'? If so, how might such 'enslavement' be avoided? If we are to allow for the possibility of freedom, does this constrain the range of metaphysical positions we can accept? Modern philosophers in the analytic tradition will be familiar with the suggestion that a free entity must have the ability to act otherwise, and that nothing could have such an ability if the world were deterministic. But ancient philosophy also suggests an alternative way in which metaphysics might be constrained by the need to make room for freedom. For the Neoplatonists, a free entity must be self-determining. A metaphysics that makes room for freedom need not be indeterministic, but it must allow for the possibility of self-causation. The Neoplatonists attempt to provide such a metaphysics. We are left, then, with two questions. Are the Neoplatonists right to think that such a metaphysics is needed? And do they succeed in explaining how a kind of self-causation might be possible?

Ursula Coope
Professor of Ancient Philosophy
Professorial Fellow, Keble College

> *On Plotinus' view, a free entity just is a kind of self-determining activity. This activity is not enslaved to its nature, because it itself is identical with, and determines, this nature.*

Text and Context
in the Heidegger Controversy

Mark Wrathall discusses the complexities of Heidegger's notorious relationship to National Socialism.

In the introduction to his 1924 lecture course on *The Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger claimed that 'with regard to the personality of a philosopher, the only things of any interest are: he was born on such and such a date, he worked, and he died. The character of the philosopher and such things will not be addressed.' The view expressed here grows out of Heidegger's phenomenological method. As Heidegger practiced philosophy, the purpose of philosophical description is to help the reader achieve her own direct intuition of the phenomenon in question. Consequently, in interpreting the arguments of other philosophers, Heidegger's primary questions were: 'how are the intended *subject matters* viewed, in what context are they addressed, in what way are they defined'? The descriptum, not the describer, has priority in determining the meaning of a philosophical text. Thus, Heidegger dismissed the biography, personality, and character traits of the philosopher as irrelevant to understanding the work in question.

There is then no small irony in the fact that Heidegger's biography and character have become, for many, a Rosetta stone for interpreting his philosophy. This is perhaps not surprising, given the public and spectacular character of his personal failings. Heidegger's support for the National Socialist movement, and his use of Nazi and anti-Semitic language and tropes, has been amply documented and exposed. It is no longer possible to doubt that, as Julian Young puts it, Heidegger was 'a real Nazi: his involvement was a matter of conviction rather than compromise, opportunism, or cowardice.' He was undeniably antisemitic and strongly supported Hitler and the Nazis from 1930 until at least 1934. It is also now clear that, after the war, Heidegger repeatedly lied or distorted the record to conceal the character and depth of his political activities in support of the Nazi movement during the Hitler regime. Moreover, he never publicly and explicitly renounced his support for National Socialism. On the rare occasions when he has called to address the Holocaust, he deflected attention away from the question of German guilt by, for instance, equating the Shoah to the repressive Soviet occupation of East Germany.
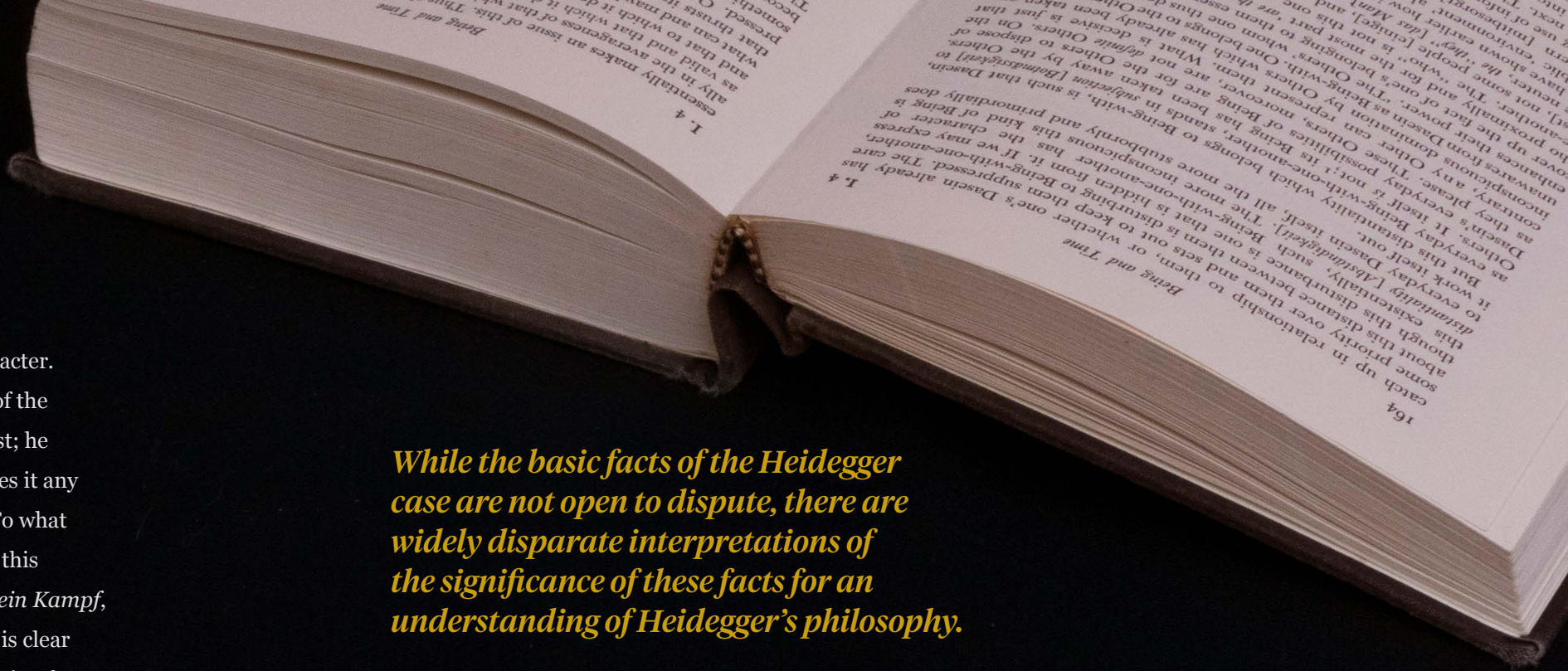
But while the basic facts of the Heidegger case are not open to dispute, there are widely disparate interpretations of the significance of these facts for an understanding of Heidegger's philosophy. Young, for instance, maintains that Heidegger's philosophical works can be 'de-Nazified' – that Heidegger's philosophical thought does not 'stand in any essential connection to Nazism.' Moreover, Young argues,

One may accept some, or all, of this philosophy without fear of being committed to, or moved into proximity with, fascism. More precisely, my claim is that one may accept any of Heidegger's philosophy, and ... preserve, without inconsistency, a commitment to orthodox liberal democracy.

Others have pushed the extreme opposite view. For instance, Emmanuel Faye argues that it is 'impossible to dissociate [Heidegger's work in its entirety] from his political commitments,' and that Heidegger 'dedicated himself' to 'the introduction into philosophy of the very content of Nazism and Hitlerism.' Indeed, Faye goes so far as to contend that 'Heidegger's work is not at all a "philosophy",' that in his work 'the very principles of philosophy are abolished.'

Claims that Heidegger's work is not philosophical or 'destructive of philosophy' are belied by the fecundity of his thought for ongoing philosophical research. Over the last century, his arguments and phenomenological insights have laid the ground for an explosion of rich and important philosophical work in a variety of fields, including the phenomenology of perception and action, the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of artificial intelligence and cognitive science, ontology, the philosophy of time, the philosophy of art, the history of philosophy, and moral psychology.

At the same time, the suspicions raised by Heidegger's Nazi past are too important to be ignored by scholars and students of his work. It is entirely legitimate and appropriate to ask if

his philosophical views were influenced by Nazi ideas and ideology, or whether Heidegger's anti-Semitism or Naziism contaminated some part (or even the whole) of his life's work. But even those who answer such questions in the affirmative have to concede that the case for influence or contamination is circumstantial at best. For example, Sidonie Kellerer argues that the philosophical works that Heidegger published in his lifetime need to be 'decoded,' that Heidegger 'employ[s] a cryptic language' to conceal the true aim of his thought, which 'has to do with his long-standing anti-Semitism, blood-and-soil nationalism, and racism, not with a genuinely philosophical project.' Cracking the code, they insist, requires us to read Heidegger's published philosophical works in the proper context – which means for them, reading Heidegger against the social and political background of Nazi Germany, and through the lens of Heidegger's personal correspondences, private notebooks, and a few other lectures and manuscripts that date from the Nazi era.

Those who defend the continuing philosophical relevance of Heidegger's work likewise insist that his philosophical writings have to be properly contextualized, but they disagree on what this requires. Situating a text in the appropriate context is the bread and butter of historical work in philosophy, and it is usually done without much in the way of reflection. The Heidegger controversy, however, calls for reflection on method because it demonstrates just how much can turn on decisions about how to contextualize a text.

Consider one example – Heidegger's use of the concept of *community* (*Gemeinschaft*) in *Being and Time*. Heidegger invokes the concept in the course of arguing that human existence is

essentially historical and social in character. However, Heidegger's understanding of the concept of *community* is unclear at best; he neither defines it explicitly nor discusses it any further in the remainder of the book. To what sources should we look in interpreting this concept? Faye turns immediately to *Mein Kampf*, and he concludes accordingly that '[i]t is clear that Heidegger is promoting that totalizing form of political organization' that Hitler referred to as the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The social and political context of revolutionary politics in Weimar Germany is thus made the dominant context for understanding Heidegger's concept.

How else might one go about contextualizing the concept of community in this passage? To most Heidegger scholars (and, I believe, to most historians of philosophy in general), the fundamental starting point ought to be the philosophical project of which this passage is a part. *Being and Time* is a work in ontology; its explicit aim is the elucidation of the meaning of being. It contains no discussion of political organization at all. Thus, the very first question which ought to be asked is: how does the concept of community contribute to an understanding of the ontology of human existence? Faye makes no effort to situate the passage in question in the context of the broader work.

Of course, it is standard operating procedure in scholarship in the history of philosophy to interpret philosophical concepts in the context of other texts. But rather than turning first to *Mein Kampf* – a book Heidegger never cited,

While the basic facts of the Heidegger case are not open to dispute, there are widely disparate interpretations of the significance of these facts for an understanding of Heidegger's philosophy.

let alone discussed, in *Being and Time* – one ought to look to the philosophical works that Heidegger *does* in fact cite. To help explain the historical constitution of a community, for example, Heidegger invokes Dilthey's concept of the 'generation.' One ought also to turn to other passages in Heidegger's corpus where he discusses the concept of community – for instance, one might look to Heidegger's roughly contemporaneous claim that the 'genuine ground' of a community is 'true love.'

This is not to entirely dismiss the relevance of the political context – when properly used, situating Heidegger's work in that context can provide vital illumination to our understanding of his work. For instance, Hans Sluga's masterful study of philosophy in Nazi Germany has helped correct misjudgments about the relationship between National Socialism and philosophy in general. As Sluga (and subsequently others) have shown, a surprisingly heterogeneous cross-section of philosophers joined the Nazi party in the 1930s. 'By 1940,' Sluga notes, 'almost half of Germany's philosophers were members of the Nazi party.' Sluga thus observes that:

by considering that context we come to see not only that other philosophers committed themselves to the Nazi cause, but that they did so for a number of different and mutually incompatible philosophical reasons. This … undermines the idea that there was a specific link between Heidegger's particular philosophy and National Socialism.

According to Sluga, Heidegger thus turns out to be just one example of the wide 'diversity of philosophical schools, movements, and ideas' that 'were willing to put themselves at the service of the regime.' It goes without saying that this fact does nothing to exonerate Heidegger. But it does serve as a reminder that there is unlikely to be a simple and straightforward account of the relationship between a philosopher and her social, political, and historical context.

Mark Wrathall
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From Oxford PPE to MP for Oxford East

Mansfield PPE student **Efa Bowen** talks to **Anneliese Dodds** (St Hilda's, 1996), Chair of the Labour Party and MP for Oxford East.

Can you tell us about your memories of studying philosophy at Oxford?

I started at St Hilda's in 1996. My memories of studying philosophy there are very happy ones, and I think this is due to my incredible tutors.

Anita Avramides was one; I remember she'd done a lot of work on Cartesian thought. She was frighteningly clever, and someone you really wanted to do well for. I was also interviewed and taught by Kathy Wilkes, who was a complete Oxford original. I remember she was a chain smoker, and in my interview, she asked me if she lacked willpower because she couldn't stop smoking. As a little 17-year-old from Aberdeenshire, I was terrified to answer her! The intimidation I felt stemmed from the fact that she was an incredible woman. She worked in the philosophy of mind, did a lot of work in Russian psychology, and made huge contributions behind the Iron Curtain. There's a plaque commemorating her on the city walls in Dubrovnik, actually, which I managed to see when I visited many years later.

There was also Stephen Blamey from Teddy Hall who taught logic. He was completely ambidextrous and wrote sentences with both his hands, starting them in the middle of the blackboard and stretching out to either side, which was very impressive. For the ethics side of the course, I was taught by Roger Teichmann, a lovely man who taught Kantian ethics amongst other things. He lived at the bottom of Cowley Road, across from where I lived as a student in my second year. I lived in what could be called a party house, and it was very funny – we'd occasionally see him around, and we'd really try to behave ourselves when we did!

Did you study philosophy throughout your three years of PPE?

I did, yes. I took the paper in post-Kantian continental philosophy where I covered a lot of work by Sartre and Nietzsche, ethics, and philosophy of mind. I also did the political theory paper, and was taught by Michael Freeden, who had written a seminal book in the field. I remember that in this book, he'd said that the concepts are the furniture, and they're just arranged in different ways for different ideologies. Everybody that I knew who was taught by him all remember this phrase about the 'furniture', and it became an oft-repeated catchphrase of his students.

Were there aspects of philosophy you particularly enjoyed?

I loved all of it really! It's fascinating in all its variety. I enjoyed the discipline of philosophy, where there can be no ambiguity, nowhere to hide, and you have to be crystal-clear in your arguments. I did always enjoy studying the philosophy of mind, and I think a big part of this was due to Kathy Wilkes being such an interesting tutor. In my finals, my strongest subject ended up being ethics, which I had always found interesting as well.

Has studying philosophy shaped your life since leaving Oxford or affected your political discourse in some way?

When I said that I wanted to study philosophy originally, my dad laughed and told me the story about Bertrand Russell being arrested. Russell was put in jail after a protest and apparently the warden asked him what he did. He said that he was a philosopher and was asked by the jailer what that meant. Russell is supposed to have replied 'I think for a living', to which the jailer responded, 'Well, could you think about sweeping the floor over there?' My dad was trying to make a joke about the usefulness of philosophy beyond academic study, but I think the discipline of philosophy has been very useful in my life. In Oxford, I was always encouraged to apply different theories to real-life examples. Putting theories into practice under different contexts to test them is always helpful.

Lots of different types of experiences are helpful in the political arena.

Since leaving Oxford, the kind of logical thinking philosophy requires has made me more upfront about recognising contradictions or ambiguities in arguments. Importantly, I think it's helped me recognise times where there's been insufficient evidence for some claims, or when an argument needs backing up. I work with people such as trade unionists who spend a lot of time negotiating, testing their arguments, spotting counterarguments, and building up responses to support their case. In this sense, I don't think philosophy has to be a purely academic pursuit. It's applicable in day-to-day life.

Anneliese at a demonstration against the introduction of student fees in 2000.

Do you think it's a good thing that so many politicians are ex-Oxford PPEists?

I don't think it is, though that probably sounds a bit strange given that I am one myself. I think we need to have a much more diverse Parliament. Lots of different types of experiences are helpful in the political arena. Parliament needs to be more representative of society, across income groups, ethnic, and disability status, and obviously, we're very far away from having this kind of representation. Within Oxford University itself as well, despite attempts to rectify this, it ultimately remains the case that for some people who want to study at Oxford and would greatly benefit from it, there are enormous barriers.

You're now the MP for Oxford East. How has that impacted your sense of the relationship between the University and the rest of Oxford?

I certainly have a very different picture of the city now compared to when I was a student. I've lived in Oxford, on and off, for quite a long time, and in a number of different parts of my constituency – at the bottom of Cowley Road, on Abingdon Road, on Iffley Road, and now in Rose Hill. It's definitely home for me. One thing I've learned as a result is that the large mass of the city's population lives not in the centre of Oxford, where the hustle-and-bustle tends to be as a student, but in the outskirts. I've also got a picture of how the local economy works, which isn't as obvious as a student.

One thing that is evident as a resident, and which I think students sense quite acutely as well, is the inequality within the city. There's the high cost of housing, which underlies a lot of the other issues. There are large disparities in disposable income because of this cost, as well as a vast gulf in life expectancy across the city.

However, I haven't come to feel that there's an oppositional relationship between the University and the rest of Oxford; and I think this is partly because so many people in the city are employed by the university in different ways. However, I do think there is tension due to housing in the city, and this is something that needs to be rectified.

Do you have any advice for young philosophy students who want to make positive political contributions?

Concentrate on your work – do better at it than I did! But more seriously, let's not underplay the extent to which philosophy is important for politics; there is a clear and strong relationship between the two. Views on human dignity, for example, are often underwritten by different forms of ethical philosophy. Beyond ethics, other areas of philosophy too can relate to politics and the way we treat fellow human beings.

But there are many different types of political engagement. Obviously, there is political engagement with a capital 'P', namely the party-political clubs. But it always moves me when I see Oxford students getting involved in community efforts and movements which help the vulnerable, which we might call political involvement with a lowercase 'p' – this form of involvement should not be downplayed.

Finally; is there something you've read recently that you'd recommend to our readers?

Charles Foster's book, *Being a Beast*, is one I've read recently that was particularly interesting. Everybody who's studied philosophy is familiar with Thomas Nagel's question about what it's like to be a bat. Foster refers to this quote and discusses two avenues that have been followed in trying to understand it: either you anthropomorphise the animal, or you abstract it completely, focusing on the human talking about it rather than on the animal itself. Foster suggests that you need to behave like that animal to understand it, and he lived as a badger in the Welsh countryside for months, sleeping in a sett and all. It's a curious read, but he brings up all kinds of interesting ethical observations to reflect upon. For example, some species of animal seem to show no empathy (if that's the right word to use) towards other injured animals, whereas other species do display empathetic behaviour. It's really fascinating and I highly recommend it.

New Books

Determinism, Freedom, and Moral Responsibility: Essays in Ancient Philosophy
OUP
Susanne Bobzien

Determinism, Freedom, and Moral Responsibility brings together nine essays on determinism, freedom and moral responsibility in antiquity by Susanne Bobzien. The essays present the main ancient theories of determinism, freedom, and moral responsibility ranging from Aristotle via Epicureans and Stoics to Alexander of Aphrodisias in the third century CE. Historically unified, philosophically profound, and methodologically rigorous, Bobzien's discussions show that in classical and Hellenistic philosophy these topics were all debated without reference to freedom to do otherwise or to free will, and that the latter two notions were fully developed only later.

Lectures on the Philosophy of Mathematics
MIT
Joel David Hamkins

In this book, Joel David Hamkins offers an introduction to the philosophy of mathematics that is grounded in mathematics and motivated by mathematical inquiry and practice. He treats philosophical issues as they arise organically in mathematics, discussing such topics as platonism, realism, logicism, structuralism, formalism, infinity, and intuitionism in mathematical contexts. He organizes the book by mathematical themes — numbers, rigor, geometry, proof, computability, incompleteness, and set theory — that give rise again and again to philosophical considerations. Throughout Hamkins offers a clear and engaging exposition that is both accessible and sophisticated, intended for readers whose mathematical backgrounds range from novice to expert.

Moral Uncertainty
OUP, Open Access
William MacAskill, Krister Bykvist, and Toby Ord

Very often we're uncertain about what we ought, morally, to do. We don't know how to weigh the interests of animals against humans, how strong our duties are to improve the lives of distant strangers, or how to think about the ethics of bringing new people into existence. But we still need to act. So how should we make decisions in the face of such uncertainty? Though economists and philosophers have extensively studied the issue of decision-making in the face of uncertainty about matters of fact, the question of decision-making given fundamental moral uncertainty has been neglected. William MacAskill, Krister Bykvist, and Toby Ord try to fill this gap
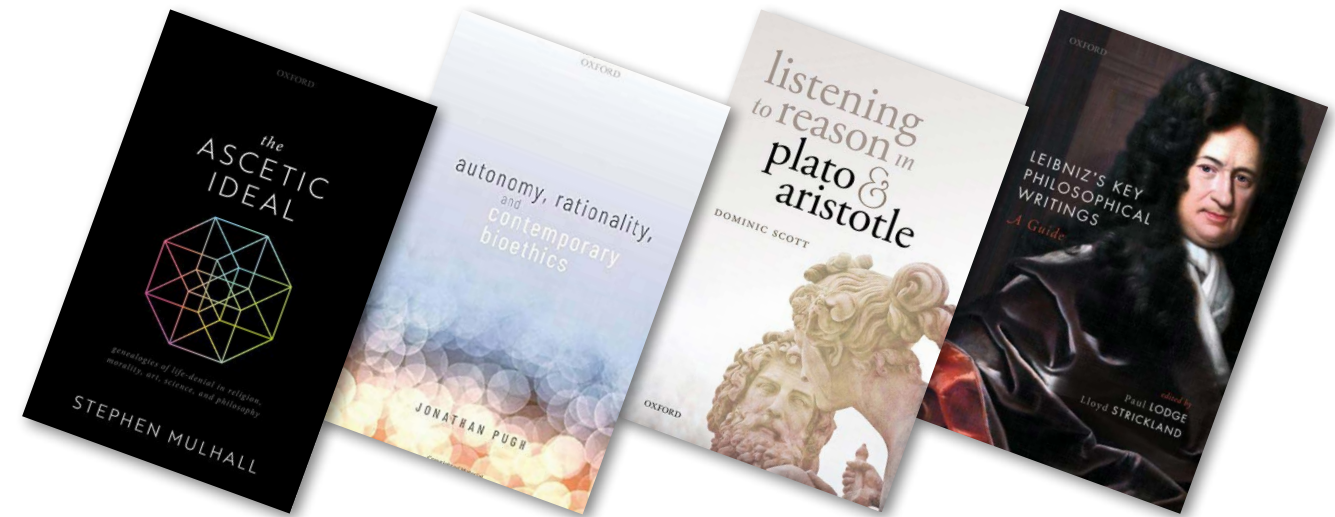
The Ascetic Ideal: Genealogies of Life-Denial in Religion, Morality, Art, Science, and Philosophy
OUP
Stephen Mulhall

In *The Ascetic Ideal*, Stephen Mulhall shows how areas of cultural life that seem to be either essentially unconnected to evaluative commitments (science and philosophy) or to involve non-moral values (aesthetics) are in fact deeply informed by ethico-religious commitments, for better and for worse. The book develops a reading of Nietzsche's concept of 'the ascetic ideal', which he used to track the evolution, mutation, and expansion of the system of slave moral values, associated primarily with Judaeo-Christian religious belief through diverse fields of Western European culture—not just religion and morality, but aesthetics, science, and philosophy. Mulhall also offers an interpretation of Nietzsche's genealogical method that aims to rebut standard criticisms of its nature, and to emphasize its potential for enhancing philosophical understanding more generally.

Autonomy, Rationality, and Contemporary Bioethics
OUP Open access
Jonathan Pugh

Personal autonomy is often lauded as a key value in contemporary Western bioethics. Though the claim that there is an important relationship between autonomy and rationality is often treated as uncontroversial in this sphere, there is also considerable disagreement about how we should cash out the relationship. In particular, it is unclear whether a rationalist view of autonomy can be compatible with legal judgments that enshrine a patient's right to refuse medical treatment, regardless of whether the reasons underpinning the choice are known and rational, or indeed whether they even exist. Jonathan Pugh brings recent philosophical work on the nature of rationality to bear on the question of how we should understand personal autonomy in contemporary bioethics.
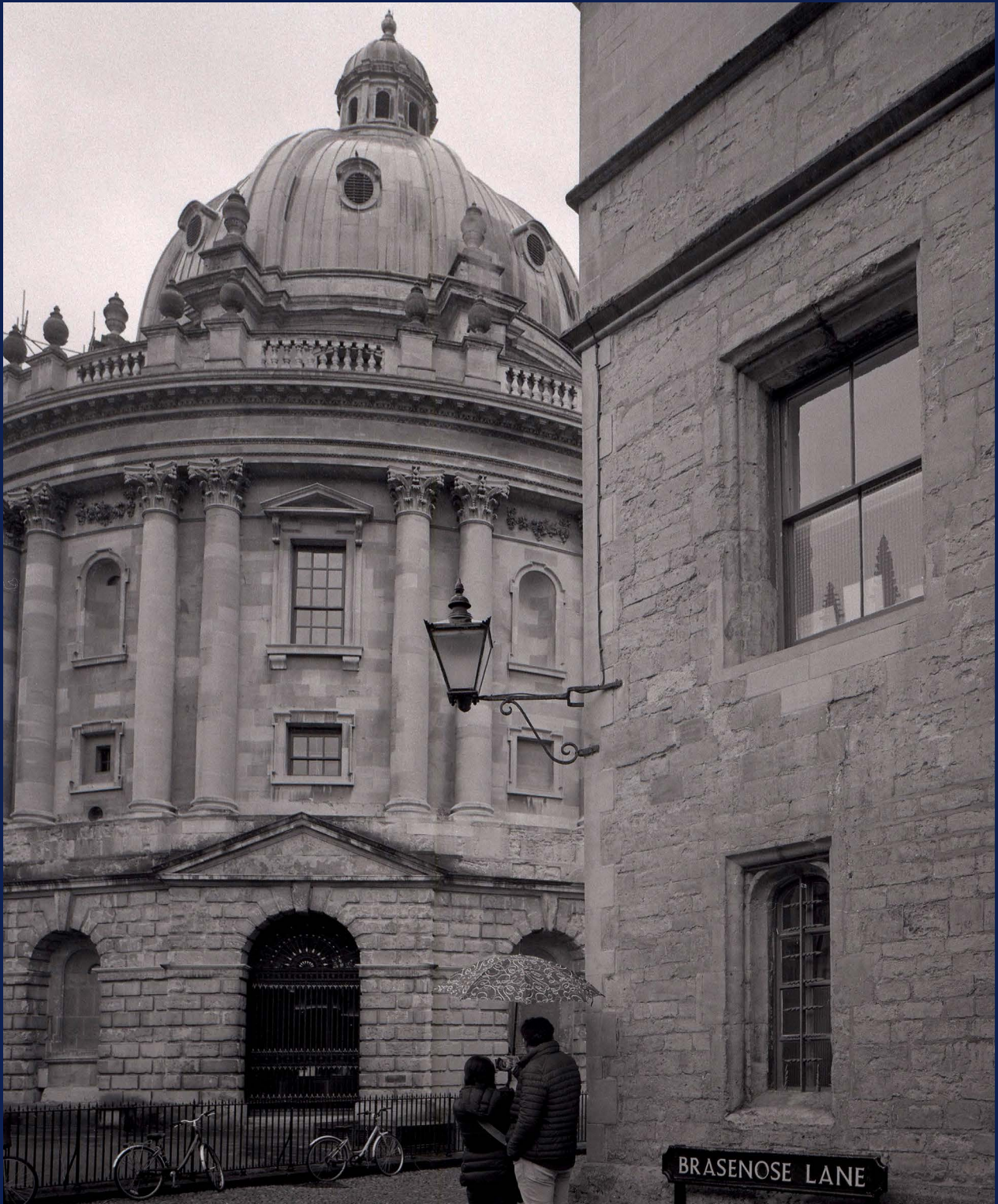
Listening to Reason in Plato and Aristotle
OUP
Dominic Scott

Focusing on the *Republic* and the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Dominic Scott compares the views of Plato and Aristotle on the persuasiveness of moral argument: in particular, how far did they think it could reach beyond a narrow circle of believers and influence people more generally? The book shows that both Plato and Aristotle offered arguments in ethics that they thought are beyond the reach of most people. Nonetheless, Scott argues that they both believed that there was another level of argument, which could have a much wider appeal, especially if supplemented by the appropriate rhetoric.

Leibniz's Key Philosophical Writings: A Guide
OUP
Paul Lodge and Lloyd Strickland

Paul Lodge and Lloyd Strickland (Manchestester Metropolitan University) assemble a collection of leading experts on the philosophy of Leibniz as guides to those unfamiliar with his philosophy. Each chapter focuses on one of Leibniz's central texts and provides relevant background and a detailed analysis of its content. Following a chapter introducing Leibniz's life and works, individual contributions focus on well-known writings such as *The Monadology* and *Discourse on Metaphysics*, major correspondences with figures such as Samuel Clarke and Antoine Arnauld, and lesser-known writings such the *Confessio Philosophi* and *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese.*