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Lecturer in Philosophy

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About

My main interests are in philosophy of mind and language, though I tend to preoccupy myself with relatively general issues that arise where those areas intersect with epistemology and metaphysics, rather than with fine-grained debates internal to the philosophies of mind and language. Thus, I have tried to defend very broadly empiricist conceptions of linguistic understanding and concept possession and to bring those conceptions to bear on issues such as semantic externalism, self-knowledge, a priori knowledge, and consciousness. For some details, see 'Research' below.

Biography

I joined the Department in 2000, after completing a doctoral degree at Oxford.

Teaching

Undergraduate

In 2014/15 I teach:

- 1st Yr. *Formal Logic* (a new one-semester module)
- 2nd Yr. *Speaking of Things* (This ran last year under the far more mundane title, 'Reference', and is an introductory course on fundamental issues concerning linguistic and mental singular reference.
- 3rd Yr. I convene the recently revamped dissertation module, Philosophical Project

Postgraduate

Two modules in 2014/15:

- Philosophy of Mind
- Philosophical Research (A research methods module for MRes Philosophy students)

Currently I am supervising four MA students and half of 1 PhD (Andrew Wright, on pain).

Postgraduate supervision

I'm happy to supervise PG students in many areas of philosophy of mind and language, epistemology and metaphysics, and I'd like to have more PG students. More specifically, I'd be especially delighted to supervise on the following areas:

- Reference
- Consciousness (especially semantic and epistemic issues)
- First-person knowledge
- *A priori* knowledge
- Epistemic contextualism
- Objectivity, realism and anti-realism
- Rule-following and the 'normativity of meaning'

Research

Recently I have worked mainly on issues involving *phenomenal concepts*: i.e. concepts that conscious subjects are said to have of what it is like for them to undergo experiences. Advocates of what has become known as the 'phenomenal concepts strategy' in the debate over the metaphysics of consciousness maintain that these concepts enjoy peculiarly *direct* semantics, and they invoke this feature in an attempt to defuse influential anti-physicalist arguments. In 'Conceptualizing Physical Consciousness' ([abstract here \(https://www.dropbox.com/s/x6sf4v0oqha6u12/Conceptualizing%20Physical%20Consciousness%20-%20Abstract.pdf\)](https://www.dropbox.com/s/x6sf4v0oqha6u12/Conceptualizing%20Physical%20Consciousness%20-%20Abstract.pdf)) I defend this approach against a recent attack by James Tartaglia, and in the near future I hope to extend my defence so as to address other philosophers who attack the phenomenal concepts strategy in a manner similar to Tartaglia's.

In '[Phenomenal Senses \(https://www.dropbox.com/s/68b742y3prpjlxv/Phenomenal%20Senses%202013.pdf\)](https://www.dropbox.com/s/68b742y3prpjlxv/Phenomenal%20Senses%202013.pdf)' I complain that the theories advocated by orthodox advocates of the phenomenal concepts strategy are threatened by some of the same worries that face Millian accounts of singular reference, and I defend an alternative,

neo-Fregean (and somewhat empiricist) account of phenomenal concepts which avoids these worries without surrendering dialectical ground to anti-physicalists. In **Phenomenal Justification and the Intuition of Distinctness** (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/oz5wzx3n2re52ms/Phenomenal%20Justification.pdf>), I explore some of the epistemic ramifications of views like mine, and suggest that my proposal delivers a more satisfying explanation of why physicalism is hard to believe than does that of David Papineau (a prominent advocate of the orthodox conception of phenomenal concepts who explicitly addresses the question of why physicalism is hard to believe). In **Phenomenal Concepts and Language** (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/0q41w7pkmfem1hj/Phenomenal%20Concepts%20and%20Language.pdf>), I explore the question whether phenomenal concepts are expressed by terms of ordinary languages, and defend a negative answer. A welcome consequence of this is that it provides advocates of the phenomenal concepts strategy with a novel response to recent attacks by Michael Tye and Derek Ball. In the near future I hope to explore ramifications of my views on the effability of phenomenal content for hoary old chestnuts such as Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations and private language argument. (For a short overview piece on the latter which I wrote a long time ago, see [here](https://www.dropbox.com/s/63jmxm0unigxdyp/PLA.pdf) (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/63jmxm0unigxdyp/PLA.pdf>).

Another area of my work belongs to the intersection of philosophy of language, mind and epistemology. In **The Candour of Sense** (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ed4kbjem47304j/Candour%20.pdf>), I defend the compatibility of semantic externalism with the neo-Fregean approach to singular reference. I argue that this requires us to overhaul the version of neo-Fregean externalism associated with John McDowell and Gareth Evans, but that the revisions I propose are independently defensible. 'Weak Externalism' and 'Sufficient Absences: Constitution or Evidence?' are older unpublished papers in which I explored other facets of the semantic externalism issue. For more older work in this area, see Publications below.

A number of years ago I undertook to compare the holism about reasons which Jonathan Dancy defends in his work on moral particularism with other kinds of holism, such as those associated with confirmation and with meaning, and I drafted a paper defending a version of moral particularism which resembles Dancy's in its epistemic aspects but not in its metaphysical ones. Since then I have been too busy with other projects to bring this paper to publishable form, but if anyone is interested, I'd be delighted to send you what I have, and to discuss.

Publications

Books

- (co-edited, with Max Kölbel) **Arguing About Language** (<http://www.routledge.com/books/Arguing-About-Language-isbn9780415462440>), Routledge, Dec., 2009
A c. 600 page anthology of classic and contemporary readings on the philosophy of language, with extensive editorial commentary.

Papers

- 'Three Notions of Tacit Knowledge', *Agora: Papeles de Filosofía*, 23 (2005) (a special issue commemorating the 25th anniversary of Gareth Evans's death), pp. 61-85. read abstract
- 'Compositionality and the Manifestation Challenge'** (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/7c0wwu6myxbyy6x/Comp%20and%20Manifestation.pdf>), *Synthese*, 144: 101-36 (2005). read abstract
- 'The "Compositional Rigidity" of Recognitional Concepts'** (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/hctga0tvc71e3oh/CompRigRecogConcepts.pdf>), *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 33(2), (2004) pp. 147-69. read abstract
- 'Gardiner on Anti-realism: A Defence of Dummett', *Dialogue*, XLIII (2004), pp. 3-24. read abstract
- 'Horwich's Semantic Deflationism'** (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/z99j3sfc1uuviz/Horwich.pdf>), *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 8(3) (2001), pp. 371-91. read abstract
- 'Liberalising Verificationism: Peircean and Dummettean Possibilities', in Weingartner, P., Schurz, G., & Dorn, G. (eds.) *Contributions of the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein Society*, Vienna, 1997.

Commissioned encyclopaedia entries, critical notices etc.

- 'Intentionality', forthcoming in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Philosophy*
- 'Further Issues in the Philosophy of Mind', forthcoming in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Philosophy*
- 'Metaphysics of Mind', in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Philosophy*
- 'Consciousness', in *Oxford Bibliographies Online: Philosophy*
- 'Casullo on A Priori Justification', *Philosophical Books*, 48 (3), 241-251
- 'The Private Language Argument'** (<https://www.dropbox.com/s/63jmxm0unigxdyp/PLA.pdf>), in Brown, K. (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (2nd Edition) Elsevier Science, 2005.
- 'Wright, Crispin', in Brown, S. (ed.), *The Dictionary Of Twentieth-Century British Philosophers*, Thoemmes Press (2005)

Book reviews

- Frege on Sense and Reference*, by Mark Textor, *Philosophical Quarterly*, forthcoming.
- Externalism: Putting Mind and World Back Together Again*** (<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/120084249/PDFSTART>), by Mark Rowlands, *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 232 (July 2008) from Wiley InterScience).
- Semantic Challenges to Realism: Dummett and Putnam*, by M. Q. Gardiner, *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 53, no. 210, (Jan 2003), pp. 117-20.