

Birkbeck College
UoA 32: Philosophy
a. Overview

Since 2009, Philosophy has been a department situated in the College's School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy. The Department has immediate research connections to other departments in the School, and links to College research culture through its Institutes. These are designed to foster interdisciplinary connections between colleagues through a high volume of symposia, conferences, and visiting fellows. They include the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities (BIH), and the Birkbeck Institute for Social Research which has a working group on Gender and Sexuality.

The Department has the advantage of proximity to, and strong connections with, the Institute of Philosophy (an Institute of the University of London's School of Advanced Study). The Institute's high-profile Director since 2008 has been Professor Barry Smith, on secondment from Birkbeck.

b. Research Strategy

Research strategy is built on a commitment to sustain a diverse research culture in philosophy from the ancient Greeks to modern moral and political philosophy. Paying heed to the fact that research in philosophy is usually individual rather than collective and is often within a narrow specialism, our overall strategy has been one of facilitating the research of academic staff and of those affiliated to the Department. Our principal aims have been: 1. to assist staff in maintaining strong research profiles through a transparent internal leave cycle and use of a dedicated Research Grants Office which offers support for funding bids to external bodies; 2. to enable collaborations with specialist faculty at other institutions and universities, and actively to encourage the building of national and international networks of interaction (see below); 3. to maintain a culture within the Department through seminars and symposia in which productive philosophical debate can take place. To this end, we run a weekly work-in-progress seminar at which staff present their work. Sessions are open not only to staff but also to interested research students and post-doctoral appointments. The seminar ensures that those coming into the Department can participate in the research community. The democratic structure of participation in these weekly seminars means that staff, students, post-docs and visiting faculty quickly forge strong connections. Specialist seminars and reading groups also emerge according to concentrations of interest.

We divide our research into five clusters: each cluster lead is a member of the Department's Research Committee, so that research support is distributed across all areas. These are not strictly separated research groups, and many individuals work within more than one cluster. The division into areas ensures that information and expertise can be shared on research grant applications, conference proposals, and submission of publications.

This strategy has, we believe, served to maintain the long traditions of individual research excellence in Birkbeck philosophy. We present some of our achievements under the heads of these clusters.

(i) Philosophical logic and the philosophy of mathematics

The Department has long had strengths in this area, with appointments of Macbride (2004), Rumfitt (2005), Edgington (2006), Hossack (2007). In 2010 Macbride was replaced by Linnebo, who secured a major (€1,000,000) ERC grant as Principal Investigator in the project 'Plurals, Predicates, and Paradox (PPP): Towards a Type-Free Account'.

Under this project's auspices, a rich series of visiting speakers, master classes, seminars, and reading groups developed, making the Department a key centre of philosophical logic. The roster of speakers included leading national and international figures in the relevant areas. The two post-doctoral research fellows attached to the project published papers on the project themes. Florio published on type-free plural logic. Walsh's work on hyper-arithmetic fragments of Frege's system in *Grundgesetze* and of Peano arithmetic cast new light on the significance of predicative variants of familiar logical systems.

There has been a special concentration on plural logic and the foundations of set theory. Hossack has published a paper arguing that the Comprehension Scheme of standard plural logic

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must be restricted; his proposal leads to a new basis for Quine's set theory, NFU. Linnebo has published papers presenting a modal explication of the idea that sets are formed in stages.

Edgington's argument that indicative conditionals do not have truth-conditions has long been influential; in 2008 she published significant work extending those arguments to counterfactual conditionals. Rumfitt kept the intra-departmental debate alive by arguing that even indicative conditionals have truth-conditions. Before his departure in summer 2013, Rumfitt published a new semantic theory for intuitionistic logic.

(ii) Metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science

General metaphysics has been a traditional strength in Birkbeck philosophy. Linnebo has published work on identity, and Edgington on counterfactual conditionals. In a special issue of an international journal, Hossack defended the metaphysical views expounded in his book, *The Metaphysics of Knowledge* (2007), giving substantive replies to critics on questions about states of affairs and modality.

Within epistemology, Gemes has published and expanded on a new argument against the Cartesian sceptic. Pelling has maintained the Department's long-standing interest in testimony by delineating the norms that characterize the speech act of telling. And there has been a focus on the relation between propositional knowledge and knowledge how, with publications from Besson and Hornsby on this theme.

In the philosophy of science, Gemes continues his researches on the notion of the content and confirmation of scientific statements. The appointment of Northcott in 2011 enriched this area. He has published significant work on causation. He has also been exploring the use of modelling in biology and economics—fields in which models play a different role from the familiar paradigms in physical science.

(iii) Philosophy of mind and action, and language

Our robust structures of research collaboration and supervision have clearly delivered in this area. Hornsby has been Principal Advisor to Christos Douskos for his project "Habits and Skills", on an E.U./Greece postdoctoral fellowship, and this led to three publications. Hornsby herself has continued to oppose the so-called standard story of action, and debated with some of that story's new opponents. Garnett's work in philosophy of action has been focused on questions of moral psychology and conceptions of freedom and of agency. Ruben's work in philosophy of action has led to four published papers. Gomes and Almotahari have both published papers resulting from work they did at Birkbeck — Gomes on topics relating to 'other minds', and Almotahari on topics relating to consciousness and physicalism. Wong (whose Fellowship finished in 2008) published on bodily awareness and on emergence. Patterson has given conference presentations on Burge's work on mind and perception.

Philosophy of language has remained an active area of research. Two recent appointments, Besson and Pelling, have written on the notion of asserting. Besson has used a theory of assertion to cast light on the ancient problem of whether statements about future contingencies are bivalent; Pelling has argued that the mark of a correct assertion is that it is suited to give a hearer knowledge of what is asserted.

(iv) Moral, political and social philosophy, and aesthetics

Until his departure in 2011, Grayling contributed widely to public philosophical discourse on many moral and political concerns (see REF 3a).

In political philosophy, Garnett has published on the nature of personal autonomy, and James on personal and political rights. In social philosophy, Fricker contributed to three symposia arising out of her book *Epistemic Injustice*, and she and Guttenplan collaborated on *Reading Ethics* (2008). Ruben also has published in social epistemology. Fricker's work was in part a contribution to feminist philosophy, on which Hornsby and James have also published in the current REF period.

In ethics, Constantinescu has published and spoken on vagueness within ethical judgements. Price organized a seminar series at the Institute of Philosophy in 2008-9 on reasons for action. He published a monograph *Contextuality in Practical Reason* (2008), which explores the ways in which an implicit context of goals and circumstances bears on practical inferences, practical judgements, and ascriptions of reasons for action. Garnett has also published work on practical rationality. Fricker, in the Department until 2012, published work on moral relativism.

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In aesthetics, Grant published *The Critical Imagination* (OUP, 2013), on the role of imagination in criticism, with special attention to metaphor. James has also published on the aesthetic imagination. Caddick has published on fictionalism, and aesthetic and fictional representations of time.

(v) History of Philosophy

The Department's reputation as a centre of research in the history of philosophy has been enhanced by many plenary lectures, radio appearances and podcasts (see REF3a and REF 3bCS2). We now have a high profile in the full range of historical areas that were targets in RAE2008.

In ancient philosophy: Price published *Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle* in 2011. Sellars works on ancient stoicism and on its reception in the Renaissance and seventeenth-centuries. Capitalising on the breadth of his interests, Sellars and James continue to co-organize a successful research seminar on 'Stoicism and Early Modern Philosophy' with colleagues at King's College London.

In 17th century philosophy: James' book *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics* was published in 2012. It advances a novel interpretation of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, founded on a close study of the debates about biblical interpretation, theology and politics. It has been the subject of three international workshops in Sydney, in Ghent and in Gottingen. Patterson has published papers on Descartes' conception of human nature.

In 19th century German philosophy: our profile in this area has been raised thanks both to the editorial and conference work of Gemes, and to the presence of May, Onof and von Tevanar, who all hold Honorary posts in the Department and have published in 19th century German philosophy in the period. Gemes collaborates with May, who writes on ethics, on the emotions and on German idealism, and has edited a volume *Nietzsche's 'On the Genealogy of Morality'* (2011). Gemes himself has published a series of influential papers focusing on Nietzsche's nihilism.

In early analytic philosophy: a number of us have contributed. Macbride studied the metaphysical debates that took place in Cambridge in the early 20th century; this work issued in publications about Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein. Hossack has developed a theory reviving and extending Russell's account of facts. Linnebo has published on Frege's 'context principle', arguing that it helps to explain how we refer to the natural numbers. Rumfitt has published studies of Frege's and Ramsey's accounts of truth.

PLANS

In RAE2008, under 'Future Work' we particularly identified commitments to a) consolidate areas of strength, such as in the philosophy of mathematics, and b) to continue to use the recruitment of doctoral and post-doctoral researchers as one of the key drivers developing our research culture. We have followed through on these commitments.

We shall maintain a diverse research culture, and continue with our current strategy, adapting research clusters as necessary in the light of any staff changes. All members of staff submit their research plans to the School's Research Committee, via the Department's own Research Committee. In the new institutional framework, the enhanced research funds of the School will provide seed-feeding for new initiatives where appropriate. We are in a position to expect strong publications across a wide range in the upcoming period.

The unit recognizes that humanities funding will be put under pressure in the future: we are aware of the need to be flexible in a changing environment and to be responsive to government and funding council developments. With these caveats, we have identified a number of strategic areas to develop:

Having again in the current period experienced the injection of vitality that doctoral and post-doctoral researchers can provide, the Department wants to create opportunities to attract them. We will make use of an enhanced Research Grants Office to target post-doctoral opportunities in philosophy. With the assistance of Birkbeck's Development Office, we are engaged in raising funds to create a named PhD studentship commemorating David Hamlyn (Head of Department 1964–88) of whom many alumni have fond memories. Our initial goal is to raise funds so as to award at least one PhD Studentship each year. An enhanced focus on providing internal scholarships in College in the future means that we will be able to shape and consolidate areas of strength in a more controlled and developmental way.

Plans for the immediate future include:

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- Lillehammer will build on existing interdisciplinary collaboration with internationally leading experts in the anthropology of ethics in order to set up a workshop on this subject through the BIH, developing new interdisciplinary links within the College.
- Since joining us, Lillehammer has established a colloquium on ethics, which revives the aspirations of Price's seminar series in 2008-9 at the Institute of Philosophy. Lillehammer, Price, Garnett, and Constantinescu form the Birkbeck core of this initiative.
- Ken Gemes will consolidate the strength in Nietzsche and German philosophy. He has announced a 2014 conference, 'Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis'. And he plans a conference 'Nietzsche on the Value of Truth' in 2015.
- The Dorothy Edgington Lectures, inaugurated in 2012, in which prominent public lectures are combined with an international graduate conference on the lectures' topic, is to be biennial. Rae Langton will be the Dorothy Edgington Lecturer in 2014.

c. People, including:**I. Staffing strategy and staff development**

The staff development strategy addresses all those with a research active career, from doctoral students up through our post-docs and research fellows, early career researchers, and senior staff. Birkbeck follows the key principles of the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*. Birkbeck's own Research Strategy 2010-13 also outlines commitment to support all research careers with equal opportunity. All recruitment panels attend equality and diversity training. The college conforms to legal principles on flexible working, caring responsibilities, maternity leave, and disability rights.

Sabbatical leave policy is uniform within the School: 1 term for every 8 full-time terms served (adjusted for fractional appointments). Staff are encouraged to apply for external funding when their project will most benefit, not on an imposed schedule, providing that replacement teaching and administration are costed. Internally all academic members of staff may each year claim up to £600 per year for conference participation and research activities, and (in competition with others in the School) may make a case for further funding up to £2,000. Every member has a compulsory annual research appraisal conducted by two members of the Department Research Committee to support research productivity, seek solutions to problems and help set realistic targets according to individual staff circumstances. All staff are offered the chance of formal appraisal through Professional Development Review, which addresses the balance of teaching, administration and research, and may identify training needs.

There are particular structures in place for post-doctoral and early career researchers at Birkbeck. New staff are given a mentor who introduces them to the research culture in the college and helps forge links with staff in cognate research areas. Probation for Early Career staff lasts three years; annual interviews are conducted with the mentor, producing an agreed document seen by the Head of Department and Dean. Mentorship is substantive: the mentor reads a draft article by the probationer and they discuss both its content and how its presentation might be improved to maximize its chances of acceptance by a good journal. Those new to HE are expected to complete their PGCHE course, and to become fellows of the HEA.

Birkbeck policies, alongside those we follow in the Department, ensure a commitment to equal opportunities in career progression. Individuals have a right to apply for promotion; and Heads of Department are required to conduct an annual review of all faculty members below the rank of professor to consider whether they might be candidates for an internal promotion, and present the results of that review to the Dean of the School. This helps to ensure that promotion reflects philosophical excellence.

The Philosophy staffing strategy retains a strong commitment to nurturing staff with a proper balance of teaching and research in contracts with the appropriate rights. We supplement the small core team with an array of research assistants, honorary and visiting fellows, and work in collaboration with colleagues across the university sector to build capacity. We aim for a stable core staff enhanced by Visiting Professors and Fellows, and a strong research student culture. We have three Honorary Visiting Professors—May, McGinn and Ruben (Ruben having been a 0.2 Professor until 2011)—, and two active Honorary Visiting Fellows—Onof and von Tevanar. Within the REF period, the Department had seven post-doctoral researchers (whether holding Fellowships at Birkbeck, or visiting us for shorter periods): Wong, Florio, Walsh, Caddick, Douskos,

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Koivuniemi, Wiseman (at BIH). Of these, Wong, who held a Jacobsen Fellowship with us at the start of the period, moved to the University of Tübingen where he leads a research group in the philosophy of neuroscience. The two post-docs on Linnebo's PPP project, Florio and Walsh, secured tenure-track jobs at the University of Kansas and at UC Irvine respectively. Emily Caddick, our current Jacobsen Fellow, combines her post-doctoral researches now with a permanent position at Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education.

During the period, four permanent faculty left, Macbride, Guttenplan, Grayling, Fricker (in 2009, 10, 11, 12); and three joined in permanent posts, Linnebo, Northcott, and Grant (in 2010, 11, 12). (Grant has left since the end of the period, as has Rumfitt. Lillehammer has joined.)

Eight young philosophers have held fixed-term contracts for some part of the REF period. Constantinescu, Pelling and Sellars remain with us. The other five have secured permanent positions: Platanakis is now a Lecturer at Koç University, Istanbul; Papadaki is a Lecturer at the University of Crete; Gomes is a Tutorial Fellow at Trinity College, Oxford; Almotahari is an Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois, Chicago; and Besson is a Lecturer at the University of Sussex. This is a remarkable record, demonstrating our contribution to the sustainability of the discipline.

c. II. Research students

During the REF period, our proportion of full-timers has increased steadily, and we have had on average in any year nine more research students than during the RAE2008 period, so that at the end of the REF period we have 28 full-time and 18 part-time students. Comparing the final three years of the RAE and REF periods: awards of PhDs have increased, and the number of MPhilStud awards has doubled.

We operate a system of principal and secondary supervisors for all research students. This enables doctoral students especially to exploit effectively the supervisory resources of the Department. The MPhilStud (research preparation) students have supervisors in turn in each of the three subject areas in which they are submitting essay work for the degree. Since RAE 2008, the Department has devoted extra resources to ensuring that the MPhilStud students get a broad philosophical education, as well as the in-depth guidance that their supervisors provide. We now provide a two-hour faculty-led seminar, which in the course of any year covers a variety of subject areas, so that our MPhilStud students proceed to the PhD familiar with a wide range of issues in contemporary philosophy. We continue to run our weekly student research seminar (for both MPhilStud and PhD students). Six different faculty members take the seminar in turn each year, each taking five successive weeks, presenting a paper of his or her own in the first and chairing a student presentation for the subsequent four. By ensuring that MPhilStud students attend two seminars a week from the start, we find that even part-time students quickly come to feel part of our research student community. By encountering a greater variety of faculty taking the research seminar, students have a good sense of the philosophical breadth in the Department. Their sense of this is increased if they attend the annual residential study weekend we run. Those who participate in the 'Masterclasses' of visiting continental philosophers organised by Slavoj Žižek at the BIH encounter an even wider range of philosophical work.

Some of our recent MPhilStud students have gone from us directly to funded places on doctoral programmes at the Universities of British Columbia, Minnesota, St Andrews, Oxford, Stanford, and University College London. Two of our recent PhDs have been awarded University of London Jacobsen Fellowships, one of whom went on to win successively an Oxford Junior Research Fellow and a permanent post at Birmingham. Two other recent PhDs now hold post-docs—at the Jerusalem Institute of Advanced Study, and at the Institute of Philosophy, University of Bochum. Two more hold Lectureships in London. This is testament to the excellent training offered by the Department.

All research students have a progress review meeting at the end of each academic year with two members of faculty, one at least being one of their supervisors. The student submits in advance an account of their progress over the year, their plans for the subsequent year, and a substantial piece of writing. We provide our research students with various training events, usually held on Saturdays, so that both full-time and part-time students can benefit from them. For beginning students, we offer sessions on how to get started on a philosophical research project; for more advanced students, sessions on how to complete a dissertation, how to prepare for the viva,

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and how to place articles in journals. One student has published an article in *The Journal of Philosophy*, another has one forthcoming in *Journal of Philosophical Logic*.

The Department has funds for which research students can apply, with support from their supervisors, to help towards covering the costs of attending conferences outside London. All full-time and many part-time students regularly attend and contribute presentations to the London Intercollegiate Graduate Conferences held in the autumn and spring terms, and to the joint London-Berkeley Conference held in the summer term. In 2012, Birkbeck hosted its own graduate conference, an event in tandem with a pair of lectures given by John McDowell, inaugurating a biennial series named in honour of Dorothy Edgington. The enthusiasm both of our own students, who were involved in all aspects of the organization, and with students from outside selected to give conference papers, has assured us that the series will sustain the high profile of Birkbeck as a place to study philosophy at research level.

The Institute of Philosophy is an excellent resource for our research students. It runs weekly lunchtime seminars throughout the year and weekly seminars in each summer term, as well as a multitude of one and two day conferences on topics across a very wide philosophical range. Our students benefit more generally from Birkbeck's Institutes and London's wealth of research resources. Many attend lectures at the Royal Institute of Philosophy and meetings of the Aristotelian Society. Many belong to specialist reading groups, whether internal to Birkbeck or having members also from other London Colleges. At any time there are typically two or three such groups based in Birkbeck: in the summer of 2013, for instance, there were groups on Physicalism, on Processes, and on *Sexual Solipsism*.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilitiesIncome

Funding from The European Science Foundation for Linnebo's P.P.P. project was €1m. The final term of Price's two year Leverhulme Fellowship was within the period. Macbride held a fellowship from the Mind Association that gave him a term's leave in 2009, as did Patterson in 2011; and a fellowship from the University of London gave Fricker a term's leave in 2010. Wong and Caddick's postdoctoral Fellowships were funded from the Jacobsen Trust, held by the University of London.

The aggregate value of grants over the REF period is £1,093,651, compared with £284,174 for the RAE2008 period—a major improvement and advance.

Infrastructure and Facilities

The Department supports and encourages research grant applications, with administrative support from a dedicated Assistant School Manager and Birkbeck Research Grants Office, with a specialist in humanities and social science funding. The Impact officer advises on 'Impact Pathway' statements. We have built a database of successful applications and conduct internal peer review as part of our demand management of grants at School level. Meetings of the School's Research Committee address grant application processes.

This Department and School work is underpinned by institutional commitment to research outlined in the College Research Strategy, which explicitly details the commitment to the equitable and productive distribution of responsibilities between research, teaching and academic administration. The Pro-Vice Master for Research chairs a College Research Committee, which supports the research agenda. The College Research Strategy is reviewed cyclically by a working party of Assistant Deans in Research, which allows for reaffirmation of core principles to be combined with responsiveness to changes in research council and government policy. The current cycle of revision began in 2013.

The College has continued to support the Birkbeck Institutes, designed to foster cross-college research. These produce extremely active and diverse research activities, from research training, to internal Birkbeck seminars for staff and graduate students, to major public events.

For Philosophy scholars, the benefit of Birkbeck's proximity to the unique concentration of London's research libraries and institutes cannot be overestimated. Our research is underpinned by the these internationally significant research libraries and specialist collections at the British Library, University of London Library, the National Archive, and Bloomsbury's rich terrain of smaller libraries. We work in direct collaboration with these institutions. Interaction with University of London colleagues is furthered through the Institute of Philosophy in the School of Advanced Study, Birkbeck's close neighbour.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

Note: Where cumulative data are given here and 'we' is used, the figures relate to activities only of the eleven permanent staff members who were present at the end of the period.

Collaboration. National and international research relationships are integral to Philosophy at Birkbeck. Hornsby was one of a group of seven European philosophers funded by an International Network grant of the Leverhulme Trust for 30 months from April 2008: she attended its eight workshops on aspects of 'Renewing the Philosophy of Action'. She directs one of the three research branches of the Centre for the Study of Mind and Nature (CSMN) at the University of Oslo. Edgington and Rumfitt were both members of PETAF, a network of researchers across Europe who (in 2008–13) explored perspectival thoughts and facts. In 2011, international conferences that celebrated landmark birthdays of Edgington and Hornsby were hosted by the Institute of Philosophy and by Birkbeck respectively.

Involvement in learned societies. Hornsby is President of the Mind Association. In 2011-12, McGinn was President of the Aristotelian Society, and is now on its Council, along with Hornsby and Edgington. James is a member of the Advisory Board of the Human Rights Consortium of the University of London. Hornsby has served on the Council of the Institute of Philosophy. Edgington is a Fellow of the British Academy and as such sits on the committee that makes research awards funded by it and by the Leverhulme Trust.

Advisory panels. We have advised other philosophy departments, both here and abroad. Hornsby has been an external member of appointment committees at Oslo, Cambridge and UCL, and on a committee reviewing the Faculty of Philosophy at Oxford. James has contributed to external reviews of the philosophy departments at Antwerp, Ghent and York. During this REF period, we have acted as advisers on many appointment and tenure decisions, including at Oxford, Ohio, Harvard, Chicago, MIT, Stanford, and Toronto.

Doctoral exams. We have served as examiners on 38 doctoral dissertations in the UK, 8 internationally.

Conference organization. Members of the Department have organised 18 individual conferences since 2008. Highlights include:

- In collaboration with the BIH and the Institute of Philosophy, James, Patterson and Sellars organised and contributed to conferences on historical themes, including 'Thinking with Spinoza', Renaissance Philosophy, and, jointly with KCL, The London Early Modern Philosophy Workshop. James' interest in Spinoza and Gemes' continuing work on Nietzsche was brought together in a conference they organized with the enthusiastic support of their research students, and which BIH sponsored—'Spinoza and Nietzsche in Dialogue'.
- At the Oslo Centre for the Study of Mind in Nature, Hornsby contributed to writing a successful application in 2010 for the renewal of its funding until 2017. She has organized eight international workshops or conferences, and been co-organizer of a further two. She has edited two issues of *Inquiry* and co-edited a Harvard University Press volume, based on papers first presented at conferences she organized.
- *Mind and Language* has put on a workshop or conference each year, held in Birkbeck or the Institute of Philosophy, the two most recent being 'Neuroscience, Philosophy and Psychology', and 'Syntax'.

Refereeing. Guttenplan (now a Fellow of Birkbeck) remains Executive Editor of the interdisciplinary journal *Mind & Language* whose impact factor has increased significantly over the period, and now ranks second among philosophy journals on Google Scholar metrics.

We have refereed articles for 56 philosophy and related journals, and book typescripts for 10 publishers including all the major university presses. We have served on the Boards of 8 journals: *British Journal for Philosophy of Science*, *Hypatia*, *Inquiry*, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, *Kant Studies Online*, *Mind and Language*, *Philosophical Papers*, *Theoria*.

Awards. James was John Findlay Visiting Professor at Boston University in 2008. Hornsby was elected Fellow of the Norwegian Academy in 2010. Walsh was awarded a Kurt Gödel fellowship by the Austrian Academy of Sciences in 2011. Besson was awarded the prize for 'best young Swiss philosopher' in 2013.

Invited keynotes and conference talks. We calculate that we have given 148, in the U.K. and in countries around the world, including Australia, the U.S.A., Canada, Ireland, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Norway and Sweden.