

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY

New Insights and Directions for Religious Epistemology

Directed by Professor John Hawthorne
Supported by the John Templeton Foundation
<http://www.newinsights.ox.ac.uk>



Job description and selection criteria

Job title	Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Philosophy (<i>New Insights and Directions for Religious Epistemology</i>)
Division	Humanities
Department	Faculty of Philosophy
Location	Faculty of Philosophy, Radcliffe Humanities, Woodstock Road, Oxford, OX2 6GG
Grade and salary	Grade 7: £29,249 - £31,020 <i>per annum</i>
Hours	Full-time
Contract type	Fixed-term for the period 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2015
Reporting to	Project Director
Vacancy reference	105491

Introduction

Applications are invited for a full-time Postdoctoral Research Fellowship to work on the Project **New Insights and Directions for Religious Epistemology** hosted by the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Oxford. The Project is directed by Professor John Hawthorne and is supported from funding awarded by the John Templeton Foundation.

The University

The University of Oxford is a complex and stimulating organisation, which enjoys an international reputation as a world-class centre of excellence in research and teaching. It employs over 10,000 staff and has a student population of over 21,000.

Most staff are directly appointed and managed by one of the University's 130 departments or other units within a highly devolved operational structure - this includes 5,900 'academic-related' staff (postgraduate research, computing, senior library, and administrative staff) and

2,820 'support' staff (including clerical, library, technical, and manual staff). There are also over 1,600 academic staff (professors, readers, lecturers), whose appointments are in the main overseen by a combination of broader divisional and local faculty board/departmental structures. Academics are generally all also employed by one of the 38 constituent colleges of the University as well as by the central University itself.

Our annual income in 2010/11 was £919.6m. Oxford is one of Europe's most innovative and entrepreneurial universities: income from external research contracts exceeds £376m p.a., and more than 70 spin-off companies have been created.

For more information please visit <http://www.ox.ac.uk>.

Humanities Division

The Humanities Division is one of four academic divisions in the University of Oxford, bringing together the faculties of Classics; English; History; Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics; Medieval and Modern Languages; Music; Oriental Studies; Philosophy; and Theology, as well as the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art. The division has responsibility for over 500 members of academic staff, for over 4,000 undergraduates (more than a third of the total undergraduate population of the University), and for about 1600 postgraduate students.

The Division offers world-class teaching and research, backed by the superb resources of the University's libraries and museums, including the famous Bodleian Library, with its 11 million volumes and priceless early book and manuscript collections, and the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology. Such historic resources are linked to cutting-edge agendas in research and teaching, with an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary study.

The Division's faculties are among the largest in the world, enabling Oxford to offer an education in Arts and Humanities unparalleled in its range of subjects, from music and fine art to ancient and modern languages.

For more information please visit: <http://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/>

Faculty of Philosophy

The Oxford Philosophy Faculty has over 150 academic members, all of whom are undertaking teaching and/or research in Philosophy at Oxford. Of these, around 60 hold permanent posts within the Faculty; many distinguished philosophers hold posts elsewhere in the University. Oxford thus contains the largest group of philosophers in the UK, and one of the largest in the world. It has a vigorous research culture: the results of the 2008 RAE show that in Philosophy Oxford had more than twice as much research activity at the highest quality level (4*) as any other department in the UK. Each year, many distinguished philosophers from around the world visit Oxford to give lectures and seminars. There are over one thousand students studying Philosophy at undergraduate level, always in combination with at least one other subject, and around 100 graduate students, about half of whom are studying for the BPhil or the recently launched specialist MSt courses in Ancient Philosophy and Philosophy of Physics, and the rest for the DPhil. A list of current Faculty members and their research interests can be found on the Philosophy Faculty website at: <http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk>.

In August 2012, the Philosophy Faculty moved to the refurbished Radcliffe Infirmary building on the Woodstock Road, now known as Radcliffe Humanities. As well as housing the Philosophy Faculty, the Grade II* listed building will also contain a combined Philosophy and Theology Library and the administrative offices of the Humanities Division. The move – which amongst other things, enhances the quality and quantity of space available for our graduate students – means that Philosophy will become the first academic unit to be located within the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, the site on which the integrated Humanities Centre (including new space for the Faculty) will be established in due course.

Further information about the Faculty can be found on its website at:
<http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk>.

The Project: New Insights and Directions for Religious Epistemology

Recent Anglo-American epistemology has experienced a fertile period of creativity that has spawned discussions that are of central relevance to religious epistemology. Several of these new developments have yet to be taken up in a systematic manner by those working within philosophy of religion. Some of these developments concern the nature of knowledge: On one prominent view, knowledge claims are context-dependent, where the stakes and interests of the knowledge-attributor make a constitutive difference to the truth of the relevant knowledge claims. On another view, stakes and interests are relevant in a different way – the stakes and interests of the subject of the attribution make a constitutive difference to what is knowledge. Both approaches – ‘contextualism’ and ‘subject-sensitive invariantism’ – conceptualize knowledge in a way that makes it sensitive to factors quite outside ordinary evidential considerations. The task of exploring and testing these theories in connection with religious knowledge is an exciting and neglected one. Other developments in the theory of knowledge concern structural relations to other phenomena – there has been a proliferation of journal and monograph discussions by leading figures in epistemology concerning (i) the relationship between knowledge and practical reasoning; (ii) the relationship between knowledge and evidence; (iii) the relationship between knowledge and dogmatism (does knowing something entitle one to ignore counterevidence?); (iv) the nature and scope of a priori knowledge; (v) ways that evidence concerning the causal origin of beliefs can defeat claims to knowledge, and more generally induce a reassessment of the epistemic status of various religious doxastic practices; (vi) the normative relationships between knowledge, assertion and belief; (vii) the mechanism by which knowledge is transferred by testimony and the mechanisms by which such transfer is blocked, and (viii) knowledge, safety, and the appropriate margins for error necessary for knowledge. All of these structural issues have direct relevance to questions about the nature and scope of religious knowledge and provide a promising interface for mainstream and religious epistemology. As well as capitalizing on recent work on knowledge, the project will also build on recent work on rationality within philosophy of science, formal epistemology and traditional epistemology. Such frameworks will provide common tools for the discussion and assessment of both religious and scientific worldviews. Relevant here are issues about the nature and source of epistemic probabilities, the probabilistic impact of disagreement between peers, the special role, if any, of experience in conferring entitlement and the relationship of outright belief to graded credences.

Religious beliefs and practices provide a fertile testing ground for these ideas, with potential for mutual benefit to both epistemology and philosophy of religion. The goal of this project is to bring the above developments to bear on key topics in religious epistemology through a three-year program which will include postdoctoral research fellowships, PhD studentships, academic visitors, four roundtable discussions, nine public lectures, six small workshops, and one large international conference. The project will be based at the University of Oxford, which is widely recognized as the leading centre for epistemology and philosophy of religion

and is also the home of a renowned Theology Faculty. The project will bring together local and international scholars in both religious epistemology and mainstream epistemology, as well as scholars in relevant areas of science and analytic theology.

This Project, valued at £1.3million, has been made possible by the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation. Further information can be found on the Project website: <http://www.newinsights.ox.ac.uk/>

Job description

Overview of the role

Applications are invited for a full-time Postdoctoral Research Fellowship to work on the Project *New Insights and Directions for Religious Epistemology* hosted by the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Oxford. The post will be fixed-term for the period 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2015.

The postholder will work under the guidance of the Director of the Project, Professor John Hawthorne, and will also be expected to work in collaboration with other members of the Project's team and with external collaborators. The successful candidate must demonstrate expertise in epistemology and/or philosophy of religion, with evidence of the ability to undertake significant research in philosophy which will contribute to the aims of the project. The Postdoctoral Fellow will be expected to produce several publications as a direct consequence of his or her involvement with the project. To be eligible to apply, candidates must hold a Bachelor/Master's degree and have completed or be close to the completion of a PhD.

The particular duties of the post will be as follows:

- To pursue independent and collaborative research in epistemology and/or philosophy of religion.
- To produce significant publications as a result of research, both independently and in collaboration with Project colleagues.
- To work with external collaborators in partner institutions and research groups.
- To assist with publicity and promotion of the Project. This may include representing the Project at conferences and seminars, as well as contributing to the design and maintenance of the Project website.
- To develop ideas for generating research income, and present detailed research proposals to the Project Director.
- To assist with the organisation of conferences and workshops hosted by the Project.

This list is indicative, and not intended to be exhaustive.

The postholder will have the title of 'Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Philosophy (New Insights and Directions for Religious Epistemology)', and will be eligible for full membership of the Oxford Philosophy Faculty. An association at one of the Oxford colleges will be sought.

Limited relocation funds will be available to the successful candidate.

This position offers excellent opportunities for career advancement. Previous holders of comparable positions within the Faculty have gone on directly to permanent academic posts at universities in the USA, UK, and elsewhere. Opportunities for further postdoctoral research may also be available.

Selection criteria

Below are the selection criteria for the post; candidates should address these in their applications and ask their referees to do so in their letters of recommendation.

Essential criteria

- (i) An outstanding research record in philosophy (appropriate to the present stage of the applicant's career) with evidence of, or evidence of potential for producing significant research in philosophy in areas of relevance to the Project.
- (ii) An understanding of, and an interest in, the aims and objectives of the Project.
- (iii) The ability to work closely and productively with research collaborators, and to conduct advanced research individually and without close supervision.
- (iv) Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- (v) Excellent organisational and time-management skills, including personal initiative.
- (vi) Excellent English writing skills.
- (vii) The successful candidate must hold a Bachelor/Master's degree and have completed or be close to the completion of a PhD.

Desirable criteria

- (viii) Experience of organising workshops or conferences.
- (ix) Experience of writing, or contributing to, successful grant applications.

Working at the University of Oxford

For further information about working at Oxford, please see: http://www.ox.ac.uk/about_the_university/jobs/research/

How to apply

If you consider that you meet the selection criteria, click on the **Apply Now** button on the 'Job Details' page and follow the on-screen instructions to register as a user. You will then be required to complete a number of screens with your application details.

Applications should consist of the following materials:

- a. A curriculum vitae
- b. The names and contact details of two academic referees: **candidates should ask their referees to submit references by the deadline directly to jobs@philosophy.ox.ac.uk**

- c. A writing sample of published or unpublished written work, about the length of a thesis chapter or article (co-authored pieces should be identified as such). This writing sample need not be on epistemology or philosophy of religion.
- d. A proposal (of no more than 1,000 words) outlining the research to be undertaken whilst a research fellow on the project. The proposal must outline the manner in which the envisioned research project will open up new streams of research in religious epistemology.

Please save all uploaded documents to show your name and the document type.

All applications must be received by **midday on 31 January 2013** (the closing date stated in the online advertisement).

Information for Priority Candidates

*A priority candidate is a University employee who is seeking redeployment owing to the fact that he or she has been advised that they are at risk of redundancy, or on grounds of ill-health/disability. Priority candidates are issued with a redeployment letter by their employing departments and this letter **must** be attached to any application they submit.*

The **priority application** date for this post is **midday on 4 January 2013**.

Full details of the priority application process are available at:

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/end/red/redproc/prioritycandidate>

Should you experience any difficulties using the online application system, please email recruitment.support@admin.ox.ac.uk

To return to the online application at any stage, please click on the following link www.recruit.ox.ac.uk

Please note that you will be notified of the progress of your application by automatic e-mails from our e-recruitment system. **Please check your spam/junk mail** regularly to ensure that you receive all e-mails.