

AOS Modal Logic, Fictional Discourse, Cumulative Cultural Knowledge, Philosophy of Language
AOC Social Epistemology, Modal Epistemology, Formal Epistemology, Philosophy of Literature

ACADEMIC POSITIONS AND TITLES

University of Cologne

PHD

(defended: 16.07.26, grade: 0,8/110 su 110)
*Cologne Center for Contemporary
Epistemology and the Kantian Tradition*,
Albertus-Magnus-Platz
50923, Cologne, Germany

University of Cologne

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE (2021 – 2025)

Petrarch Institute,
Richard-Strauss-Str. 2,
50931, Cologne, Germany

University of Oxford

VISITING SCHOLAR (2026)

Uehiro Oxford Institute (Hilary Term, 2026,
hosted by Neil Levy).

University of St Andrews

VISITING SCHOLAR (2025)

*ARCHÉ Philosophical Research Centre for
Logic, Language, Metaphysics and
Epistemology* (trimester 2, 2025, hosted by
Franz Berto).

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

1. “Unpacking Mystery Boxes – The Logical Substructure of Prima Facie Conception”. In: *Synthese* 208, 72 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-026-05735-2>.

Abstract: Prima facie conception can appear mysterious. Having a prima facie grasp of something means being ‘on the edge’ of conceiving. But it seems that often there is no way for us to know if what our intuitions present as prima facie conceivable is *actually* conceivable, i.e. conceivable under ideal rational reflection. We propose a novel account of prima facie conception: on the basis of working hypotheses concerning the logical interactions of conception, sensory imagination and prima facie conception, we isolate different subtypes of what we call *general prima facie conception*. With these tools, we explore (what seems to be) the deeper logical substructure of prima facie conception. We hint at how this could help us understand different reasons for different intuitions (for instance, regarding intuitive differences in the truth-value of conditionals with impossible antecedents).

2. “Epistemology of Folk-Lore”. In: *Social Epistemology* 40(4): 494-509 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2025.2496199>.

Abstract: Testimony is a central concept in the epistemological debate on knowledge and learning. It is therefore surprising that testimony plays a minor role in the empirical literature on cultural learning. This raises the question of whether our approach to knowledge in epistemology might be missing out on some things when applied to cultural knowledge and its transmission. By taking the semantic component of knowledge in the compound folk-lore at face value, we aim to explore whether the concept of folklore could potentially help out here. Three persistent puzzles concerning folklore and its study are discussed to this end: (1) What is the ontological status of folkloric objects of study? (2) How shall one safeguard folkloric objects, depending on different possible answers to the ontological question? (3) How could we distinguish fake-lore, i.e. folklore that is merely seemingly representative of epistemic groups, from more generally representative folklore?

3. “Should We Embrace Impossible Worlds Due to the Flaws of Normal Modal Logic?”. In: *Logica Universalis* 18: 301–314 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11787-024-00344-4>.

Abstract: Some philosophers advance the claim that the phenomena of logical omniscience and of the indiscernibility of metaphysical statements, which arise in (certain) interpretations of normal modal logic,

provide strong reasons in favour of impossible world approaches. These two specific lines of argument will be presented and discussed in this paper. Contrary to the recent much-held view that the characteristics of these two phenomena provide us with strong reasons to adopt impossible world approaches, the view defended here is that no such 'knock-down arguments' do emanate on those grounds. This is not to rule out that there cannot be any other good reasons for assuming impossible world semantics. However, the discussion of a further argument for impossible worlds will suggest that different attempts to argue for them likely present intertwined problems.

4. "Possible Arguments against Impossible Worlds in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*". Forthcoming in: *South American Journal of Logic*. Preprint [here](#).

Abstract: At first glance, impossible world semantics appear to be useful adaptations of normal modal logic. Proponents of impossible worlds argue, e.g., that in the context of metaphysical disagreement, impossible worlds would provide a key to modelling the respective dispute situation. The same philosophers also argue that we need impossible worlds to model what they consider to be the conceivability of logical impossibilities. With the help of Wittgenstein's early philosophy, or, better said, with what I believe to be a visualisation of his ideas on nesting models for possibility, I develop some thoughts on the likely shared weaknesses of such arguments for non-normal world approaches. Said goes hand in hand with the supplementary proposal of rethinking our conventional nesting models for possibility.

5. "The Antlers of Homo Ludens – Information Disorder in the Age of AI". Submitted to: *Mind and Language*.

Abstract: 'AI gets better at faking, so we build AI better at detecting.' Such ex post mitigation arguably treats the symptom rather than the systemic information disorder, sometimes resembling a futile cat-and-mouse game. We therefore explore a complementary, conventionalist, ex ante approach aimed at directly tackling information disorder by understanding its conventionalist roots. Drawing on the work of Kendall Walton and David Lewis, we examine communicative strategies interwoven with human nature and behaviour. We start from an anthropological premise backed by empirical evidence from (paleo-)anthropology, psychology and neuroscience: Homo Sapiens is a playful, fiction- and narrative-craving animal. We argue that these intrinsic traits become a liability when facing new, or poorly conventionalized, information environments. By examining the conventional, make-believe attitudes humanity arguably has developed to maintain diachronic information order despite its nature, one can derive original insights in how to tackle present-day mis- and disinformation. The respective normative takeaways directly concern the architecture and regulation of AI-driven information environments (a), the management of training data (b), transparency efforts (c), the evolution and preservation of communicative conventions (d), and the realism of AI-generated content (e).

MONOGRAPHS

Understanding Fictional Discourse – From the Logic of Our Minds to Its Power in the Streets (PhD thesis)

Book abstract: While 'fiction' is often employed as a shorthand for works of fiction, this book breaks with this somewhat imprecise paradigm. The work is dedicated to the intricate relationship between fictions in terms of fictitious mental contents (for instance, what one imagines when reading about Sherlock Holmes smoking a pipe) and fictional discourse (the playful language use characteristic of novels, jokes, internet memes, and so on). It is argued that, with respect to (some types of) fictitious mental contents, it holds that an agent can entertain the respective mental content *x* without being aware of *x*'s fictitiousness. What follows is that (many types of) fictions can be the consequence of, say, fake news or propaganda. And fictional discourse, accordingly, is not only a Waltonian 'make-believe sandbox', in which we live out our playful nature, but also a 'conventional guardrail' that guarantees information order. – It 'domesticates' fictions by preventing them from 'running rampant'. Across several key dimensions of the relationship in question, it is argued that understanding fictional discourse is essential for managing the 'power' that fictions exert in the real-world:

Ch. 1 I propose an epistemic modal logic (FIB) designed to discuss fictions in terms of (voluntary and involuntary) mental contents.

Ch. 2 I compare different nominally related stances (e.g. mathematical fictionalism/fictions in law) and I argue against a comparative fictionalism.

Ch. 3 I propose a conventionalist account of fictional discourse based on David Lewis's notion of convention. **Ch. 4** I propose epistemic norms which arguably govern non-immersive fictional reception.

Ch. 5 I propose a Bayesian interpretation of non-immersive reception. In line with predictive processing accounts of the human brain, I derive a notion of immersive reception: Immersion is the (partial) absence of reality-monitoring due to the (partial) absence of prediction errors.

Ch. 6 I suggest that fictional discourse is, among other things, a 'recipe' for navigating mis- and disinformation in present times.

TALKS (SELECTION)

1. "The Antlers of Homo Ludens – Towards an Anthropologically Informed, Conventionalist Understanding of Information Disorder in the Age of AI". At: *The Uehiro Oxford Institute, Internal Research Work-in-Progress Seminar*, University of Oxford, 17.02.2026.
2. "Epistemology of Folk-Lore". At: *Minds and Worlds – 16th Conference of the Italian Society for Analytic Philosophy*, 28.08.2025, Turin, Italy.
3. "(Rational) Deference to Groups? The Case of Folk-Lore". At: *The 18th Cologne Summer School in Philosophy* (on Applied Epistemology, special guest: Alex Worsnip), 22.07.2025.
4. "Genuine problems and 'merely' possible worlds" [GE: Echte Probleme und 'bloß' mögliche Welten]. At: *Borderfictions – aesthetics and pragmatics of political borders*, 30.11.2024, University of Cologne.
5. "Should We Embrace Impossible Worlds?". At: *Springer Mathematics & Statistics webinars 2024*, February 14. Introduction: Jasmin Özel (University of Siegen). Moderation: Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen (Hong Kong Baptist University), doi.org/10.52843/cassyni.ddvv89.
6. "Impossible Worlds? 'Let us not be bewitched'.". At: *First South American Logic Meeting (SALOME1)*, 12-15.01.2024, UNSAAC, Cuzco, Perú.
7. "Über die Freiheit fiktionaler Rede und die Gebundenheit von Simulation" [On the Independence of Fictional Speech and the Constraints of Simulation]. At: *Fiktion und Simulation: Wie entsteht und was bedeutet 'virtuelle Realität'?*, High-Performance Computing Center Stuttgart, 13./14.12.22

JOURNALISM (SELECTION)

1. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, NR. 69, 22.03.2025 – "Allein der Westen kennt die Geschichtsschreibung"
2. *DIE WELT*, 25.12.2022 – „Erfundene Geschichte - Wie der Ukrainer Breschnew den russischen Krim-Mythos bis heute prägt“.

TEACHING (SELECTION)

1. W. 2025: [Fiction and Reality] Fiktion und Wirklichkeit
2. W. 2025: [Introduction to literary theory] Einführung in die Literaturwissenschaft
3. S. 2024: [Introduction to literary theory] Einführung in die Literaturwissenschaft
4. W. 2023: [The boundaries of fictional speech] Grenzgänge der Literatur
5. S. 2023: [Philosophy and Literature] Philosophie und Literatur
6. W. 2022: [Introduction to literary theory] Einführung in die Literaturwissenschaft
7. W. 2022: [Introduction to literary theory] Einführung in die Literaturwissenschaft
8. S. 2022: [The topicality of past science-fiction] Aktualität vergangener SciFi

CONFERENCE ORGANISATION/CONCEPTUALISATION (SELECTION)

1. *Grenzfiktionen - Ästhetik und Pragmatik politischer Grenzen* [*Boarderfictions - Aesthetics and Pragmatics of Political Borders*], 30. November 2024. (Conceptualisation)
2. *After the seventh centenary*. Loven di Menaggio (IT), Villa Vigoni - German-Italian Centre for European Dialogue, 15/11/2023 to 18/11/. (Organisation)

ACADEMIC SERVICE (REFeree/EXPERT OPINION)

1. *Social Epistemology* (2025)
2. *UK Metascience Unit* (2026)

REFERENCES

1. Bernecker, Sven (University of Cologne, University of California Irvine)
s.bernecker@uni-koeln.de
2. Berto, Franz (University of St Andrews, University of Amsterdam)
fb96@st-andrews.ac.uk
3. Levy, Neil (University of Oxford, Macquarie University)
neil.levy@mq.edu.au

LANGUAGES

- | | |
|------------|--------------------------|
| 1. German | Native speaker |
| 2. Italian | Native speaker |
| 3. English | C2 |
| 4. Spanish | B1 |
| 5. French | B1 |
| 6. Latin | Intermediate certificate |

FUNDING

- | | | |
|---------|--------|--|
| 1. 2026 | ~300€ | Travel grant,
(Vrije Universiteit Brussel). |
| 2. 2025 | ~3000€ | Funding for open access publication,
(Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft & UzB Köln). |
| 3. 2024 | ~2500€ | Funding for open access publication,
(FUNDREF: dx.doi.org/10.13039/501100001659). |

MEMBERSHIPS

1. Member of the Italian Society for Analytic Philosophy (SIFA)
2. Member of the Young Network for Wittgensteinian Philosophy (YNWP)