

## Michela Massimi

I was awarded a PhD in philosophy from LSE in 2002. Since then, I had research and teaching positions at Cambridge (Girton College) and UCL. I'm currently Full Professor in Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, where I have worked since 2012.



My PhD resulted in my first monograph, *Pauli's Exclusion Principle. The origin and validation of a scientific principle* (2005: CUP). I then edited *Kant and Philosophy of Science Today* (2008: CUP). I was the lead author of the popular book, *Philosophy and the Sciences for Everyone* (2015: Routledge), and the project leader for the University of Edinburgh's MOOC "Philosophy & the Sciences". I am currently co-editing with Angela Breitenbach a collection on *Kant and the Laws of Nature* (resulting from the homonymous Leverhulme Trust-funded international network, for which I was the PI). I have just embarked on a 5-year ERC Consolidator Grant entitled "Perspectival realism. Science, knowledge and truth from a human vantage point," part of the European Commission Horizon2020 programme.

From 2012 to 2015 I was in the Governing Board of the PSA. As of December 2016, I step down from being Co-Editor-in-Chief for *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* (covered together with Steven French since August 2011). In September 2015, I have been elected Vice President of the *European Philosophy of Science Association*.

My research has always been in the broad area of history and philosophy of science. I'm interested in tackling important questions about scientific methodology and epistemology by looking at scientific practice, the history of science, and the history of philosophy. This multi-disciplinary approach is evident in my current ERC project on *Perspectival realism*. The idea behind it is simple and has a long philosophical pedigree: can we be realist about science, while acknowledging that our knowledge is situated and contextual, i.e., from a specific vantage point? The specific vantage point can be that of the modelling practice scientists are using; or the broader theoretical-experimental context of the scientific community at the time.

To tackle this overarching question, I will be studying both modelling practices in contemporary particle physics and observational cosmology, as well as relevant scientific practices in given historical periods (e.g., the Chemical Revolution and the electromagnetic worldview of the end of the nineteenth century).

In this first part of the project, I am doing fieldwork at CERN and at the Dark Energy Survey to gain a better grasp of the frontiers of scientific methodology. I think there is simply no substitute for engaging directly with scientists and their very own work. Often enough in philosophy of science we tend to either indulge in philosophical speculations or fall prey to oversimplified images of science with no counterpart in actual practice. That's why philosophy occasionally gets bad press among scientists. But it would be wrong to conclude that philosophy is to science like ornithology is to birds (to quote Feynman's infamous analogy). After all, birds cannot tell good stories about themselves! That is what ornithologists are for.

The other main dimension behind my research and my current project is properly historical. I don't just look at the history of science but also at the history of philosophy. After all, it was Kant who placed centre-stage the idea of knowledge from a human vantage point. It is no wonder that philosophical traditions that share with perspectival realism a similar commitment to the situated nature of knowledge, share with it also the Kantian roots (from Putnam's internal realism, to various forms of pragmatism). Most philosophical confusions about perspectivalism (i.e., as being contiguous with relativism or constructivism), originate from a deeper confusion concerning the Kantian roots of the move. By clarifying those Kantian roots, I hope to dispel the persistent source of caricatures surrounding Kantianism and related murky opinions about what is really at stake in "knowledge from a human vantage point". The final outcome is a scientifically and historically informed novel image of scientific knowledge that aims to redefine key philosophical notions, such as truth, progress and natural kinds.

Please watch this [space](#), and stay tuned!

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