

My love of Philosophy and desire to study it further became evident to me when, inspired by Blackburn's 'Think', I became absorbed by the question "What makes 'me' me?" There seemed to be problems with physical and psychological explanations of identity because I believed I would have the same identity if I lost a memory or limb. My intuitive belief was that the mind constituted identity, but, attending Ali Boyle's lecture "Who am I?", I realised that if my belief was true and my mind changed I would have a different identity. This posed a problem because I believe I have the same identity even though my mind is always changing. Wishing to explore further, I wrote about the importance of memories for identity, winning the Oriol College Oxford Lloyd Davies prize. I suggested I can show memory's significance by an argument from best explanation. The theories and their counter-examples both rely on memory; the method of disproving each theory derives from an intuitive belief that memory is essential for identity. E.g. the psychological-continuity, non-branching and multiple-occupancy views all suffer from the incompatibility of our three instinctive beliefs that i) pre-fission the mind has a single identity, ii) post-fission the minds have the same identity as the pre-fission mind and iii) the two new minds are different. While seemingly unsolvable, the focus on memory displays its importance for identity. Fascinated by metaphysical philosophy and identity, I taught younger pupils about Theseus' ship on an Outreach Day. This taught me how to make complex concepts simple and present arguments clearly and concisely.

I think Linguistics is an inherently philosophical subject and discovered my passion for it when reading Pinker's 'The Language Instinct'. It gave me a contemporary perspective on the unresolved debate about the origin of knowledge, compelling me to believe in innate knowledge, contrary to my initial belief. I decided to look at the source of this viewpoint: Chomsky's theory of universal grammar. It struck me that Chomsky's innate principle of cyclical application of rules was in no way specific to language, nor proven by linguistic method. This steered me to consider whether linguistic typology was more diverse than Chomsky thought. However, linguistic critiques are easily rebutted and Chomsky based his theory almost solely on English, not accounting for empirical evidence of global linguistic variation. Thus, I considered instead Locke's ideas I had studied in class and whether a Lockean argument against innate knowledge from universal consent could be applied to universal grammar. In my ASke Project (Distinction*) I tried to show not only that universal grammar is merely a set of basic scientific principles found in many other walks of life, but that even if a language-specific one can be proven, it need not be innate - universal grammar can be explained more parsimoniously by empirical acquisition of language. Children are taught such that they can gain all their knowledge of scientific principles empirically. I found it rewarding to think about Linguistics in terms of the Philosophy I had been taught and to use linguistic techniques to prove the philosophical empiricist position. My French and Latin AS levels, Japanese WJEC Level 1 and GCSE Greek have stimulated my interest in linguistic typology, showing me a diverse range of syntax affected by a variety of pragmatic contexts.

I immerse myself in music and have progressed in the HABS Big Band and Symphony Orchestra beyond my Grade 5 trombone. My leadership roles as School Prefect and Head of CCF Navy have been complemented by my Royal Navy leadership course, which taught me to give clear instructions and offer constructive criticism. I run HABS PhilSoc and Classics Soc and regularly participate in MUN, improving my debating and public speaking skills while winning many awards. I have also led as Chair and PGA, teaching me to consider numerous viewpoints.