



**PhD Research Proposal Form
China Scholarship Council (CSC)
2026**

FIELD

ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Thesis subject title: **The Cognitive Value of Fiction**

Name of the French doctoral school/Ecole doctorale: ED 662: Sciences Cognitives

Name of the Research team/Equipe de recherche: Institut Jean-Nicod CNRS UMR 8129 | ENS-PSL | EHESS

Website: <http://www.institutnicod.org/?lang=en>

Name of the Supervisor/Directeur de thèse : Jérôme PELLETIER

Email: jerome.pelletier@ens.psl.eu

Lab Language/ Langue de travail : English

Research Proposal Abstract/Présentation du sujet:

The main aim of this dissertation is to examine in depth issues that lie at the heart of contemporary discussion in analytic philosophy regarding the cognitive value of fiction.

The PhD candidate will address some of the following research questions:

- **In what ways do truth and knowledge retain significance within fiction, even if fiction is understood to turn away from empirical reality?**
- **How can the conception of fiction as an emotional or affective enterprise be reconciled with its cognitive or epistemic dimensions?**
- **What forms of understanding or insight can be derived from engagement with fictional narratives?**
- **Do fictional works possess cognitive content, and if so, in what sense?**
- **What kinds of knowledge of reality, if any, does fiction seek to convey—propositional, experiential, or otherwise?**

- **How do the cognitive value and the aesthetic merits (or shortcomings) of a fictional work interact or influence one another?**
- **Does the use of fictional scenarios in scientific and philosophical thought experiments to uncover truths about the world provide support for a cognitivist account of fiction?**

References:

- Aumann, Antony (2014). "The Relationship between Aesthetic Value and Cognitive Value." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 72/2, 117–127.
- Baumberger, Christoph (2013). "Art and Understanding: In Defence of Aesthetic Cognitivism." Pages 41–67 in *Bilder sehen: Perspektiven der Bildwissenschaft*. Edited by M. Greenlee et al. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner.
- Bender, John (1993). "Art as a Source of Knowledge: Linking Analytical Aesthetics and Epistemology." In *Contemporary Philosophy of Art: Readings in Analytic Aesthetics*. Edited by J. W. Bender and H. G. Blocker. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Berger, Jacob, and Mark Alfano (2016). "Virtue, Situationism, and the Cognitive Value of Art." *The Monist* 99, 144–158.
- Buzzoni, Marco (2025) "Empirical-Scientific and Fictional Thought Experiments: A Comparison." *Global Philosophy* 35:5
- Conolly, Oliver, and Bashar Haydar (2001). "Narrative Art and Moral Knowledge." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 41/2, 109–124.
- Currie, Gregory (1997). "The Moral Psychology of Fiction." Pages 49–58 in *Art and Its Messages: Meaning, Morality, and Society*. Edited by S. Davies. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Currie, Gregory (1990) *The Nature of Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Currie, Gregory (2020) *Imaging and Knowing: the shape of fiction*, Oxford University Press
- Davenport, Edward A. (1983) "Literature as Thought Experiment (On Aiding and Abetting the Muse)." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 13: 279-306
- Davies, David, (2007) "Thought Experiments and Fictional Narratives." *Croatian Journal of Philosophy*, 19: 29-45
- Diffey, T. J. (1995) 'What Can We Learn from Art?' *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 73: 204–11.
- Elgin, Catherine. (2007) 'The Laboratory of the Mind'. *A Sense of the World: Essays on Literature, Narrative, and Knowledge*. Eds. John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer and Luca Poggi. London: Routledge, 43–54.
- Elgin, Catherine Z. (2017). *True Enough*. London: The MIT Press.
- Farrell, Frank. (2004) *Why Literature Matters*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2004.
- Freeland, Cynthia (1997). "Art and Moral Knowledge." *Philosophical Topics* 25/1, 11–36.
- Friend, Stacie (2007). "Narrating the Truth (More or Less)." Pages 35–49 in *Knowing Art: Essays in Aesthetics and Epistemology*. Edited by M. Kieran and D. M. Lopes. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Gaut, Berys (2003). "Art and Knowledge." Pages 436–450 in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*. Edited by J. Levinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gaut, Berys (2006). "Art and Cognition." Pages 115–126 in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Edited by M. Kieran. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gaut, Berys. (2007) *Art, Emotion, and Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

- Gibson, John. (2007) *Fiction and the Weave of Life*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Gibson, John (2008). "Cognitivism and the Arts." *Philosophy Compass* 3/4, 573–589.
- Graham, Gordon. (1995) "Learning from Art". *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 26–37.
- Graham, Gordon (2005). *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics*. 3rd edition. New York: Routledge.
- Gendler, Tamar Szabó (2000) *Thought Experiment: On the Powers and Limits of Imaginary Cases*, New York: Garland Press
- Harrison, Bernard (1998). "Literature and Cognition." Pages 158–160 in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*. Edited by M. Kelly. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hjort, Mette and Sue Laver, eds. (1997) *Emotion and the Arts*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Hursthouse, Rosalind (1992). "Truth and Representation." Pages 239–296 In *Philosophical Aesthetics*. Edited by O. Handling. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ichikawa, Jonathan, and Benjamin Jarvis (2009) "Thought-experiment intuitions and truth in Fiction." *Philos Stud* 142, pp. 221–246
- John, Eileen. (1998) 'Reading Fiction and Conceptual Knowledge: Philosophical Thought in Literary Context'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56: 331–48.
- Kieran, Matthew, ed. (2005) *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lamarque, Peter and Stein Haugom Olsen (1994) *Truth, Fiction and Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Maioli, Roger (2014). "David Hume, Literary Cognitivism, and the Truth of the Novel." *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 54/3, 625–648.
- Marples, Roger (2017). "Art, Knowledge and Moral Understanding." *Ethics and Education* 12/2, 243–258.
- McGregor, Rafe (2016). "Narrative Representation and Phenomenological Knowledge." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 94/2, 327–342.
- Meynell, Letitia (2014) "Imagination and Insight: A New Account of the Content of Thought Experiments", *Synthese*, 191: 4149–4168
- Mikkonen, Jukka (2015). "On Studying the Cognitive Value of Literature." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 73/3, 273–282.
- Novitz, David (1983). "Fiction and the Growth of Knowledge." *Grazer philosophische Studien* 19, 47–68.
- Novitz, David. (1987) *Knowledge, Fiction and Imagination*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple UP.
- Rowe, M. W. (1997). "Lamarque and Olsen on Literature and Truth." *Philosophical Quarterly* 47/118, 322–341.
- Stokes, Dustin (2007). "Art and Modal Knowledge." Pages 67–81 in *Knowing Art: Essays in Aesthetics and Epistemology*. Edited by M. Kieran and D. M. Lopes. Dordrecht: Springer
- Stolnitz, Jerome. (1992) 'On the Cognitive Triviality of Art'. *British Journal of Aesthetics* 32 : 191–200.
- Swirski, Peter (2007). *Of Literature and Knowledge: Explorations in Narrative Thought Experiments, Evolution and Game Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Young, James O. (1999). "Art, Knowledge, and Exemplification." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39/2, 126–137.
- Zarnitsyn, Aleks (2015). "The Cognitive Value of Fiction in Thought Experiments in Personal Identity." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 49/2, 62–81.



Type of PhD:

1.Full PhD

- Joint PhD/cotutelle (leading to a double diploma) : NO
- Regular PhD (leading to a single French diploma) : YES
-

2. Visiting PhD (students enrolled at a Chinese institution who come to ENS for mobility period) :

NO

Direction des Relations internationales : dri@ens.psl.eu
--