

# Juliette Vazard

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- Areas of Specialization** Philosophy of Mind, Epistemology, Cognitive Science
- Areas of Competence** Meta-ethics, Philosophy of Psychiatry, Philosophy of Action
- Current Employment** Postdoctoral researcher in Philosophy at the Swiss Center for Affective Sciences, in the *Thumos* research group on “Emotions, Values, and Norms”, University of Geneva, CH
- Sept. 2022-Sept. 2024 Two-year postdoctoral scholarship at City University of New York (visiting Jesse Prinz) and the University of Toronto (visiting Jennifer Nagel), funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation
- Education**
- 2017-2021 **Joint PhD in Philosophy and Cognitive Science**, Institut Jean Nicod, FR/University of Geneva, CH  
Dissertation title: “The Anxious Inquirer: Emotions and Epistemic Uncertainty”  
Awarded with highest honors
- 2018-2021 **Bachelor’s degree in Clinical Psychology**, Paris VIII Sorbonne (remote program)
- 2019-2020 **Visiting Graduate Student**, New York University Philosophy Department  
Fully funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Host professor: Jane Friedman
- 2011-2013 **Master of Science**, Philosophy of Mental Disorder, King’s College London, UK  
Thesis title: “Compulsion in Philosophy and Psychopathology”. Awarded with Distinction
- 2010-2011 **Master of Arts**, History of Philosophy, Paris-Sorbonne IV, Paris, FR  
Completed in long-distance conditions as a fellow of the elite Studienkolleg in Berlin and visiting student at the Humboldt Universität. Awarded with Merit
- 2009-2010 **Bachelor**, Philosophy, Paris-Sorbonne IV, Paris, FR  
Summa cum laude. Including a year abroad as an Erasmus scholarship holder at the University of Bologna, IT
- Peer-reviewed Papers**
- Vazard, J., Audrin, C. (forthcoming). The Noetic Feeling of Confusion. *Philosophical Psychology*
- Vazard, J. (2021). From Habits to Compulsions: Losing Control?. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 28(2), 163-171.
- Bonard, C. & Vazard, J. (2021). Pas de panique ? (Don’t Panic?) *Les Ateliers de l’Ethique/The Ethics Forum*, 16, 1.
- Vazard, J. (2019). (Un)reasonable doubt as affective experience: obsessive-compulsive disorder, epistemic anxiety and the feeling of uncertainty. *Synthese*, 1-18.

Vazard, J. (2018). Epistemic Anxiety, Adaptive Cognition, and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. *Discipline Filosofiche* (2018-2): Philosophical Perspectives on Affective Experience and Psychopathology, 137.

#### **Book Chapters**

Vazard, J. & Deonna, J. (2019), Darker Sides of Guilt, In *Moral Psychology of Guilt*, eds. Cokelet, B. & Maley, C. Rowman and Littlefield

Vazard, J., (2019), Passions et Psychopathologie (Passions and Psychopathology), In G. Origgi (dir.), *Dictionnaire des Passions Sociales*, Presses Universitaires de France

#### **Public Writing**

Blog post - Imperfect Cognitions blog, 12 February 2019. "OCD and Epistemic Anxiety": <http://imperfectcognitions.blogspot.com/2019/02/ocd-and-epistemic-anxiety.html>

Vazard, J. (2018), « Anxiété », In M. Kristanek (ed.), *l'Encyclopédie philosophique*, URL : <http://encyclo-philos.fr/anxiete-a/>

#### **Working Papers**

Vazard, J., Kurth, C. "Worry and Wellbeing: Understanding the Nature, Value, and Challenges of Anxiety" (in progress)

Vazard, J., Humbert-Droz, S. "What Role for Imagination in Hope?" (in progress)

Vazard, J. "Feeling the Unknown: Emotions of Uncertainty and their Valence" (under review)

Vazard, J. "Everyday Anxious Doubt: Epistemic Anxiety and the Virtue of Epistemic Cautiousness" (under review)

Vazard, J. "The Doxastic Profile of the Compulsive Re-checker" (under review)

Vazard, J. "The Epistemic Base of Emotions of Uncertainty" (under review)

Vazard, J. "An Emotional Account of Epistemic Anxiety" (under review)

#### **Selected Talks**

Thumos Seminar on Emotions and Values – Geneva, October 2021  
"Feeling the Unknown: Hope, Anxiety, and Emotional Valence"

Groupe de Recherche en Epistémologie, Collège de France – Paris, December 2020  
Questioning one's Mind: Epistemic Anxiety and the Virtue of Epistemic Cautiousness

University of Geneva, Thumos Research Seminar – Geneva, December. 2018  
Questioning one's Mind: Epistemic Anxiety, Questioning, and the Reflective Mode of Cognition

Philosophy of Psychology Seminar, New York University – New York, February 2020  
Am I wrong about this? Epistemic anxiety as an interrogative attitude

Western Michigan University Philosophy seminar – Kalamazoo, November 2019  
Anxiety and Irrational Questioning

European Society for Philosophy & Psychology Annual Conference – Athens, September 2019  
Feeling epistemic gaps: feeling confused and the benefits of deep inquiry

European Philosophical Society for the Study of Emotion Annual Conference – Pisa, June 2019  
Active doubt: Possible Threats and Open Questions

Swiss Center for Affective Sciences Annual Research Forum – Geneva, February 2019  
What is anxiety?

Summer Symposium in Philosophy on “Mental Capacities” – Jena, July 2018  
Emotional Capacities and Cognitive Agents

British Society for the History of Philosophy Annual Conference – Durham, April 2018  
From Habits to Compulsions: Losing control?

Agency Lab Seminar, Institut Jean Nicod, Ecole Normale Supérieure – Paris Sept. 2017  
Metacognitive Feelings and the Sense of Control

- Conferences Organized**
- “Philosophy of Emotion Workshop”, December 7th 2019  
Co-organised with Prof. Jesse Prinz and Dr. Sarah Arnaud at the City University of New York
  - “Cultivating Negative Emotions”, June 5th 2019  
Organizer of a half-day interdisciplinary workshop at the Swiss Center for Affective Sciences
  - “The Science of Well-being”, February 27th 2018  
Organizer of a half-day interdisciplinary workshop at the Swiss Center for Affective Sciences

## Grants & Scholarships

- 2022-2024  
Swiss National Science Foundation  
“Postdoc mobility” grant for a two-year postdoc at City University of New York and the University of Toronto on the research project “How we Feel the Future: Hope, Anxiety, and Hypothetical thinking”
- 2019-2020  
Swiss National Science Foundation  
One-year mobility fellowship to visit New York University Philosophy department
- 2018-2021  
Swiss National Science Foundation  
Three-year funding awarded through competitive research proposal submission on the project “Feel bad, Live well! The Value of Negative Emotions for Well-being”
- 2017-2018  
Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship  
One-year Excellence Scholarship for foreign scholars in Switzerland
- 2010-2011  
Studienkolleg zu Berlin Scholarship  
One-year Excellence scholarship program in Berlin selecting thirty European students each year

## Teaching Experience

- Fall Semester 2021      Lecturer, University of Geneva  
Co-teaching a Philosophy graduate seminar on “Art and Emotion”
- Spring Semester 2019      Teaching Assistant, University of Geneva  
Teaching a Meta-ethics course to advanced undergraduate students
- Sept. 2015-Dec. 2016      Lecturer in French, Boston University, USA  
Teaching french language classes for undergraduate students
- Sept. 2015-June. 2016      Lecturer in French, Simmons College, Boston, USA  
Teaching french language classes for undergraduate students
- Sept. 2015-June. 2016      Workshop Leader, French Cultural Center, Boston, USA  
Designing and leading workshops of ethics and moral philosophy directed at graduate students

## Languages

French: native speaker  
English: fluent speaking and writing  
Italian: fluent speaking and writing  
German: intermediate speaking and writing

## Reference Letters

Prof. Fabrice Teroni, University of Geneva (PhD supervisor): [fabrice.teroni@unige.ch](mailto:fabrice.teroni@unige.ch)  
Prof. Charlie Kurth, University of Western Michigan: [charles.kurth@wmich.edu](mailto:charles.kurth@wmich.edu)  
Prof. Jennifer Nagel, University of Toronto: [jennifer.nagel@utoronto.ca](mailto:jennifer.nagel@utoronto.ca)  
Prof. Elisabeth Pacherie, CNRS, Institut Jean Nicod: [elisabeth.pacherie@ens.fr](mailto:elisabeth.pacherie@ens.fr)  
Anne Meylan, University of Zurich: [anne.meylan@uzh.ch](mailto:anne.meylan@uzh.ch)  
Prof Jérôme Dokic, Institut Jean Nicod: [dokic@ehess.fr](mailto:dokic@ehess.fr)

My PhD dissertation is entitled “The Anxious Inquirer: Emotions and Epistemic Uncertainty” and concerns the relation between the epistemic attitude of doubt and the emotion of anxiety. A lot has been said about how we form beliefs, and much less about how we lose or drop our beliefs, and about the distinct states and processes which occur when this happens. In this work I focus particularly on *doubt* as a key moment of an inquiry process. I approach doubt as a psychological phenomenon and I ask: how does doubt most commonly arise in the mind? Besides its interest for the philosophy of mind, understanding the mechanisms at work in doubt is also of interest to epistemology, cognitive science, and psychopathology, insofar as doubt results from a series of affective and cognitive mechanisms which can become dysfunctional.

How do we move from believing  $p$ , to doubting it? Doubt, within a Cartesian rationalist framework, is viewed as a typical manifestation of the human capacity to reflect and reason on our beliefs. Yet, recent work in the philosophy and the psychology of emotion has revealed that emotional states – rather than reflective thinking – are more often than not at the origin of our cognitive activities. In this dissertation I develop a hypothesis as to how our natural inclinations to experience doubt about whether  $p$  come about, which centrally involves specific affective mechanisms.

I focus on the emotion of *anxiety* particularly, and I show that our capacity to feel anxiety allows us to be sensitive to problematic uncertainties and epistemic threats, and that this often constitutes the basis for our inclinations to doubt. More particularly, following Kurth (2018) I propose to view anxiety as a family of emotions, which includes a moral kind of anxiety, and an epistemic kind of anxiety. I put forward an emotional account of the phenomenon of “epistemic anxiety” as defined by Nagel (2010) and Hookway (2008), which is both in-line with the epistemological intuitions of these authors, and with existing philosophical and psychological work on anxiety.

This account enriches Hookway’s original claim according to which epistemic anxiety is a form of *virtue* which supports our ability to doubt reasonably. In the same way as it has been argued that a proper disposition towards anxiety is a helpful guide in moral agency, and the manifestation of a morally virtuous character, I argue that in the intellectual realm, the ability to experience appropriate anxiety in the course of one’s epistemic activities can be equated with what Roberts and Wood (2007) call *intellectual caution*. However, when it dysfunctions, for example when it becomes hyperactive, or when it is exploited improperly, our capacity to feel epistemic anxiety can lead to unreasonable doubt, for instance to a tendency to be overly cautious and overly concerned about our beliefs.

In support of this hypothesis, I present the persistent and recurring doubt of patients with Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) as a case study. Examining the possible mechanisms responsible for pathological doubt, I propose, might provide a pathway towards understanding the processes at play in everyday doubt. I show that the doubt of OCD patients poses a puzzle for the tradition view of how we shift from belief to doubt. Accounting for such cases of doubt in patients who have insight requires us to posit that doubt emerges at a level of cognition that is distinct from the level at which these patients judge that their doubts are unjustified. Finally, I provide a model of the affective and cognitive architecture of doubt, and propose that the mechanisms which are dysfunctional in OCD are the ones which, when working properly, are at the origin of the emergence of everyday doubt in healthy individuals.

The dissertation is structured as follows. In Chapters 1 & 2 I first analyze the possible role of doubt in the conduct of our inquiries from an epistemological point of view. I then rely on the philosophy of emotion to motivate a view of doubt as triggered by affective states. In chapter 4, 5, and 6, I develop my main claim which is that most forms of everyday doubt are triggered by a kind of anxiety. In Chapter 7 & 8, I propose to consider chronically dysfunctional cases of unreasonable doubt to support my claims about the psychological reality of doubt. I take Obsessive-Compulsive disorder as a main case study there and I ask: what can we learn from pathological forms of doubting? Finally, in chapters 9 and 10, I refine my model of the affective architecture of doubt and propose that doubt involves a shift from an intuitive to a reflective mode of cognition as a result of experiencing affective signals of epistemic uncertainty. However, when it is well-calibrated, I argue that the mechanism behind epistemic anxiety gives us a *prima facie* good reason to doubt, and motivates us to reassess our epistemic commitment to a belief.