

Professor Maria Rosa Antognazza (1964-2023) served as President of the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion from 2019 to 2022. A distinguished philosopher renowned especially for her magnificent scholarship on Leibniz and her innovative work in epistemology, Professor Antognazza made a major contribution to the philosophy of religion throughout her thirty-year career. Much of that career was spent at King's College London, and it will culminate in a pioneering monograph, *Thinking with Assent: Renewing a Traditional Account of Knowledge and Belief* (Oxford University Press, 2024). In the words of intellectual historian Professor Howard Hotson, Antognazza's husband and collaborator, the philosophy of religion is "a golden thread" woven through her three decades of outstanding scholarship. "For Rosa," Professor Hotson has said, "the history of philosophy was always in the service of philosophy; philosophy, in turn, was in the service of life; and life, in turn, was centred around religion."

Professor Antognazza was committed to deep engagement with the history of philosophy, believing passionately that our own thinking can be inspired, clarified, and put to the test by a close encounter with our intellectual predecessors. From her book *Leibniz on the Trinity and the Incarnation: Reason and Revelation in the Seventeenth Century* (Yale University Press 2007) to *Thinking with Assent*, her work was distinguished by a rare synthesis of historical and conceptual argument. *Thinking with Assent* has a remarkable historical range, from Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics to contemporary debates in analytic epistemology, while retaining the meticulous rigour of Antognazza's earlier studies focusing on the early modern period. This magisterial last work brings to fruition a philosophical enquiry spanning her whole career, and crystallises its significance for the philosophy of religion as well as for epistemology in general. Here Antognazza retrieves from ancient and medieval sources the insight that knowledge consists in direct contact between knower and known. While post-Humean skepticism posits a gap between subject and object, and treats subjective belief as the paradigm for cognition, Antognazza insists that the more traditional conception of knowledge forestalls skepticism at the outset. She agrees with Thomas Aquinas that a "cognitive contact between mind and world" grounds our knowledge – however limited, partial and indeterminate that knowledge must be in practice. *Thinking with Assent* will profoundly reshape current debates in religious epistemology through its compelling argument that knowledge and belief are robustly distinct, and indeed mutually exclusive. Its proposals establish a transfigured field of enquiry for philosophers of religion, who will be building on Antognazza's achievements for many years to come.

Professor Antognazza advocates a "Socratic humility" on behalf of any individual's claim to knowledge, without sliding into pessimism about belief. "There are many matters," she writes, "on which we cannot even in principle claim individual

knowledge and must instead trust the collective knowledge of appropriate communities of experts.” While belief is not knowledge, she insists, it may nevertheless be true, strongly justified, and a basis for confident judgement and action. With its dual emphasis on humility and confidence, her mature epistemological stance mirrors her longstanding methodological commitment to the history of philosophy. She inspired many of us with her conviction that the more we learn from our intellectual forebears, the more securely we stand on the shoulders of these giants: “the humility of the history of philosophy is also its strength.” Anyone who had the good fortune to work with Professor Antognazza – as a colleague or as a student – will know that she embodied what she taught. Her towering strength, as a thinker and as a human being, was inseparable from her sincere humility and warm kindness, not least to younger scholars.

Maria Rosa Antognazza was educated at the Catholic University of Milan. After working for seven years as a Research Fellow, Lecturer and Senior Lecturer at the University of Aberdeen, she joined King’s College London in 2003. Throughout her two decades at King’s, Rosa was loved and admired as an exceptional person as well as a gifted scholar; among many other colleagues, I felt privileged to enjoy her unforgettable friendship and her sparkling conversation. In 2016 she was awarded the Leibniz Professorship at the University of Leipzig, and in 2022 she was elected to the Academia Europaea. She held prestigious research fellowships from the British Academy, the Leverhulme Trust, and the Mind Association. Her book *Leibniz: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) was awarded the Pfizer Prize for outstanding scholarship in the History of Science – a rare honour for a philosopher. By the end of her illustrious career she was concurrently Chair of the British Society for the History of Philosophy and President of the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion. These two roles remain a fitting tribute not only to Professor Antognazza’s philosophical brilliance and outstanding contributions to both fields, but also to her peers’ extraordinarily high regard for her ability to lead others with wisdom, spirit, generosity and grace.

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