

Philosophy News

from Steve Luper . . .
Dear Alumni:

Inside this issue:

<i>Chairman</i>	1
<i>Faculty Speak</i>	2-4
<i>Alumni Experiences</i>	5-6
<i>Alumni Survey</i>	7

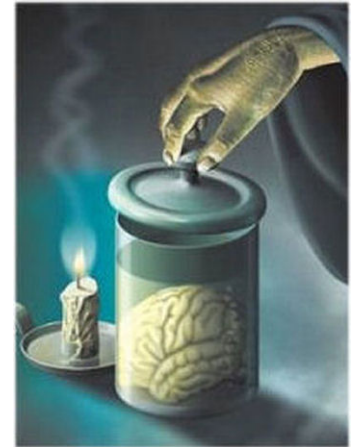
Greetings from Central Texas. Several of our alumni have asked that we provide some suggested readings, so we are going to do so. We'll provide some suggestions here in the Newsletter, and also post them on our webpage. As for the web page, I'm also thinking about adding some blog space for alumni. We could name a few topics, and see whether current and former students want to chat. Anyone interested?

This summer I will be traveling to Bled, Slovenia. It is my first trip into the former Soviet Union. I hear Bled is beautiful, so I know I'll enjoy the visit, but my official reason for going is that I've been invited to present a paper at the Bled Conference on Epistemology. If you are interested, you can visit the official conference web site at http://www.bled-conference.si/index.php?page=content&page_id=1. I will present only a brief essay, but it will be based on work I've been working on since grad school. If you want a taste, you can look at my article on epistemic closure in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, which appears online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/>

[closure-epistemic/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/closure-epistemic/).

After that I will hunker down and get back to work on a book I'm writing called *Philosophy of Death*. It will be loosely based on my article in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/death/>. I'm a long way from finishing but it is great fun. So far I've defined what it is to be alive, and decided that androids aren't, and now I've moved on to working out how death should be understood in the law. And I haven't even gotten to the good parts! For a preview, you can look at my latest essay, "Mortal Harm," which, to my great surprise, has been added to Philosophy-Wiki.org, which is spanking new. My essay appears at http://www.philosophywiki.org/main/Mortal_Harm.

I am still working on my place out next to the Guadalupe River. This spring has been absolutely stunning. It has been nice and cool, and everything is blooming. Out here, Spring arrives early, in April.



By this time the insects are busily munching on all the fresh growth. But more growth bursts forth. Now, if I can just get my irrigation system back up, I'll be ready to go.

One more thing: for the first time, someone has made a financial contribution to the Department! **Kathy L. Schnare and William Reid** not only donated to us, they say they will continue to do so each year. We thank them, and now face the pleasant task of figuring out how the money can best support our program.

And now for some suggested readings:

Some oldies but goodies: Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*; Harris, *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches*; Koller, *Oriental Philosophies*; Storr, *Solitude*; Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*.

Some new stuff: Hawthorne, *Knowledge and Lotteries*; Benatar, *Life, Death and Meaning*; Potten and Wilson, *Apoptosis: the Life and Death of Cells*; Dennett, *Kinds of Minds*.

Let us begin then by laying facts aside, as they do not affect the question.

-Rousseau

from Judith Norman

I've had a great year this year. I've started translating Schopenhauer's massive, major work, *The World as Will and Representation*. It's a nice change from translating Nietzsche (more prosaic but less offensive!). I also wrote a paper on German romanticism, arguing against the way philosophers think about romanticism (i.e. philosophically!). Basically, I am trying to

understand what is distinctive and about artistic presentation, for the romantics.

I also achieved a certain amount of local notoriety for a talk I gave last fall at the Esperanza Peace and Justice center on the Israel / Palestine conflict – and an op-ed piece that I published in the Express-News in defense of my (Jewish, anti-occupation) position.

It seems that the Middle East is a pretty divisive issue these days!

Readings:

The Man Without Qualities by Robert Musil (a novel)

Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance by Noam Chomsky.



Please help us in our assessment of the Philosophy Department by taking our online survey at:

<http://www.trinity.edu/departments/philosophy/survey%20feedback%20.htm>

You may puzzle and bewilder your opponent by mere bombast; and the trick is possible, because a man generally supposes that there must be some meaning in words. . . .Should your opponent be in the right, but, luckily for your contention, choose a faulty proof, you can easily manage to refute it, and then claim that you have thus refuted his whole position. . . .A last trick is to become personal, insulting, rude, as soon as you perceive that your opponent has the upper hand, and that you are going to come off worst.

- Schopenhauer, *The Art of Controversy*

from Andrew Kania . . .

This semester has been very busy for me. In addition to traveling to three conferences to present my recent work in aesthetics, I was hosting Trinity's inaugural Lennox Seminar. The Lennox Seminar is a new annual event at Trinity. Every year, one humanities department will be funded to bring five leading scholars to campus from around the world over the course of the Spring semester. Each visitor gives a public talk and a smaller colloquium presentation, and there is a course designed around the visits.

We hosted a series of philosophers of the arts – a kind of super-sized version of our annual Stieren Arts Enrichment events. They covered a range of topics in aesthetics in their public talks:

“Telling Pictures: The Place of Narrative in the Visual Arts” – David Davies (McGill University, Montréal)

“Is Live Music Dead?” – Lee Brown (Ohio State University)

“Photographic Representation” – Stephen Davies (University of Auckland)

“Beauty Is Not One: The Many Species of Beauty” – Jerrold Levinson (University of Maryland)

“Fakin’ It: Is There Authenticity in Commercial Music?” Theodore Gracyk – (Minnesota State University, Moorhead)

I was pleased to see all of the lectures well attended, with members of the public and students from other colleges and universities in the area engaging the speakers at the receptions after the talks, in addition to the regular attendance of members of the Trinity community. The series was awarded “Best Lecture Series of the Year” by the *Trinitonian*!

In addition to these public talks, each visitor gave a colloquium presentation on the ontology of music – the study of the kinds of musical things there are (works, performances, recordings, etc.) and the relations that hold between them. These

presentations were the heart of a seminar on musical ontology that attracted about equal numbers of music majors, philosophy majors, and students who were neither (yet!) but have a strong interest in music. The non-philosophers acquitted themselves admirably, reinforcing in my mind the true interdisciplinarity of philosophy of the arts.

The Lennox Seminar will also have a lasting impact on scholarship. I am currently collecting the Lennox speakers' colloquium papers, together with several other new essays on musical ontology, for a new anthology to be published in the near future.

The Lennox Seminar is a great addition to intellectual life at Trinity, and we can be very proud of the Philosophy Department's leadership role in bringing the series into being, and carrying out the inaugural series with such success.

The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.

- Marx



from Curtis Brown. . .

I've enjoyed the past year. This spring I was able to teach a new class, "Nonclassical Logics," for the first time. I had five excellent students in the class, all of them graduating seniors. They managed to fight off senioritis and work seriously on a variety of nonclassical logics, including modal logic, many-valued logics, conditional logics, and intuitionistic logic, among others. The class was a really great experience for me.

I've worked on two encyclopedia entries over the past year. In February I completed a revision of my entry on "Narrow Mental Content" for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (This is available online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/content-narrow/>.) More recently, I've completed an entry on "functionalism" for the second edition of the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, to be published by Macmillan. The en-

try emphasizes functionalism in the philosophy of mind, but also discusses views that have gone by the same name in psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

My main project for the summer will be to make progress on a text in the philosophy of science. In late May I will attend the annual conference of the Canadian Society for the History and Philosophy of Science to help get in the right frame of mind!

Books I've enjoyed recently:

Audrey Niffenegger, *The Time Traveler's Wife*.

An excellent time travel novel. For scientific issues you're better off with something like Gregory Benford's *Timescape*. For philosophical conundrums, you can't beat Robert A. Heinlein's story "By His Bootstraps." But Niffenegger's novel is a beautifully writ-

ten exploration of the emotional complications of a relationship with an involuntary time traveler.

Rhonda Wilcox, *Why Buffy Matters: The Art of Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

The closest thing I know of to the definitive Buffy book.

Daniel Nolan, *David Lewis*.

It is hard to believe it has already been six years since David Lewis passed away. This extremely lucid and surprisingly accessible book does a nice job of surveying Lewis's contributions to many areas of philosophy.



The point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it.

- Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, lecture

Professor John Heil will be taking leave next year while his wife pursues her career in Spanish literature at East Tennessee State University. Dr Heil can be contacted via his Trinity email address next year at jheil@trinity.edu.

Thomas Dieter's Peace Corps Experience Class of 2007

Hello Everyone,

I have been in Romania for almost a month now, and it has been a crazy--but great--experience so far. I am living with a host (gazda) family that does not speak a bit of English, but it has been a lot of fun figuring out the Romanian language with them.

The better I have become at Romanian, the more philosophical conversations I've been able to have. Already, I've discussed the fall of communism with my gazda and some other Romanians. I have not pushed the conversation on them; I find that many have a strong desire to talk about it. The responses have been highly varied and always interesting. My gazda parents, for instance, are very much in favor of capitalism but see similar difficulties within the economic system. Michael is nostalgic for the days without cell phones, cars on the street, pollution, etc. Of course, this opinion may be more representative of older generations than of communism. Kati considers that in communism, people had money because everyone was forced to work. But, the problem was that resources were so limited; people had to wait in long lines at 2 a.m. to receive a liter of milk and loaf of bread. In capitalism, as Kati notes, there are a lot of goods, but there is no money. She faults corrupt politicians for the current scarcity of funds for the poor. I wonder about the psychology of those who have money without resources versus those who have no money in an era of television and advertising that boasts a world of fabulous resources.

Kati--and I do not accept necessarily that her position represents all Romanians--is somewhat fatalistic. She has confessed that, to her, life does not mean as much to her as the rewards she will receive after she dies. I wonder if this view is a by-product of her economic experiences.

As a TEFL volunteer, I have almost completed my two weeks of practicum. Last week, I taught English to 9th graders. Their English abilities were incredible for the most part, and I was able to gear my lessons more toward content. I had lessons on music, space travel/fiction/and whether space programs like NASA are worth the costs, we had a debate, and even worked on Shakespeare. This week I have had 6th graders, and their English abilities are quite divergent. Most of the lessons have been focused on basic vocabulary building and sentence structure. Middle school has been fun, but it is an interesting and vastly different challenge than high school.

Some consider that Peace Corps Romania is easier than being stationed in more remote locations like Africa, and, in some ways, those individuals are correct. We have access to the internet, can drink water without having to boil it for contamination concerns, and can travel by trains, buses, etc. But, I think there are plenty of unique challenges to Peace Corps Romania. All of the accessibility to Western resources--TV, music, video games, movies--I think in many ways works against the work that the PC does here. For instance, instead of having no experience with America, Romanians have a lot of what I would consider misleading or ignorant few points of the U.S. For instance, in class yesterday, a couple of the guys in the class asked me about why I chose to be a volunteer. "You don't get any money," they said. I told them that was correct, and they could not understand why I would want to have no money. They told me that it was because, in America, money is not an issue but, here in Romania, you cannot do anything rewarding unless you have money. I asked whether they thought poverty in the U.S. was an issue there, and they said that no it was not. When I asked where they learned about all of the money that American's supposedly had, they said from TV and movies.

It will be an interesting task to challenge certain perspectives that are forming based on entertainment and advertising.

Thomas Dieter
Trinity Alum, '07

Jason Bullock's Air Force Experience Class of 2006

It's been one year since I graduated with a degree in philosophy, and I'm proud to say I have a job. I am an officer in the United States Air Force. I'm currently stationed in California, where I'm receiving technical training to become a space operator. Over the course of my career, I will be in charge of US space assets on the ground (ie. radars, rockets) and in orbit (satellites). For now, here are some experiences and observations from my brief time *in the real world*.

After graduation, I took advantage of some time off by hitching a ride on a Navy cargo plane to Italy – a spontaneous and uncharacteristic move on my part. It was my first trip outside North America, my first ride on a train and my first time speaking a foreign language outside a classroom. More profoundly, it was my first opportunity to appreciate the inherent responsibility of representing one's home country while traveling in a foreign land. At the same time, it's amazing how irrelevant nationality – and even language – can be when interacting with people to pursue a common goal, such as navigating a city or taking a picture. My enlightenment abroad was complemented by my return to the States via Washington, DC, where people of the same nationality and language often struggle to simply coexist.

Since I entered active duty in October, I've spent the majority of my time learning about the space careerfield. So, what does my job have to do with my major? Nothing. However, not a day goes by that I don't consider the philosophical implications of a particular aspect of my occupation. I remember a guest lecturer at Trinity claimed the only way to *practive* philosophy is to become a professor of philosophy. Semantics aside, I disagree. I think anyone with an awareness of philosophy applies some school of it in his or her daily lives, whether it is an after-the-fact justification or a conscious decision.

In today's Air Force, men and women are assigned to critical jobs that could be automated by computer but are not because it is believed that there is no substitute for human judgment. (I am reminded of Philosophy of Science/Mind with Dr. Brown.) In the Air Force's introduction to space class, we learn about Greek philosophers that attempted to explain the makeup of our universe. (Intro to Greek Philosophy with Dr. Heil) The most obvious philosophical topic is the military itself, which embodies the premise that some things are worth fighting for. (Ethics with Dr. Luper) And, lastly, who could overlook the Freudian implications of our nuclear missiles, which deter others from challenging our authority? (Dr. Norman's seminar on Freud)

Thanks to an ROTC scholarship, I knew coming into college that I would join the Air Force – but I had no idea it would land me a job interacting with the Final Frontier. After my training is completed in August, I'll be heading off to a remote radar station in the Northern Plains. After that, who knows where I'll go... Wherever it is, I know that my philosophy degree will continue to shape my experiences.



There's no greater challenge than the study of philosophy.

Jean-Luc Picard, Captain,
Starship Enterprise

ALUMNI SURVEY

Please help us in our assessment of the Philosophy Department by taking our online survey at::

<http://www.trinity.edu/departments/philosophy/survey%20feedback%20.htm>

This survey is also linked to the Department homepage at

<http://www.trinity.edu/departments/philosophy/>

Your responses will contribute greatly to the future direction of the Department.



What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Trinity University

Philosophy Department

One Trinity Place

San Antonio, TX 78212

Phone: 210-999-8305

Fax: 210-999-8353

Email: cgerakar@trinity.edu

<http://www.trinity.edu/departments/philosophy/>

Mailing Address Line 1

Mailing Address Line 2

Mailing Address Line 3

Mailing Address Line 4

Mailing Address Line 5



Metaphysics is a dark ocean without shores or lighthouse, strewn with many a philosophic wreck.

Immanuel Kant