

Philosophy News

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Dear Alumni:

Greetings from the Philosophy Department. The summer break is nearly over, the Fall semester will soon begin, and we have plans you might like to hear about.

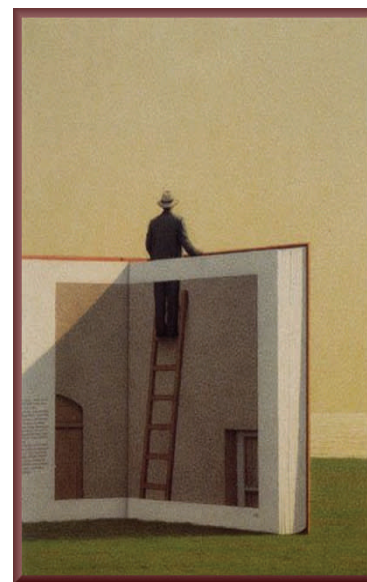
We are excited about hosting the first ever Lennox Seminar, which is planned for Spring 2007. This will involve public presentations and colloquia by five leading philosophers of art. The general topic will be the ontology of music. The presentations will be the focus of a seminar led by Andrew Kania. The line up includes Jerrold Levinson (University of Maryland); Steven Davies (University of Auckland, New Zealand); David Davies (McGill University, Canada); Theodore Gracyk (Minnesota State Univer-

sity); and Lee Brown (Ohio State University).

Judith Norman, with John Donahue in Sociology, are putting together a symposium on the issue of water rights in Texas.

If you get a chance, check out our webpage at: <http://www.trinity.edu/departments/philosophy/> It will keep you up to date on our events. It might also have information you find helpful. Among other things it includes a list of alumni. Check out the information we have on you, and let us know if we can add or change anything.

Also consider writing us and giving us information about yourselves that we can include in this Newsletter. There is a good chance your past



classmates might like to hear about you. In this issue, Matt Badders, a recent graduate, tells us how he got into UT Law School.

Every so often the Department must evaluate itself. It would be helpful if you would tell us about how well your education in the Department has prepared you for your career or for graduate school. If you would, please consider responding to the Graduating Senior survey if you just completed your degree, the Survey of Former Students in Graduate School if you are presently in a graduate school, or to the Survey of Former Students if you are a former student.

I'm astounded by people who want to 'know' the universe when it's hard enough to find your way around Chinatown.

Woody Allen

A word from Luper . . .

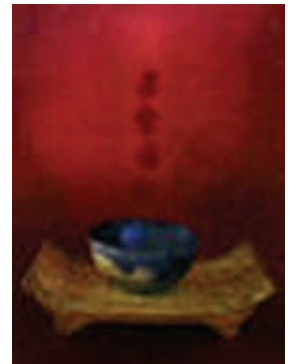
Hello, everyone, from overly sunny San Antonio. These days I have been working outside too much. I've been building a rock retaining wall. If my back holds out, I hope to have it done before the end of the summer. (Want to help?) I've also planted trees, tomatoes, onions and cucumbers. I also bought a nice telescope, and started stargazing. The view of

Jupiter has been really great lately. Slowly I'm learning a little about the stars.

I continue to work in the areas of epistemology and ethics. My latest paper, "The Easy Argument," criticizes some recent attempts to attack reliabilist accounts of knowledge. This semester I'll be teaching Biomedical Ethics again. I'm on the Ethics Committee for Southwest

General Hospital, so teaching this class will give me a chance to catch up on recent literature.

What do you folks think about Dubya's decision to veto legislation that would have provided extended funding for stem cell research? My own view is that it was a deeply unfortunate mistake.



From the desk of Curtis Brown . . .

My most exciting recent adventure was attending a Computing and Philosophy conference in Trondheim, Norway. I presented a paper on "Computation, Represent-

tation, and Teleology" and, more importantly, visited the shrine of St. Olaf, for whom his undergraduate college was named. As this newsletter goes to press, I am in Vancouver, British

Columbia attending the annual meeting of the Cognitive Science Society. A highlight so far has been an all-day tutorial on Bayesian models of inductive learning.

Catch a man a fish, and you can sell it to him. Teach a man to fish, and you ruin a wonderful business opportunity.

Karl Marx

Off the top with Kimmel . . .

July 25, 2006 Arroyo Seco, New Mexico.

I'm writing in the summer with a distance of mountains from the flatlands of South Texas, and so predictably pensive about what it is we are doing. As graduates in philosophy from Trinity University, you will all appreciate the irony of a philosophy "newsletter." That seems to be how it is done these days—tutorial toutings from

various vocations within *academe*: but *news*...in *philosophy*..(?) I don't think so. Whether or not there is anything new under the sun there will be no hatchings in the philosophical vineyards. Philosophy reviewsletter might work. In any event, Trinity remains very much as you left it; with different faces and dependably (thank god) differing voices. In a world most often blowing in the bellicose and belligerent winds of change, Trinity

may be a *kairic* point of remembered grace if not a continuing lodestone for your growing lives. Meanwhile, we do hear from some of you about your lives and times, but would like to get e-mail missals from the rest of you, particularly with reference to how you are putting to use the wisdom you gained on leaving us. Keep thinking, keep the faith, and keep in touch. --LDK

Dr. Norman's notes

I am continuing to translate Schopenhauer as well as write a paper on German philosophy and literary theory which has taken up most of my summer.

I have also been as politically active as time will allow. I am currently involved in editing Jewish Peace News (please refer to jewishvoicefor-peace.org for further in-

formation). I will continue to speak and write about Middle East issues from a human rights perspective, a topic which has particular poignancy for me right now.

A note from Andrew Kania . . .

I guess I should be reflecting on my first year at Trinity, but I can't help thinking about the exciting events coming up this year. In Spring, the department will be hosting Trinity's inaugural "Lennox Seminar". This started off as a proposal for a Stieren event, but the administration liked it so much, they decided to make it an annual event! Over the course of the semester, five prominent philosophers of art will be visiting Trinity. In addition to presenting a public lecture on a current topic in philosophical aesthetics, each visiting scholar will give a colloquium

presentation of his current research in the ontology of music – the study of the nature of, and relationships between, musical items such as works, performances, and recordings. These colloquium presentations will form the basis of a seminar in musical ontology I'll be leading. Check out our website for more details!

Now for some reflection: My first year here has gone really well. I've enjoyed the experience of teaching small classes and really getting to know some of our students. I'm looking forward to deepening these connections

in future years. I've also managed to do some research (not an easy feat in one's first year on the job!), developing some of the issues in musical ontology from my dissertation. I hope to add the philosophy of film to my research agenda next year. Finally, I've been getting to know San Antonio and the surrounding areas with my fiancée, Julie, a violinist who plays with the San Antonio Symphony.

To sum up, we like it so much here we've bought a house in Tobin Hill. Now all we need is some furniture...

I haven't failed, I've found 10,000 ways that don't work.

Ben Franklin



a word from Heil

Plato's Last Problem

Last things can be interesting, and often very important. Thus, sometimes a little eschatology can go a long way. In Plato's last work, the *Laws*, the last question he takes up (Bk. 12) is how to preserve good government. (See Bks. 1-11 for how to create good government.) His answer is through a "syllogos" of the best people (961a). The word means "discussion together". The corresponding Latin word is "collegium". As in the *Republic*, Plato proposes that the only safeguard of a good society is for those in power to be thinkers who care about the good, and who are keenly aware of what they do and don't understand. This remains true in the *Laws* as well, but with some interesting differences.

First, in the *Laws*, Plato insists that the political success of discussion among colleagues depends on a combination of intelligence and perception. The *Republic* lamented the distance between the pursuit of wisdom and our cave-dwelling existence (philosophers are essentially blind when they move from the light back into the darkness of the cave). But, in the *Laws*, political wisdom is impossible without keen observation and the free flow of information (961d). A captain will wreck his ship if he tries to navigate based on some cherished principles, without close attention to the condition of the seas, the winds, the vessel, and the crew. This, then, is Plato's warning that, when ideology pushes out the scientific gathering of information, good government becomes bad. And, as we know, wars can be started when this happens.

A second difference, and one that seems at odds with the first, is that colleagues should make theology central to their discussion. In the *Republic*, rational discussion of the nature of the divine was needed largely to ensure that the non-governing classes are brought up with a healthy view of the gods (they are good and don't want to destroy us). Theology was seen as part of our pre-philosophical, civic education. In the *Laws*, however, it becomes crucial to the very highest political discussions. Though this notion sounds frightening in the context of modern right-wing fundamentalism, and the recent erosion of the separation between church and state, Plato's argument points surprisingly in the opposite direction. If the thinking people in our society stop doing theology, then others (more ignorant, discussion-hating people) will take it up. And, when that happens, rational discussion itself will lose its force in politics (967b-c). We seem to be witnessing something like this in our country today. ...But theology? How can clear thinking agnostics possibly engage in that? Well, perhaps it is no different from the question of how a skeptic can engage in epistemology. The question, rather, is how can a skeptic NOT engage in it. The skeptic, after all, is taking an epistemological position. I don't know what this says exactly about philosophy's relationship with religion, but I do know that some of our schools are now living with the results of letting the Pat Robertsons and Jerry Falwells define the public debate over the causes and order of nature.

Finally, a good government should have a single aim, virtue. When it pursues a multiplicity of goals, e.g., wealth, freedom, power, it goes wrong (962b-963a). This is the same old Plato from the *Republic*, but here he

adds a point that changes everything. In the *Republic*, he did not consider it difficult for good people to get the goal right. They knew what they needed to do. It is a careless mathematical miscalculation that leads to the downfall of Kallipolis in the *Republic* (546a-d), not an error in moral judgment. In the *Laws*, however, Plato thinks the fallibility of our moral understanding is the greatest challenge. Why? Because, he says, we still don't know whether virtue is many things or one (963c-964c). Are courage, justice, temperance and wisdom four different qualities? If so, then why do we call them all by the same name "virtue"? The old Socratic "unity of virtue" problem has returned. Though this puzzle may strike us as purely theoretical, it isn't. When we see violent terrorists boldly laying down their lives for their cause, or U.S. soldiers raping and murdering civilians, or self-controlled politicians making unwise decisions, or wise intellectuals retreating to the safety of silence, the virtues seem to fly apart. Courage doesn't seem to imply justice or temperance, and wisdom doesn't seem to imply much of anything. This is surely one of the most profound practical problems of life, because, until we solve it, we don't know what a good person is. We praise courage, but maybe that means we're also praising terrorism. We champion justice, but maybe that means we're also endorsing oppression and poverty. We promote wisdom, but maybe that means we're promoting disengagement from what matters. As colleagues in a discussion over policy, we don't yet know what we're aiming at. That is Plato's last problem.

Surveys

***Note: Sensitive information will be kept confidential**

NAME: _____ **GRADUATING CLASS** _____

Survey of Graduating Seniors

To which graduate schools or other professional programs (such as law school) did you apply ? (Please list these in order of your preferences) _____

Which ones admitted you? _____

What financial aid was offered to you? _____

What were your scores on the GRE _____, LSAT _____, MCAT _____

What was your overall GPA at Trinity? _____ What was your GPA in philosophy at Trinity? _____

To what extent do you believe that your work in the philosophy department will be helpful in connection with these plans? (circle one) extremely helpful, very helpful, quite helpful, slightly helpful, not at all

Why? _____

How well did the Department train you to construct and evaluate arguments? (circle one) extremely well, very well, quite well, slightly well, not at all

Please explain _____

How involved did you feel in the activities of the department? (circle one) extremely, very, quite, slightly, not at all

How involved were you in Phi Sigma Tau activities? (circle one) extremely, very, quite, slightly, not at all

Are you finding graduate school more or less difficult than you expected? _____ More _____ Less

Please Explain _____

How well did the Philosophy Department at Trinity prepare you for graduate work? (circle one) extremely, very, quite, slightly, not at all

Please explain _____

Which features of your work in the philosophy department at Trinity were most helpful in preparing you for graduate work?

Please explain _____

How could your preparation for graduate work have been improved? _____

NAME: _____ **GRADUATING CLASS** _____

Survey of Former Students in Graduate School

How realistic were your expectations of graduate school at the time you graduated from Trinity?

(circle one) extremely, very, quite, slightly, not at all

Why? _____

How well informed do you believe you were about the academic job market while at Trinity?

(circle one) extremely, very, quite, slightly, not at all

Why? _____

How confident are you that you will complete the degree you have been working toward?

(circle one) extremely, very, quite, slightly, not at all

Why? _____

NAME: _____ **GRADUATING CLASS** _____

Survey of Former Students

If you are now out of school, how much has your philosophical training helped you in your career?

(circle one) extremely, very, quite, slightly, not at all

Why? _____

Do you have any suggestions for how the Department might help you continue to engage with philosophy?

From: _____

**Place
Stamp
Here**

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San Antonio, TX 78212**

Want into Law School? Here's How it is Done.

This year Matt Badders was admitted into one of the nation's top law schools, at the University of Texas at Austin. He has kindly agreed to provide advice for how it can be done. I expect that his advice, with some adaptation, is good for gaining admittance to top graduate school programs in philosophy as well.

- S. Luper



How to Prepare for the LSAT: What Worked for Me

One year ago, I was sweating bullets over a four-hour test that, I felt, would determine the rest of my life. Well, the test did not ruin my life in any way. In fact, I scored in the 97th percentile, most likely the result of how I prepared. Now, I'll tell you how I did it.

First, if you are the type of person who works best when the stakes are high (as I am), then make them such. Tell yourself that this test WILL be the SOLE ARBITER of your future. It helps motivate.

Second, schedule to take the LSAT during the June session (as opposed to the February or September ones). No exceptions. This way, you will complete your regular slate of courses at Trinity, then have one month to do NOTHING but focus on the test. Also, complete your registration for the June exam in January, so you can have first-choice as to the best facility for you. The longer you wait, the less selection there will be, if there are even any open spots left at all.

After registering for the LSAT, be sure to take a professionally instructed prep course. Do not try to "teach yourself" from one of the LSAT review books available at Borders. I promise they are nowhere near the quality of personal instruction. My specific recommendation is the Princeton Review. It is the course that I took, that helped me do so well. I recommend them above Kaplan because I was also an LSAT instructor for Kaplan this spring, so I am very familiar with both programs. But I digress; now back to LSAT preparation. . .

Schedule to take the spring review course, so that the course will finish right before you take the test (and everything you learned from Princeton Review remains fresh in your mind). The week before the date of the test is when the most intense, most critical preparation is done.

I bought an entire book of previously administered LSAT exams from the Law School Data Assembly Service (the company that administers the exam). Each day, I woke up, ate a balanced breakfast, swam a few laps, then went to the room where I would be taking the test for real, at the same time during which I would be taking the test for real, and took a practice exam. I did this everyday, for seven days before the date of the actual exam.

When test day came, there were no surprises, nothing to be nervous about. I knew where to go, what to do, how long it would take, and even what my approximate score would be. It was business as usual.

Although my method may have seemed a bit overboard, it was certainly worth it when my score came in the mail. My peers who didn't practice this sort of regimen had scores much less than mine. True, this might not be the best advice for your own way of studying, but I just thought I'd share what worked for me.

-Matt Badders

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