

Philosophy News



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from Steve Luper . . .

Dear Alumni:

Now that our Cinco de Mayo end-of-year picnic is over, the semester is really winding down. It has been a good year in many ways. We have had some interesting visiting speakers: Greg Currie, Henry Rosemont and Aaron Meskin. But we have had cause for regret as well. John Heil, Jr. has resigned, and is now living in Virginia, while Christina Gerakaris is in the process of moving to the Economics Department. We wish them well, and we will miss them.

My long-term project, a book I'll call *The Philosophy*

of Death, is shaping up nicely. I'll struggle with it in the summer months. In July I will present a paper on suicide in York, England. I'll carve out a bit of material from *The Philosophy of Death* for the presentation. I'm not sure yet what I want to say! I know I want to rail against those who oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide, but I'll just be whinging unless I work out a fairly general theory about when killing is wrong. On that I'm making good progress. After the York conference on

death I'll head over to Southampton to visit Alex Neill, then continue on to Edinburgh. Then it's back to the Hill Country, to toil on the land. This Fall I'll plant daffodils and narcissi.

Suggested Readings:

The Reasons of Love by Harry Frankfurt

What Are We? by Eric Olson

How We Persist by Katherine Hawley

A man finds himself, to his great astonishment, suddenly existing, after thousands and thousands of years of non-existence: he lives for a little while; and then, again, comes an equally long period when he must exist no more. The heart rebels against this, and feels that it cannot be true.

- Schopenhauer

from Judith Norman . . .

Hello, all,

I've been working "behind the scenes" this year -- I've been on a year-long leave of absence to care for my new little baby, Charlotte. She's doing well, and I'm planning to come back to work in the Fall. I've reached the conclusion that being a stay-at-home mom is a lot harder than being a philosophy professor!

I've had plenty to do at home in those rare moments when the baby is actually asleep. I've been plugging away at my Schopenhauer translation, and I'm starting to appreciate his wry sense of humor. I've been thinking a lot

about the philosophical problems raised by translation, and I'll probably be writing an article about that soon.

I'm also working on an article about German romanticism, looking carefully at their theories of language. Many of them believed that music was prior to language -- that people sang before they spoke. I'm going to watch my baby carefully, to see if that's true for the individual as well!

Finally, I've been active with my peace group -- check out our blog at www.jewishpeaceneeds.blogspot.com to see what we've been up to.



Take care!

Suggested Reading:

The Corporation by Joel Bakan
(book and movie recommended)

Our Mutual Friend by Charles Dickens

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>

The winner of the 2008 Hemlock Award for Best Senior Essay in Philosophy was **Casey Strickland**. The Award is made possible by a generous donation from **Kathy L. Schnare and William Reid**.

from Andrew Kania . . .

I have had another fulfilling year at Trinity. I did my best imitation of Judith Norman, teaching Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer while she was on leave this year, and I'm sure the students will breath a sigh of relief when she returns in the Fall! Perhaps the most enjoyable teaching experience of my career so far came with my Philosophy of Film course this Spring. Despite the three-hour late-Monday afternoon/evening timeslot, almost every student was well prepared for every class, and the engaged discussions made the course a pleasure to teach. As I write this I am looking forward to seeing what they have to say in their final research papers for the course, on topics as diverse as the role of narrative in videogames, the function of music in film, and the aesthetic implications of 'rotoscopic' films – those made by a combination of photography and animation.

On the research side, one highlight was seeing the publication of my entry on philosophy of music in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. It's available online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/music/> if you want to check it out – let me know if you have any thoughts about it. The SEP has already become a central reference work in philosophy, so it was an honor to be asked to provide the entry on this major area of aesthetics. Within days of the entry going online I was engaged in an email discussion about musical aesthetics with an grad student in Amsterdam!

Another highlight of my year was winning the inaugural Essay Prize of the British Society for Aesthetics. My essay was on the methodology of musical ontology, that is, the question of how we ought to go about figuring out the fundamental nature of musical entities, such as works, performances, and recordings. You might see this as

a specific version of a general mystery about metaphysics, namely, how on earth we philosophers expect to figure out the fundamental nature of the universe by sitting in our armchairs and thinking about it! In fact, I think musical ontology is in a slightly different boat than general metaphysics, since musical works (and the rest) are at least in part cultural products. Thus, we get to partly determine their nature just by engaging in certain practices. As you've probably figured out from this brief summary, there are a lot of issues to be sorted out here. I'm hoping to work on some of them at the Arché Summer School on philosophical methodology being held this summer in St. Andrews, Scotland.

My main research project this summer is to put together *Philosophers on Memento*, a volume of new essays by various philosophers on the philosophical aspects of the 2000 neo-noir film. As many of you probably recall, the film raises a number of issues about the nature of memory, knowledge, and the self. It is also an interesting case-study for several issues in aesthetics, including narrative and ontology.

I'm looking forward to teaching Philosophy of Gender again this fall, which will incorporate a visit from Professor Carolyn Korsmeyer, our Stieren visitor for the year, who will be discussing issues in feminist aesthetics. (It would be great to see some of you who are still in the San Antonio area at her public talk!) One of the requirements for the Gender course will be 'cross-dressing day', an student initiative from the first time I taught the class, and a great way to really feel the force of gender norms. In the spring, I'll be teaching metaphysics for the first time at Trinity. It should be fun having a look at some of the recent textbooks in this area over the sum-



mer.

Perhaps it's unwise to recommend books I haven't read myself yet, but my summer reading list includes two recent books related to the research described above: Amie Thomasson's *Ordinary Objects* and Timothy Williamson's *The Philosophy of Philosophy*. If you're after something a bit lighter (!), for a taste of the intersection between film and Texas, I recommend two recent films: *There Will Be Blood* and *No Country for Old Men*, both filmed in and around Marfa, TX. I also recommend the novel *No Country for Old Men*, by Cormac McCarthy. Even better (despite the ending) is his most recent, Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Road* soon to be made into a film. Keep your fingers crossed – I think *The Road* could make a great film if they stay close to the novel's bleak minimalism, but it could easily degenerate into Hollywood schlock if they try to make it more audience-friendly.

from Curtis Brown . . .

It's difficult to believe that it has been a year since the last Philosophy Department newsletter. One highlight of the year for me was a trip to London and Edinburgh with my family. We didn't do a lot of philosophical sightseeing, but I did see a room from Hume's house reconstructed in the National Museum of Scotland, and in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, I took a photo of a large vase on which there was a painting of Locke. Next up was the annual meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, which was held this time in Nashville, at the Gaylord Opryland resort. I walked over to the Grand Ole Opry and took in a show, but actually got more enjoyment out of a free outdoor concert by a couple of young singer-songwriters.

During the academic year, far too much of my time was spent on committee work. Luckily my term as chair of the Faculty Representa-

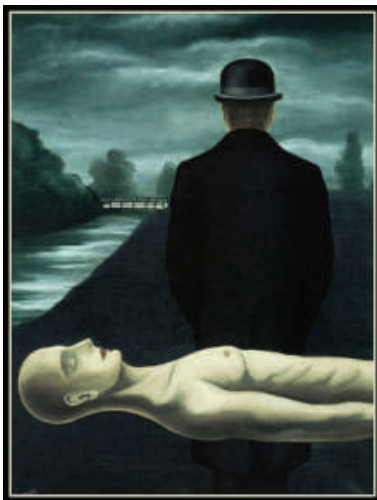
tion and Elections Committee is now over, so I should have more time for other things next year! I have also been Trinity's liaison for the Beinecke Scholarship, a \$34,000 scholarship to support graduate study in the humanities, arts, or social sciences. Trinity can nominate one student each year for this award, and this year, for the first time, our nominee was successful! As chair of the oversight committee for the Cognitive Science interdisciplinary minor, I oversaw a revision in the requirements and bulletin copy for the minor.

This summer I will be gearing up to teach a new course next fall, a course called Tools for Reasoning, which will provide an introduction to logic, probability theory, and hypothesis testing. I expect it to be a lot of fun. I will also be preparing materials for my philosophy of science course. And I also plan to read Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste: Food, Taste, and Philosophy*. Korsmeyer will be our Stieren lecturer

next year, so this will be preparation for her visit, but it also looks like a book I'll really enjoy.

I reread all of Jane Austen's novels over the past year. They're all good, but *Pride and Prejudice* is probably still my favorite. I was struck this time through by how prominent epistemological issues are in the novels; many of them hinge on different interpretations of the same evidence. I also read Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* for the first time, and enjoyed it more than I had expected to.

On the philosophy front, Peter Smith's *Introduction to Gödel's Theorems* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) is a really first-rate logic book, with a lot of virtues that are all too rare in the genre: an engaging and readable style; ample signposting; clear indications of which points are central and which are fiddly details; and clear discussions of the motivations and significance of the technical results.



Wesley: But you're a Slayer.

Buffy: Yeah, I'm also a person. You can't just define me by my Slayer-ness. That's . . . something-ism.

Episode, "Choices"

Buffy the Vampire Slayer



**Trinity Philosophy Students, Austin Johnston and Kerry Vaughan,
Study Abroad Program in Scotland**



Brendan Greeley's Naval Aviation Experience Class of 2005

Three years after departing Laurie Auditorium for the final time, degree in hand with parents and family along my side, I have answered the age-old question of “so...what are you going to do with a degree in Philosophy?” Several influential professors and semesters at Trinity opened my eyes to the importance of wonder and curiosity in life, so in the spirit of stirring the gods and further delaying my homecoming to Ithaca, my intellectual odyssey lead me to Saint John’s College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. While Trinity taught me Philosophy, Saint John’s taught me to think. In the Liberal Arts program, my attention turned to many of our “great books” with an exciting intensity and sense of purposiveness that can only be found in “Johnnie chairs” in special places like Santa Fe. I realized that few significant philosophical questions can be answered with statements of fact, and that the most challenging and insightful answers, if indeed we can call them such, arise from a deep understanding of the questions themselves.

My two years at Saint John’s College were incredibly rewarding; however, upon graduation, I felt somewhat unbalanced. The city that was my soul had become lawless—the rational and appetitive classes were in total opposition to one another because the guardians, the necessary link between the two, were neither enforcing the laws from above nor establishing order among the Epicureans below. Eager to inspire my guardians, I attended the United States Navy’s Officer Candidate School in Pensacola, Florida last June. I commissioned as an Ensign on the 31st of August and attended several preliminary flight schools in Pensacola. Last January, my orders sent me to Corpus Christi, Texas, where I have remained for the past four months in Primary Flight Training. I am currently flying the T-34 Turbo-Mentor, a low wing, turboprop, primary trainer, and spend most of my time gazing up towards the heavens and examining weather reports, wondering when, if ever, this East Texas costal weather will be neither too windy nor too cloudy to fly.

Upon graduation from Primary Flight Training, I will select the aircraft that I will fly in “the fleet”, based upon the needs of the Navy and my individual scores. I aspire to fly jets and hope that my graduation from Primary will line up with the Navy’s launching of the Joint Strike Fighter (F-35) early next year. Although flight training is extremely demanding, I still cannot believe I get paid to practice tactics and aerobatics in million-dollar airplanes. As former President John F. Kennedy once said, upon addressing the Plebes at the Naval Academy: "I can imagine no more rewarding a career. And any man who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, I think can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction: I served in the United States Navy."



ALUMNI SURVEY

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

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



There is no moral precept that does not have something inconvenient about it.

- Denis Diderot

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The brain therefore you speak of, being a sensible thing, exists only in the mind.

- George Berkeley