



AAPT News

The Newsletter of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers

VOLUME 15, Number 2

July 1992

Welcome to the 9th IWCTP

The American Association of Philosophy Teachers is pleased to announce its 9th International Workshop Conference on Teaching Philosophy, to be held August 7-10, 1992, at the University of Vermont, Burlington, VT. The conference is open to anyone interested in the teaching of philosophy.

Founded in 1978, AAPT is devoted exclusively to the advancement and improvement of philosophy teaching at all educational levels. With members in Asia, Canada, Europe, and the United States, AAPT is an international advocate for philosophy teaching.

Beginning with the first Workshop-Conference at Union College in Schenectady, New York, in 1976, over 1,500 philosophy teachers have attended sessions at the University of Toledo (1980 and 1984), Appalachian State University (1982), Culver-Stockton College (1986), Hampshire College (1988), and Indiana University (1990). Attendees have come from all over the United States and Canada, as well as Europe, Africa, Asia, and

Latin America.

The program is a Workshop-Conference format in order to emphasize the interactive, learning environment of the sessions. Everything presented is intended to show, demonstrate, and exemplify innovative, effective materials and techniques which can be put directly into the practice of philosophy teaching. Some sessions are organized around particular ideas and areas of philosophy; others focus on techniques and methods. The aim of each, however, is the same: more effective, dynamic, engaging teaching and learning.

The Workshop-Conference will cover four days, in a setting conducive to interactive learning among colleagues. Throughout the week there are countless informal discussions, with constant sharing of information and insights. Book displays, syllabus exchanges, software demonstrations, and film screenings all add to the opportunities for learning and interaction. Our goal, which we have been meeting for 14 years, is an educational, informal, enjoyable, noncompetitive conference.

To date 62 peer reviewed sessions are scheduled for presentation. Ten more are in final planning stages. Continuous Poster Sessions will also be open for all participants, and a "Let's Talk About..." bulletin board will enable networking for discussion and information exchange.

Gareth B. Matthews, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, will present the keynote address for the conference entitled: *The Child as Natural Philosopher*.

A conference registration fee for AAPT members will be \$100.00 (\$125.00 for non-members and \$45.00 for graduate students). Room and board will be as follows: \$60.00/person single occupancy, and \$48.00/person double occupancy for the duration of the conference. Meals will be an additional \$79.80.

Travel and registration information appears on page 7 of this issue of *AAPT News*.

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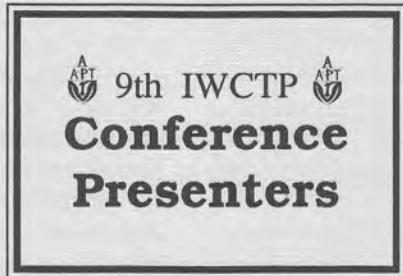
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Philosophy Teaching Exchange

A regular feature of *AAPT News* sharing course materials and classroom experiences. Replies to the editor or the authors are welcome.

A Dialogue

John Hanagan
St. Michael's University
Colchester, VT

At 4:30 on a Friday afternoon, my window was already darkened. The deserted building was quiet as I slowly made my way through a stack of term papers. "Two more," I thought, "and I'm outta here." I could picture my wife lighting the fire and mixing our Friday night martinis.

As I reached for the next paper, a student suddenly materialized at my door. Sandy hair topped a floor length tweed coat. Clear blue eyes looked out of a sea of freckles. His face was kinetic. "Hi prof," he said. "You busy?"

"Yup," I said.

"Can I just have a few minutes?" he asked. "Something's been going round and round in my head, and I need to talk."

"OK," I sighed, thinking of a fire burned to ashes and a watery martini.

"My name's Matt," he said, settling into an office chair.

"Hi, Matt," I said. "What's up?"

"It's like this," he said. "It's getting toward the end of the semester, ya know? And a lot of teachers are beginning to fulminate..."

"Fulminate?" I asked.

"Yah," he said. "Look it up. Anyway, lots of teachers are taking class time to come down hard against cheating and plagiarism. They get like all bent out of shape and get all heavy about how kids who cheat are bad."

"So what did you expect?" I asked. "Encouragement?"

"Naw," he said. "But I really think that cheating is damned understandable, what with the pressure and all; and frankly prof, I don't think the reasons I've heard for not cheating are worth a crock."

"Of what?" I asked.

"Not funny, prof," he said.

"OK," I said. "Tell me what you mean."

"Well," he said, "I remember the grade school teachers telling me that if I cheated on a test, I was only

cheating myself."

"And...?" I asked.

"C'mon," he said, a pained look on his face. "I may be stupid but I'm not dumb. I'm going to learn what I need to know, or care to know, and the rest is just games. I want to be an accountant, for God's sake, and make a lot of money doing other peoples' income taxes. So why study Wordsworth? So I can recite poetry to my clients? I'm sorry. I'll gladly learn what I need to learn in life, but if I can cheat my way around some stupid hoops, why not?"

"I see your point," I said. "When I taught flying at the airport, I never had a student try to cheat on Landing."

"Damn straight," he said.

"But don't you think," I asked, "that a human life is richer if it has some poetry or mythology in it?"

"Sure," he said. "But I got a lifetime to fool with that stuff. Talk real. Right now, my priorities don't lie with the Romantic poets. It's marks, deadlines, and hormones. Not necessarily in that order."

"Besides," he went on. "Wasn't Plato against compulsory education? Him being the father of the whole thing and all? Didn't he say 'for the free spirit, there should be no element of slavery in learning?'"

I shifted uncomfortably. "You do seem to remember some things quite well," I said. "But College is your choice."

"Smell the coffee," he said. "You can't deny that a lot of us kids are in school because of pressure from our parents and because of economic pressure from the society. Some choice; College on the one hand, poverty and PO'd parents on the other."

"I wouldn't dream of denying it," I said.

"Honest, prof," he said. "This whole school business has been thirteen years of torture. Hell, over half the teachers I've had hated school too; and didn't like kids very much either, as far as I could tell. My history teacher hated history, my poetry teacher was the soccer coach.

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On and on. If their subjects didn't mean much to them, why should they count a tinker's damn with me?"

"Well..." I said.

"School has been one long painful game," he continued. "Nothing but memorizing the answers to other peoples' questions. Any question I had was on the floor just long enough for the teacher to stomp it, like a roach. I learned real fast what was important, and it wasn't me learning! "Naw, prof," he concluded. "The only thing I've really learned is how to play the game called Student. And the point of that game is to get the highest mark for the least amount of work. And one of the basic rules is: when you don't need the knowledge, and it's a lousy course anyway, and you can get away with it, cheat!"

He sat back, finally played out. I looked at him across the silence in my office. This was a good kid, with good ideas. He wasn't playing. My stomach tensed. Could I give him the honesty he had given me?

"Matt," I said. "I'm not going to argue with a word you've said. When I was a Freshman, I felt trapped in an uncaring system just like you do."

"But here you are," he said, "part of the system. What gives?"

"That's one of my perennial questions," I said. "And maybe in the next few minutes we'll confront it together. But for now, I'd like to follow a line of thought which just occurred to me about cheating, even within a bad system. Is that OK?"

"Good luck," he said.

"Thanks," I said. "My idea's got something to do with how important it is to keep some kind of continuity between what's going on inside of me and the face I show to the world. There's a thinker I like named Martin Buber. He talks about how some people in the world are 'essence people,' and others are 'image people.' Now, it seems to me that when there is a serious break between who I am and the image I fabricate, the real me is painfully isolated, unacknowledged by others and even by myself. I find myself pouring all of my energy into maintaining that phony exterior, all the while trying to fool myself and other people into believing that it's real. But I feel the split; I know it's there, and sometimes it is almost crippling. Besides, deception gets to be a mess. It's like when you were a kid, trying to remember which group you told which lie to."

He was listening intently, so I pressed on.

"I think of this sometimes," I said, "when I sit at graduation and watch student after student receive his/her diploma. As they walk across the stage, faces flushed with champagne and triumph, mothers and fathers crying with pride, I wonder how terrible some of them must feel, knowing it's all a lie."

"I see what you're saying," he said. "But the

pressure..."

"I know," I said. "But where do we draw the line? Where is our cave-in point? It reminds me of the student who asked a teacher if he could have an 'A' for a million dollars. The teacher said sure. The next day the student asked the teacher for a 'A' for ten bucks. 'What kind of a man do you think I am?' asked the teacher indignantly. 'We've already established that,' said the student. 'Now we're just haggling price.'"

"There's something to this story," I went on. "Aren't people who choose to cheat simply prostituting themselves? Selling themselves out because the price is right?"

"That's nasty, prof," he said.

"You're right," I said. "That usually happens to me when I begin really to confront myself."

"Now don't you get phony on me," he said. "You're not telling me that you have trouble with cheating, are you?"

"You bet I do," I said. "Not on tests, because that's not an issue for me. But I'm constantly tempted to cheat other people by not giving them the real me. And so is everyone else. Maintaining your integrity is one of the toughest things in life. Some people do it by becoming hard, cold and self-righteous; others just give up; still others are looking for a different way, a way fraught with difficulty and risk. It's a constant battle. We're dealing with terrific fear here.

"But I'll tell you, Matt," I said. "Every time fear wins, I lose big time. And I really believe that. The 'I' I'm trying to protect gets scared and confused, and I get farther and farther away from finding out who I really am. This is why I think that there are few things in life as important as continually walking through my fear and reaching with everything I have for the reality and wholeness of myself. Nobody likes a phony---especially when it's yourself."

"Jeez..." he said.

"You did a good job of justifying the act of cheating within a corrupt system, Matt," I said. "But it's a lot harder to come up with reasons which justify, or even recommend, being the type of person who could do it."

"I never thought of it that way," he said. "Actually," I replied, "this kind of moral thinking goes all the way back to the ancient Greeks." I grinned at him. "Look it up," I said.

"Still not funny," he said.

"Now about my being part of this corrupt system," I said.

"This is really the point," he said. "How can a guy buy into those grand ideals of yours, when his spirit is being ground down day after day?"

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"Out of the Mouths of Babes"

or

"Quotable Quotes"

Don't you wish your students would simply accept you for who you are instead of making nasty comments about you on their evaluations? Well, the next time you have a conference with your department chair about your student evaluations, during which you are informed that some students have called you Attila the Hun, have accused you of being intolerant of stupidity, or have otherwise suggested that you be taken out back and shot because you have the *unmitigated gall* to require that they write *papers*, all you need to do is quote this QQ:

"We are who we are. I wish that others felt that same way but I am also a realist."

This lets your chair know that you are a profound, open-minded, insightful person who accepts the fact that not everyone, especially your students and perhaps your very own chairperson, will see how terrific you really are and hence you have resigned yourself to being unjustly persecuted. It might also be a good idea to exhibit confidence in being who you are and to point out that some people are not in as good a position as you when it comes to making judgments that concern who they are. May we suggest using the following poignant QQ to get the message across to your chair:

"I have decided that changing my body or thoughts would change my identity. I like my identity. For those who do not have a clear understanding of their identity, I do not feel that they should judge or conclude what they should do."

This gets you off the hook when your chair suggests that you make some changes in how you deal with students (e.g., that you encourage them by telling them they are all potential philosophical giants and that with a few minor changes in their papers, *any* philosophy journal would jump at the chance to publish them). After all, you *like* your identity, and it is obvious that those who *don't* like the way you are do not have a clear understanding of their *own* identity so how can they make negative judgments about *you*? (If you feel compelled to elaborate as we have just done, make sure you do it real fast in case the chair is a nitpicker when it comes to

noticing what does and does not follow from what.)

Which reminds us. Some of you out there have sent the QQs Center some *very* tough questions about identity. So now that we've shown you how to defend yourself against insubordinate students and how to deal with a potentially unpleasant meeting with your chair, we will answer those questions. We wish to thank the members of our research staff for their assistance. Of course *no* question is too difficult for us to handle, despite its level of difficulty, as you will see from the following.

Question: When thinking about who I am, what do I have to consider?

"Identity is a factor you have to consider when you are thinking about who you are."

(Of course there may be *other* factors to consider, such as whether you have time to even consider such a vacuous topic.)

Question: Is there anything wrong with wanting to sacrifice my identity?

"Why should someone be willing to sacrifice his identity which he has grown to love and respect only to become the person he has always wanted to be? One would have to spend a lifetime getting to know this 'new' identity."

(But it's a whole other story if you haven't grown to love and respect your identity, for then you have to find a new one and start a relationship with it all over; and *that* can present a real problem. It's time-consuming enough when to have to do that with a *person*; having to do that with *your identity* will take *more* than the rest of your life.)

Question: Why all the hoopla about identity?

"Our identity is a whole and is a very vital part of who we are."

Besides,

"Without our identity we are not the same person."

And not only that:

"Identity is very important in establishing a place in society and when you take that away what do you have left? You are the same person but redefined with no real relevance in society."

Some of the questions we received concerned the intimidating nature of SOCIETY which, as is implied in this last QQ, is A Thing to be reckoned with. To be quite honest, we didn't think that *philosophy* teachers would care one *after-image* about SOCIETY. But our research staff gave us an explanation for why this might be:

"Many people feel inadequate because of the way our society puts such high standards on the population."

If you are feeling inadequate due to rotten student evaluations, for example, and your chair is trying to blame *you*, remember---IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT; it's SOCIETY'S fault for putting such high standards on you.

Here are a couple of questions we received which reflect the writer's feeling of inadequacy due to an unfamiliarity with the likes and dislikes of Society; our research staff has provided the answers.

Question: As a professional philosopher, would society prefer that I strive for a better mind or a better body?

"Today's shallow and materialistic society would more than likely opt for a better body."

Question: Should I worry about what I *look* like when I teach my classes or is my *inner* beauty and my identity more meaningful?

"Society today has made appearance so much more meaningful than a person's inner beauty and identity does not seem to mean much to people anymore."

Obviously, then, what you should do is start working out six days a week, go on a body-builder's diet, have cosmetic surgery, and get a new wardrobe; *then* maybe Society will like you better and you'll probably even get better student evaluations.

On the other hand, you might not be concerned with Society; and so we suggest modeling yourself after Descartes:

"I feel [Descartes] is being a bold individual, believing what he knows to be true and forming beliefs for himself."

Of course you don't want to take a Cartesian model *too* far because

"if you doubt your existence in the world, then there is a large possibility that you do not exist."

But for those of you who are feeling inadequate and depressed and want a way out, this QQ provides you with one---doubt your existence and, chances are, you don't exist. We like to think of this as death by doubt.

Even if you do have problems, they are *nothing* compared to the problems the SOUL has. "What is the soul," you ask, "that it would have *problems*?" Well, for one thing,

"The soul is a sick sense."

And, as you will see from the following, the soul has many other difficulties to face:

"... every soul is given a body to inhabit and grow in. The actual physical part of a person's body does not realize the soul is there. It is the unconsciousness of a body. Throughout life the unconscious and the conscious have a goal to meet one another. According to environmental obstacles that may occur, they often do not meet. This causes the soul to wander to another body in search of total fulfillment. Before a soul is put on Earth, it receives an assignment, and if the assignment is not accomplished, the soul seeks to better itself to become what it wants to be. ... It will never be happy and rest until it finds content with the final life in which it leads. ... Until it completes the mission it is sent down to accomplish, it will continue to survive."

So when you start to feel inadequate and depressed, just remind yourself that you could be a lot worse off; you could be a SOUL. In which case a body wouldn't know you existed because you are the body's unconsciousness; you would always be trying to get up with consciousness but the environment has a way of spoiling the rendezvous; you wouldn't have a home-body because you would constantly be looking for another body; you would get some unknown assignment that, on the one hand, precludes your bettering yourself and, on the other hand, automatically results in your finding happiness, contentment and time to relax as well as meeting your demise all at the same time. A no-win situation if we ever saw one.

We leave you with a QQ that is so insightful we were left speechless; we think you will be too:

"People who die usually stay that way."

Mary Ann Carroll
Department of Philosophy and Religion
Appalachian State University

Philosophy Teaching Exchange

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"This is true," I said. "I've already told you that I was as brain dead as anyone when I got out of high school."

"What happened?" he asked.

"Well, it didn't happen all at once," I said. "I just remember that during my sophomore and junior years in college, I began to hear bewildering notes in some of my classes; kind of a tentative freshness. Where was the customary BS? I started looking at my teachers, watching them. And I saw, in some of them at least, an honesty and sincerity which I never knew existed. What's more, the process in which they were engaged looked exciting. Fun, even. I decided to join them."

"Are you telling me that's here at this school," he asked.

"It sure is," I said. "Right down the hall from here is a Religious Studies teacher who is honestly engaging with the problem of evil in the world. When he was in grad school, he worked part-time at a hospital. One of his jobs was delivering dead babies to the morgue. You can join with him, if you want, in his struggle to understand. A few doors further down is a Sociology teacher who is courageously confronting the very validity of sociological knowledge, a knowledge to which he has devoted a lifetime. Upstairs is a woman who teaches college writing and who lives as a writer of relentless sincerity. And across the hall from her is a man who loves Shakespeare with an intense passion.

"I could go on and on," I continued. "This school is filled with people who are honestly confronting the truth of themselves. Their classrooms are vibrant; energized with caring. But if you want to see them, you have to decide to look. And once you do, once you get a taste of a few of these people, school becomes one of the most alive and exciting places in the world; a place where cheating is an obscene and callous affirmation of all the ugly values you deplored when you first came in."

It was my turn to be played out. Silence settled between us.

"I don't know what I think about all this," he said at last, "but there sure is a lot here for me to chew on."

"Me too," I said.

"Well, I got to go, prof," he said. "Thanks for your time."

"See you, Matt," I said. "I hope we can do it again."

I sat in my office alone after he had gone, staring at the darkened window. Finally, I turned out the light and went home.

IWCTP Conference Travel Information

Burlington is a small city with most of the advantages of a metropolis...and none of the drawbacks. Sophisticated boutiques, entertainment, galleries, restaurants and museums alternate with picturesque outdoor markets in a charming New England setting. The world-famous Shelburne Museum, historic Montreal, Stowe, and other points of interest are all nearby, and well worth seeing.

The University of Vermont offers a variety of outstanding recreational facilities. Play squash, racquetball or tennis, jog, take a dip in the pool, or work out in the exercise rooms. Stroll down to Lake Champlain and enjoy boating, fishing and more. Sandy beaches and wooded bike paths are just minutes away. Water sports and golf courses are three mile away, mountains a 30 minute drive. Cultural, sports, and educational activities abound on and off campus.

Continental Airlines is the official conference airline. They are offering a 5% discount off all Continental fares. No discount will apply to any ticket issued within 72 hours of departure. Some restrictions apply. To order tickets call 1-800-468-7022. The AAPT identification number is EZ8AP64.

If you or a member of your family has special needs, we want to accommodate you. Please tell us your special needs, including vegetarian or other diets.

The registration form, including a minimum deposit equivalent to the registration fee, should be sent to: Richard Wright, Executive Director; AAPT; P.O. Box 26901, LIB 418; Oklahoma City, OK 73190. Call 405-271-2111 for information, or to receive a conference brochure.

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Deadlines for submissions: January 1, May 1, and September 1.

Calendar of Events

July 26-31, 1992 - Workshop: Ethics: Practice and Teaching. Colorado Springs. Contact The Poynter Center, 410 N. Park Ave., Bloomington, IN 47405. E-mail: appe@iubacs.bitnet

August 14-16, 1992 - Seventh International Conference on Computing and Philosophy. U. of Central Florida, Orlando. Deadline for abstracts: March 1, 1992. Contact Don Jones, Philosophy, U. of Central Florida, Orlando, FL 32816. E-mail: asdhibaa@ucf1vm.bitnet, or asdhibaa@ucf1vm.cc.ucf.edu.

October 16-17, 1992 - Central States Philosophical Association, Univ. of Kansas. Papers due July 15, 1992. Contact A. C. Genova, Philosophy, U. of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045.

December 27-30, 1992 - American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Eastern Div., Washington, D. C.. Papers due March 15, 1992. Contact Eugene Long, Philosophy, Univ. of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208.

April 1-4, 1993 - American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Pacific Div., San Francisco. Papers due September 1, 1992. Contact Anita Silvers, Philosophy, San Francisco St. Univ., San Francisco, CA 94132.

April 22-24, 1993 - American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Central Div., Chicago. Papers due September 1, 1992. Contact Hugh McCann, Philosophy, Texas A and M Univ., College Station, TX 77843.

These listings are drawn in part from Nancy Simco (ed.), *The Philosophical Calendar*, published by The Conference of Philosophical Societies.

SUBMISSIONS TO AAPT News

Submissions on disk (or E-mail) are much appreciated. Editing is done in WordStar 7.0, and WordStar's file conversion utility can import virtually any MS-DOS word processor file format. So, files from PFS Write, Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, and others are fine. Please include a hard copy.

Diskette formats other than MS-DOS (Apple, Atari, Amiga, MacIntosh, etc.) cannot be read. Files may also be sent as E-mail to Daryl Close, CompuServe 76170,2351, Internet 76170.2351@compuserve.com or by FAX to 419-447-9605. If you need help, call us at 419-447-6442 (Tiffin University) or 419-772-2197 (Ohio Northern University). —The editors

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