AAPT News

The Newsletter of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 3 Fall 1995

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY TO HOST 1996 AAPT IWCTP CONFERENCE

The 11th International Workshop/Conference on Teaching Philosophy, sponsored by the American Association of Philosophy Teachers, will be held at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, July 31- August 4, 1996. The AAPT is dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of philosophy at all levels. It is exciting to see that there are many more conferences now devoted to pedagogy than there used to be, and there are many good ideas we can learn from dedicated teachers in other fields. The AAPT biennial workshop/conference, however, offers the opportunity to learn new teaching strategies and to discuss pedagogical problems within the context of philosophy, a subject with its own particular difficulties. We expect 60-70 interactive workshops (see this issue of *AAPT News* for the call for proposals), guest speakers, lively, thoughtful discussions about teaching, and the camaraderie of colleagues who share a commitment to teaching philosophy well. ***Please join us!***

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Old Dominion, Norfolk, and the Surrounding Area

Old Dominion University, now a comprehensive university in its own right, was originally a division of the College of William and Mary. It combines both the red brick Georgian buildings of its heritage with modern facilities like the Webb University Center, residential apartments (where we will be), and a new Performing Arts Center. Norfolk, itself, combines the old and the new. This historic part of Virginia on the Chesapeake Bay has been a major seaport since the 17th century. Norfolk is, of course, famous for its U.S. Naval facilities, but it also has the Maritime Science Museum (great for kids!), Waterside and Town Point Park for shopping and riverside dining, and lots of concerts and cultural events.

Only 20 miles away is Virginia Beach which includes not only resort hotels and the beach, but also Seashore State Park with bicycling and hiking paths. (Last May, Nancy Slonneger, David James and Betsy Decyk walked a little bit of the Bald Cypress Trail on a boardwalk through a cypress swamp!) Also in Virginia Beach is Virginia's largest Crafters' Mall. If you are interested in history, Williamsburg, Jamestown and the Yorktown Victory Center are about an hour away.

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From the President

Betsy Newell Decyk
California State University at Long Beach

APA *AND* AAPT TO JOINTLY SPONSOR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY WORKSHOPS IN CHICAGO

The APA and the AAPT plan to offer a series of workshops at the APA Central Division Meetings in Chicago, April 24th and April 25th, 1996. The purpose of the workshops is to provide support, and practical suggestions, for improving the teaching of philosophy. The tentative schedule is as follows:

Wednesday evening, April 24th: Plenary session with a keynote speaker; a coffee and dessert reception to follow

Thursday morning, April 25th: Two workshop sessions with 3 current workshops each; a coffee break and poster session between workshop sessions to encourage further discussions. Three workshops will provide ideas and strategies for teaching introductory philosophy, introductory ethics, and logic and critical thinking. The other three workshops are expected to be on (1) beginning to teach philosophy, (2) multicultural classrooms and texts, and (3) cooperative learning techniques for the philosophy classroom.

For more information about this workshop series, please contact me at the address/phone number below, or check *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 69, no. 4 (February 1996) for complete conference information.

Betsy Newell Decyk
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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AT APA-EAST

Several sessions sponsored by various groups concerning issues in teaching philosophy will be held at the Eastern Division meetings of the APA in New York, December 27-30, 1995. Details are contained in the *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 69, no. 1 (September 1995). If you are not an APA member, the Proceedings are now available in electronic form on the World Wide Web. Point your Web browser to the APA Homepage and click on Proceedings, or go directly to the Proceedings at

http://www.oxy.edu/apa/proceed/proceed.html

AAPT NEWS is the Bulletin of The American Association of Philosophy Teachers.

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TYPESETTING AND LAYOUT
The Philosophy Documentation Center

***AAPT NEWS* is published in the Spring, Summer, and Fall. Deadlines for submissions: January 1, May 1, and September 1.**

Philosophy Teaching Exchange

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

THE TEACHING OF LOGIC IN LARGE CLASSES WITH INTERACTIVE GROUPS*

Tom Vinci
Dalhousie University

1. Introduction

I have taught a class in reasoning skills for several years at Dalhousie University. The subject matter for this class covers a variety of matters ranging from formal logic to heuristics. It is a fairly large class (enrollment last year was 132) composed mainly of first-year students. Prior to introducing the innovations described below, I had had somewhat mixed success with this class and decided that my approach to it needed renovation. Based on some group-learning techniques which I encountered at a faculty development summer institute held at the University of Prince Edward Island, I developed a set of procedures for implementing learning in small groups within a large class. I begin with a description of these procedures.

2. Classroom procedures

2.1 General description

First, permanent groups of 3-5 students, designated numerically, are established in a square seating configuration at permanently assigned seats in the lecture hall. (The squares are composed of two students in one row paired with two students sitting immediately behind them. This arrangement is used when the classroom is a large lecture hall with fixed seats.) The classroom procedure during the lecture period can be summarized as follows:

1) I set up a problem with a brief lecture or previous reading assignment.
2) I formulate a group question.
3) Groups prepare reports.
4) I select groups at random by number for reports, responses, and evaluations.
5) I give my own report, usually in the class subsequent to that in which the group discussions have occurred. These reports serve as summaries of what I want students to learn from discussion of the topics and are distributed to the class in hard copy. The hard copies comprise the core of a uniform set of class notes and also serve as a uniform basis on which to examine the students.

I ask that the reports be written down on index cards and handed in by all groups after class. I read these over before the next class, assign a grade and make comments. This establishes an incentive for all groups to complete their work conscientiously and to record their results concisely; it provides me with an opportunity to give feedback on specific assignments to each member of the class (through their group) at the next meeting without requiring the reading of a large volume of student work; and it gives me at least some idea for every class which parts of the material are being well learned and which are not.

2.2 An Example

In the second week of the term I introduce a distinction between syntactic and semantic conceptions of proof. In the third week I begin to consider the question, "Which method is best?" In a short lecture

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given at the beginning of this week, I note that all valid categorical syllogisms and immediate inferences can all be shown to be valid by either method, but I also introduce a problem with the syntactic method. What follows (in CAPS) is a copy of a portion of the overhead transparencies employed during that class.

A: PROBLEM WITH THE SYNTACTIC METHOD

THERE IS NO SYNTACTIC PATTERN COMMON TO ALL OF THE ARGUMENTS WE WOULD ACCEPT AS VALID. WE CANNOT THEREFORE DEFINE THE COMMON NOTION OF VALIDITY IN TERMS OF A COMMON SYNTACTIC PATTERN.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING LISTS OF ARGUMENTS:

VALID

A. TODAY IS WEDNESDAY AND TODAY IS SUNNY
TODAY IS WEDNESDAY

B. ALL WHALES ARE MAMMALS
ALL BELUGAS ARE WHALES
ALL BELUGAS ARE MAMMALS

C. ALL WHALES ARE FISH
ALL BELUGAS ARE WHALES
ALL BELUGAS ARE FISH

D. TODAY IS WEDNESDAY
TOMORROW IS THURSDAY.

INVALID

E. TODAY IS WEDNESDAY AND TODAY IS SUNNY
TOMORROW IS SUNNY.

F. ALL WHALES ARE FISH
ALL DOGS ARE FISH
ALL DOGS ARE WHALES.

G. SOME FISH ARE BIG
ALL SHARKS ARE FISH
SOME SHARKS ARE BIG

H. TODAY IS CLOUDY
THE MOON IS ROUND.

GROUP QUESTION: A DEFINITION OF VALID CONSEQUENCE SHOULD SHOW THE FACTOR WHICH ALL VALID ARGUMENTS HAVE IN COMMON AND WHICH ALL INVALID ARGUMENTS LACK. WHAT IS THAT FACTOR?

The following is a sample of a student index-card report:

> In examples E and H, one of the terms in the conclusion isn't mentioned in the premise. In examples F and G, one of the premises uses the word "some" and the word "all" (this does not work.) (F uses some, because some fish are whales and some fish are dogs.) Since "some" means that not all of the information is contained, each of the examples does not have all of the information needed to draw a valid conclusion. Therefore factor "f" is the "right" information.

The following is my report (in CAPS), given on overhead and in hard copy the next day:

> ALL FORMS OF VALID REASONING HAVE THIS CHARACTERISTIC: IF YOU ASSUME THAT THE PREMISES ARE TRUE, THEN THE CONCLUSION MUST ALSO BE TRUE. THIS CHARACTERISTIC IS MOST USEFUL IF WE HAVE A PRIOR CONVICTION IN THE TRUTH OF SOME PREMISES AND WISH TO JUSTIFY ANOTHER PROPOSITION BY SHOWING THAT IT FOLLOWS VALIDLY FROM THE PREMISES. SOMETIMES, HOWEVER, WE DO NOT START OFF KNOWING THAT CERTAIN PREMISES ARE TRUE. EVEN HERE KNOWING WHAT VALIDLY FOLLOWS FROM THE PREMISES IS USEFUL BECAUSE VALIDITY ALSO MEANS THAT THE PREMISES CANNOT BE TRUE WHILE THE CONCLUSION IS FALSE.

3. Methods of evaluation

One of the most important components of any teaching method is the method of evaluation. Establishing traditional evaluation procedures based on an assessment of individual performances as the exclusive method deprives students of the energy and support of the group in an activity which is of great importance but also generates much anxiety. The reduction of anxiety is one of the things for which group methods are most effective. On the other hand, employing group-based methods of evaluation exclusively deprives me of a reliable instrument to use in assigning fair individual grades and deprives students of a reliable and fair measure of their own individual success.

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The evaluation scheme I adopted eventually employed 3 kinds of evaluation: (1) evaluation of individual students by tests (40%), written assignments (15%), computer lab assignments (10%); (2) evaluation of groups by group answers to test questions (10%) and daily questions (20%); (3) end-of-term evaluation of individual students by group peers (5%).

Based on comments made on student evaluation forms and in conversation for the 93/94 course, it appears that free riders and non-attenders may have benefited too much from group test grades. I have eliminated this component from 94/95 offering of the course.

4. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the innovations

Data for evaluating the overall success of the course is derived from comparative grade performances, from comparative student evaluations and from a questionnaire distributed at the end of the most recent class.

4.1 Student evaluations

A precise comparison is difficult because the format for the student evaluation forms and the number of respondents was not constant over the period under consideration. The period comprises three classes offered in 92/93, 93/94, 94/95, the first of which did not incorporate the innovations in group teaching, the last two of which did. Looking just at central numerical measures of approval for the instructor and for the course, there has been little change over the period. Both measures were consistently in the 3-3.5 range on a standard scale for 1-5, measures which are somewhat lower than those I generally receive for other classes. The uniformity of these results is disappointing and somewhat surprising in view of anecdotal evidence (see below) that the group format was much appreciated.

One aspect of the course evaluation information that did show improvement was in the nature of the written comments provided by respondents. In the evaluations for all three classes, students who gave the course low numerical ratings were likely to express their dissatisfaction with negative written comments. However, while in the pre-innovation class, relatively few students giving the course a high numerical rating also took the time to express their satisfaction in written form, in the post innovation classes a significantly higher proportion of students did so. This suggests that, although the proportion of disgruntled students did not vary much from pre to post innovation classes, the level of enthusiasm among students who were satisfied with the course did rise.

4.2 Grade comparisons

A straightforward comparison of the final averages after the 92/93 class and after the 93/94 class shows significant improvement: the average for 92/93 was 59.7% (D), the median was C-; the average for 93/94 was 71.5% (B-), the median was B-. Although the grading methods changed from 92/93 to 9394 and were, in some respects, incomparable, the final tests were comparable and the same degree of improvements were observable in those results.

4.3 Course questionnaire

The course evaluation forms distributed to students in all three classes were on standard forms which did not measure student reaction to the group format. To obtain such reaction a questionnaire was distributed to the 94/95 class in addition to the standard course evaluation form distributed to all three classes. This questionnaire contained the fol lowing questions relevant to the conduct of the class:

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SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS

The editors of *AAPT News* invite you to send in materials for publication. Share your ideas about teaching in the Philosophy Teaching Exchange, a featured section of each issue. Write a report of a paper you have presented. Report on sessions you have attended at recent conferences. Send us your thoughts about what you have read in *AAPT News*. We want to hear from you.

Submission 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, 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, Internet **76170.2351@compuserve.com**; or Mark Lenssen, Internet **m-lenssen@onu.edu.**

Please call us at (419) 447-6442 (Tiffin University) or (419) 772-2197 (Ohio Northern University) for guidelines for submissions.—*The editors*

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A: QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LECTURES:

1. If there is one thing you especially liked about the lectures and suggest I keep, it is:.....
2. If there is one thing about the lectures that you especially dislike and suggest I change, it is:.....

B: QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROFESSOR'S OVERALL CONDUCT

1. If there is something that you especially like about my overall conduct and think I should keep, it is: .....
2. If there is something that you especially dislike about my overall conduct and suggest I change, it is:.....

C: QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GROUP FORMAT IN WHICH THE CLASS IS RUN:

1. If there is something that you especially like about the class format and think I should keep, it is:.....
2. If there is something that you especially dislike about the class format and suggest I change, it is:.....

These questions did not require answers to fall into any pre-arranged system of classification. However, it was possible to sort answers into a rough set of categories for both questions requesting a positive response (the first of the questions in each set) as well as those requesting a negative response (the second of the questions in each set.)

Positive Answers: Taking positive answers to all three sets as a single class, the highest proportion mentioned the existence of groups as a positive factor, the next highest proportion mentioned the hard copy handouts as a positive factor. Other answers were distributed over a variety of miscellaneous categories. Among those saying why they liked the groups, some said it was because of academic benefits, some said it was because of social and emotional benefits. The latter slightly outnumbered the former overall and seemed to be especially significant among the large number of first year students who took the class.

Negative Answers: Among negative answers most directly relevant to the group component of the class, the following categories, ranked in decreasing order attracted a significant number of responses:

(1) Too much group work was assigned
(2) The burden of completing group assignments was not evenly taken up by all members of the group

5. Conclusions

It is satisfying as a professor to observe that discussions among students during class time focus mainly on course subject matter rather than on the previous night's social activities. Unfortunately, hopes to produce a dramatic rise in numerical course evaluation results did not materialize. I would also note that although some students expressed appreciation for the large number of assignments each of which individually made only a small contribution to the overall grade (between 25-30 per student), the cost in time and effort to administer this feature of the course was very great and could not have been attempted without the help of two very dedicated teaching assistants, Paul McCulloch and Andrew Fenton. However, I expect that the chief benefits of group work could be achieved with somewhat fewer graded assignments resulting in much saving of administrative overhead.

Overall the experiment seems to have been successful, resulting in better levels of attendance, higher grades, happier students (at least among those reasonably satisfied with the course to begin with) and, I am gratified to report, a happier professor.

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* Based on a workshop presented at AAPT's 10th International Workshop/Conference on Teaching Philosophy, Marianopolis College, Montréal, August 1994.

Letter from the Executive Director

Nancy Slonneger
Transylvania University

The Editors of *AAPT News* have graciously offered me a space in each issue for a letter from the Executive Director. So, beginning with this issue, I will be using this space to increase communication between the home office of AAPT and its members. Look in this letter for information concerning memberships, new and continuing projects, election results, and other items of interest. I would also like to encourage everyone to send me their comments about, and suggestions for, AAPT projects and activities!

Membership Information

If you are wondering whether your membership will be expiring soon, I urge you to look at the expiration date for your membership on the address label of this newsletter. In an attempt to keep costs down, we will no longer be able to carry members past this expiration date. If you would like to continue receiving *AAPT News* uninterrupted, please be sure to send in your membership renewal at least one month in advance of its expiration.

11th International Workshop/Conference on Teaching Philosophy

Plans have been finalized for holding the 1996 AAPT Conference at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. The dates have been set for July 31-August 4, 1996. More information is included in this issue. Let's all thank David James for agreeing to be our local liaison—a formidable task!

Hoping you all have a successful semester. . .

New Projects — AAPT Enters the Internet Age!

I am very excited about two new projects that will greatly benefit our members. Bob Timko at Mansfield University has set up a World Wide Web homepage for AAPT and I have begun a Listserv discussion list called "AAPT-L." Both are designed to improve communication among our members on an on-going basis. While the biennial Workshop and Conference (coming up in late July 1996!) is a wonderful place to exchange ideas and information on teaching philosophy, having a forum for on-going discussion should prove invaluable. I hope that all of our members take advantage of both of these new services. Many thanks to Bob Timko for all of his work in setting up and maintaining the AAPT Homepage!

To access the AAPT Homepage, point your Web browser to:

http://www.mnsfld.edu/depts/philosop/aapt.html

To subscribe to AAPT-L, send an e-mail message to

listserv@ukcc.uky.edu

with a single line message:

subscribe AAPT-L yourfirstname yourlastname

SECOND CALL FOR WORKSHOP PROPOSALS

Second Call for Proposals for AAPT's
11th International Workshop/Conference
on Teaching Philosophy

- SHARE YOUR IDEAS AND TEACHING STRATEGIES!
- LEAD A WORKSHOP, PANEL DISCUSSION OR DEMONSTRATION!
- JOIN DEDICATED TEACHERS IN IMPROVING THE TEACHING OF PHILOSOPHY!

AAPT is dedicated to improving the teaching of philosophy at all levels, kindergarten-graduate school, and presentations on any aspect of teaching philosophy are welcomed. All sessions should be interactive.

Especially encouraged are sessions that will improve the teaching of philosophy for first-time and/or one-time-only philosophy students in the typical beginning college courses such as introductory philosophy, introductory ethics, logic and/or critical thinking, and the history of philosophy. Workshops on more specialized topics such as teaching political theory, aesthetics, philosophy in literature, feminism, non-western philosophies, applied ethics, existentialism, phenomenology, philosophy of science and philosophy of religion are also invited.

Of special interest are innovative and successful strategies for introducing cultural and gender issues in philosophy courses, teaching philosophy in nontraditional venues, linking philosophy with other disciplines, or using new technologies. Also of interest are workshops which will open discussion of teaching practices, both traditional ones such as paper assignments, examinations, grading, lecturing, and less traditional ones such as open syllabi, co-operative learning, class publishing, etc. Expanding on the Graduate Student Seminars of 1990 and 1994, AAPT seeks some sessions that will particularly benefit graduate students and first time teachers of philosophy. Perhaps people who were participants in the earlier graduate seminars would like to share their further experiences in teaching. We also hope to discuss issues related to the graduate training of philosophy teachers.

FIRST DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: JANUARY 1, 1996

SECOND DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: JANUARY 15, 1996

Proposals submitted by the 1st deadline date will be given preference in the schedule. Proposals submitted by the 2nd deadline date will be accepted as space permits.

Proposals should be prepared as follows:

4 copies of a 1-2 page cover sheet, separate from the proposal (two for review tracking, two for scheduling purposes, if accepted):

(1) your name, affiliation (if any), address, work and home phone numbers, email address, if you have one, and a summer phone number, if different from your other phone numbers

(2) title of proposed presentation

(3) preferred length of presentation (60, 90, or 120 minutes)

(4) style of presentation (workshop, panel, discussion, poster, etc.)

(5) list of any special equipment you will need (overhead projector, VCR and monitor,computer, etc.) or any special room set-up.

(6) a one-paragraph abstract (100-300 words) to be used to describe your presentation, if accepted, in the conference program.

3 copies of a 3-5 page proposal (2 for blind reviewing, one for the master file)

(1) the title of your presentation, but without your name

(2) a summary of your presentation: its content, its method(s),and its goal(s)

(3) a list of handouts and materials you plan to provide

Complete proposals should be sent to:

Nancy Slonneger, Executive Director
AAPT
Transylvania University
300 North Broadway
Lexington, KY 40508

Please share this call for proposals with colleagues!

AAPT IWCTP Conference. . .

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The following airlines fly into Norfolk International Airport: American, Continental, Delta, Midway Connections, Northwest, TWA, United, and USAir. The airport is about fifteen minutes from ODU and the taxi ride to the campus is about $15-18. There is also an airport shuttle which is most economical if four people share the ride.

Norfolk is likely to be hot and muggy in the summer. But do not let that deter you from joining us. Our conference rooms and dorm rooms will all be air-conditioned (we checked on that!) and we will plan outdoor activities for the cooler hours.

People to Contact:

Workshop Proposals, AAPT Membership,
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CALL FOR BOOK REVIEWS!

Although many journals have sections dedicated to reviewing new books in philosophy, rarely (if ever!) is there an opportunity to discuss how well those books actually work in the classroom, or how a certain software program (or movie, video, game, novel, etc.) can be used in the classroom to deepen understanding and enhance discussion of philosophical issues. So, here's the chance! Whether you have been using a text (film, etc.) for years or have only experimented with it for one semester, we are interested in whether you would recommend it and why. General guidelines we have for submissions to the new review section are the following:

- materials reviewed must have actually been used by you in the classroom; and reviews should include:
  - a description of the use you made of the materials
  - a discussion of student responses to the materials
  - a summary of the results
  - reviews should be 500 to 1000 words long.*

That's it! Please send submissions to

Nancy Slonneger, Book Review Editor
AAPT
Transylvania University
300 N. Broadway
Lexington, KY 40508

Internet: **aapt@music.transy.edu**

*If you are interested in commenting on what you have found to be useful in the classroom, but do not wish to write a full-length (i.e., 500-1000 word) review, you might consider writing a summary for "The Bulletin Board" in this newsletter.

"Out of the Mouths of Babes" or "Quotable Quotes"

Being Director of the QQs Center is not always as glamorous as you might think. First of all, you have your Good Editors of this Newsletter constantly begging you to actually do your job. Then you have your research staff to deal with to make sure they come up with the right answers to deep and meaningful questions that plague everybody whether they know it or not. In addition, you have to contend with Dr. Reality who on occasions makes a statement such as,

> "There are several conditions that have to be met when considering something to be real, and those conditions are based mainly on how you feel and whether an evil genius is playing with your mind and the world."

As if we don't have enough problems of our own without also having to consider conditions for reality, not to mention a genius, evil or otherwise, playing with all sorts of things. Even some of Dr. Reality's really insightful comments like the following do not always sufficiently compensate us for what we must endure:

> "If truth is an accurate and sincere description of reality then one might say that knowledge of something is being able to deliver an accurate and sincere description of that something;"

and

> "Knowledge must be justified. That is that knowledge must be proven blameless and reasonable."

Now don't get us wrong. It's not that we're an *ingrate* when it comes to Dr. Reality sharing such profundities; we just don't want to be railroaded into delivering anything that has to do with accuracy or sincerity, and we see no reason to get bogged down with trying to prove whether or not knowledge is reasonable and whether it should be blamed for something.

That's not the end of our tribulations; you also have your Society to deal with as well as The Majority:

> "The majority of society does not and has never accepted crime in any fashion. This lack of acceptance has not slowed the crime rate."

This is a fine example of just how stupid The Majority is. The obvious solution is simply to *accept* crime and *that* might slow the crime rate. Stupidity really makes us crazy.

Then you have your Skeptics who feel compelled to do battle with Society over knowledge and concrete evidence:

> "Society is skeptical about many issues but there is always one side of the issue that society as a whole believes to be true. This side of the issue is considered knowledge because most of society believes it to be true. When most of society believes something to be true, there is, in most cases, concrete evidence to support the issue. Although society believes this, there will still be skeptics. When the skeptics also have facts based on concrete evidence, the knowledge is no longer plausible."

Which goes to show that your Skeptics are just as stupid as your Society because they actually believe that they can have FACTS BASED ON CONCRETE EVIDENCE. How silly. It doesn't take an intellectual giant to see the truth in what one of our staffers said:

> "Reality can best be determined on an individual basis. This is why there are so many conflicting views from philosophers. An important thing to remember when studying this topic is that all these views are crucial in the process of developing a personal belief as to what is actually real. Because one must determine for himself/herself what is real, I think it is important that people should not pass judgment on what others claim to be real. Finally, I want to stress something I feel very strongly about regarding all this. To me, too much time is wasted on trying to analyze and explain the reality of things when your senses should be enough to tell you if something is real or not. If people would just trust their own instincts, they could have more time to spend on more pressing matters such as creating world peace or eliminating the hunger problem that now exists. This is not to say that one's senses are always correct, but for the most part, 'gut-instincts' are the best way to go."

In other words, facts are not based on concrete evidence at all but rather the extent to which your gut has instincts; and that is a result of determining

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reality in the best way—on an individual basis. This is one of the truest ideas we've seen in a long time. So you see, there are some rewards to our job here.

Speaking of Reality, as you can tell, it is a topic that is quite popular around the QQs Center. Its popularity no doubt is a result of it being such a complicated topic:

> "Determining reality is much more complicated that determining if something is real or not."

So let's now focus on the question of what is real because it has a concrete effect:

> "The question of what is real and what exists causes you to make a definitive stand."

Naturally this leads to the question of how to prove if something exists, which is no easy task:

> "When you want to prove or disprove the existence of something you have to use evidence, but which evidence you choose to use is sometimes a hard decision."

This problem is further complicated because

> "There are more scientific theories than you could shake a stick at and they all supposedly have some evidence to back them up."

So just what is a person to DO??? Well,

> ". . . if a person just stays with what he knows (humanistic-point-of-view) then practical decisions can be reached. Even if they are wrong, there is still some security in feeling as though the answers have been obtained. This helps in allowing clear thinking of other, perhaps more important, issues by not clogging someone's mind with questions that can never be without a doubt answered."

Making practical decisions, feeling secure, and getting one's mind unclogged are some of the things we try to promote here at the QQs center. We also try to give a personal touch to existence. As one of our researchers put it,

> "I believe for something to exist that it all depends on what kind of person you are; are you an optimist or a realist?"

Naturally if you're an optimist, you will cause only good things to exist, whereas if you're a realist the stuff you will cause to exist will be pretty much like it already is.

Here we should emphasize the value of knowledge:

> "Knowledge will stay with the mind forever and will take people far if they have the facts to help back it up."

We aren't sure just HOW far it will take people —can it take them as far as Australia, for instance, or Japan, or even the moon? Maybe Knowledge should be a tour guide.

Now for another reason why knowing is important:

> "Knowing real truths will answer questions from who you really are inside to what today is."

Now if THAT doesn't prove knowing is important, then skunks don't stink, the Pope is an atheist, and the QQs Center should be annihilated.

Speaking of being annihilated,

> "If the universe is totally annihilated, meaning everything is gone and that there is no trace of anything, then life would be absurd because there is no life and if there was life where would it be?"

Beats the pants off *us* where life would be if it were absurd, being as how there wouldn't *be* any life in order to be absurd. Having access to profundities like this is a real perk.

Whether you are going to be an optimist or a realist or maybe a little or a lot of both, you must remember that

> "Life is the only thing that we have to enjoy and we must make the most of this experience and make it all that we can."

Now that's an upbeat thought if there ever was one. So despite our initial grumbling about being Director of the QQs Center, we really are trying to make it all that we can. Besides, as one of our staff members reminded us,

> "If we sit around on our rear ends and don't accomplish or try to do anything beneficial, then the world destroys itself. But if we live as if we will live forever (or the world will last forever), then at least we have the satisfaction of knowing we tried."

And far be it from *us* to contribute to the world's self-destruction. Which is why we have decided to live exactly as was just suggested and if we do die we will take consolation in the knowledge that we tried to live as if we were immortal. If all you philosophy teachers out there would do the same, and spread the word to your students and all the head honchos who try to make your life miserable by constantly bossing you around, why, by golly, the world might not destroy itself.

On the other hand, just sitting around on our rear ends might not be such a bad idea either.

Mary Ann Carroll, Most Fortunate Director of the QQs Center where Dispensing Truth, Reality and Knowledge is Our Business, located at Appalachian State University (Boone, North Carolina) where Determining Reality is a Way of Life.

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Calendar of Events

December 27-30, 1995 - American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Eastern Div., New York Marriott Marquis, New York, NY.

April 3-6, 1996 - American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Pacific Div., Westin Hotel, Seattle.

April 3-6, 1996 - Assoc. for Philos. of Education (with APA). Theme: Technology and Education. Papers due Dec. 15, 1995. Send 5 copies to Prof. Joel Rudinow, Philos., Sonoma State Univ., 1801 E. Cotati Ave., Rohnert Park, CA 94928.

April 24-27, 1996 - American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Central Div., Palmer House, Chicago. Papers due Sept. 1, 1995, to Linda Smallbrook, APA, Univ. of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716.

April 24, 25 1996 - Teaching Philosophy Workshops, with APA. Jointly sponsored by the APA and AAPT. See "From the President," p. 2 of this issue, for more details.

July 31-August 4, 1996 - 11th International Workshop/Conference on Teaching Philosophy, Old Dominion University. Sponsored by AAPT. See inside this issue for more details.

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

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