



AAPT News

The Newsletter of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers

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SPRING 1998

CONFERENCE UPDATE

12th International Workshop/Conference on Teaching Philosophy Mansfield University of Pennsylvania • July 30–August 3, 1998

Current Proposals

All submitted proposals have been read and evaluated. As soon as Presenters have been contacted, a list of workshops grouped by category will be published.

Plenary Sessions

The following Plenary sessions have been planned:

1. The Presidential Address—James Campbell
2. Rosemarie Tong—Topic: TBA
3. “Degrees of Shame”—A film about the plight of associate and untenured faculty, followed by a discussion.

Meet the Authors

This is a new feature for this conference. At this time we have two such sessions planned—one with Brooke Noel Moore and one with Louis Pojman.

Day Care

Debbie’s Licensed Day Care Service of Mansfield will make available on a first-come, first-serve basis, openings for children from 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., beginning Friday, July 31, 1998 through Monday, August 3, 1998. Debbie’s Day Care will provide breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack for \$20/day/child. Evening Care will be available in the dorms at a cost of \$2.50/hour when scheduled.

Recreation Passes

Recreation passes will be available at \$10/person or \$20/family for July 30–August 3, 1998.

Recreational equipment will be provided by Mansfield University. Participants may reserve racquetball areas or basketball courts. There is a weight and exercise room, aerobics room, volleyball setup, basketball and racquetball available. The swimming pool facilities will be available if there is sufficient demand.

Meal Passes

The conference meal package will cost \$57.75/person (we are working on reducing this by \$5) for 12 cafeteria and catered meals. The package includes Breakfast on July 30 and August 3, Continental Breakfast on August 1 and 2, Brunch on August 1 and 2, Dinner on July 30, 31 and August 1, and our traditional Cookout and Ice Cream Social on August 2. Individuals meals

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

GOALS

Much of what is going on in our contemporary academic world, like much of what is going on outside of it, makes it worse than it was before. The monetarization of thinking throughout the campus, from "strategic planning" at the top to defensive measures at the department level, inclines our discussions and actions away from our educational mission. The temporalization of employment in academia makes the job market unattractive to young teachers, the work climate worse for all faculty, and the educational experience less continuous for students. The devaluation of humanities in the face of technical and career interests makes the job of the philosophy teacher more difficult.

I list these troubles not to introduce some lament about our sorry state, for we all know other individuals whose situations outside of academia are far worse than ours. I list them, rather, as a reminder of how much is being lost in our current misguided pursuit of "efficiency." On campuses increasingly driven to produce reports and other documentation as evidence of what is being done, our time-consuming attempts to advance the life of the mind are almost out of place. When faculty members are being asked to help "retain" students and to "process" them more directly to graduation, we are being asked to focus upon the *tail* of what we should be about, not the *dog*. Is it any wonder that in this climate our students tend to forget that they once wanted an education and slip too easily into the pursuit of a diploma?

As teachers, we know that we are responsible for only a small part of what goes on in our students' complex lives. We are not even responsible for most of what goes on in their campus lives. But part of the time we are responsible; and we realize that we occasionally fail to do what we should. We may come into class unprepared, or fail to connect up our presentations, or return graded papers with inadequate comments. These sins of commission are real; but, usually there is a good reason why they occur, and I suspect they are infrequent.

It does seem, however, that we could think more about our sins of omission. That is, we could always do more to try to make our students' education more enriching. We could work harder to help our students remember why they are on campus. One model that we might consider is offered by John Dewey in a discussion of what he calls "*an experience*." Dewey is advocating an aesthetic consideration of living in which we hold out as a goal that the various aspects of our doings and undergoings should hang together. The resultant product—a compelling work of art, a well-played game, a successful discussion, a well-written term paper—makes sense as a finished whole. In each of these instances, the parts display an internal unity, and the end of the productive process is experienced as "a consummation and not a cessation." There is summation and there is growth. "Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency."¹ These are the sorts of

notions that are being lost in our current academic climate; I suspect that our students—the usual losers in the current battles to make education more efficient—are getting fewer and fewer experiences of the special sort to which Dewey is pointing.

This aesthetic standard may be too high a standard to use when evaluating everyday classroom experiences. Maybe. But, even if it is, this standard can still function as a goal. It may be unlikely that a group-project, for example, will hang together for all of the members of the team and provide them with an educational experience in which all of their contributions are taken up and shaped into a creative whole from which all learn; but such an educational experience can still be the goal that we have in mind when we devise such a project. To consider another example, it may be unlikely that all of our students in an introductory class will come away with a firm grasp on why mind is such a fascinating philosophical issue or why abortion is problematic. Maybe. Similarly, it may be unlikely that the majority of our students in an advanced class will come away with a thorough understanding of Kant or Royce or Heidegger. Maybe. But this is no reason not to try to bring these results about. We can count our victories in the moments and classes, and occasionally even courses, where what we do helps our students to have *an experience*.

In our current academic climate, good philosophy teaching can contribute to students' well-being especially by raising their

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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.

APA PACIFIC DIVISION ANNUAL MEETING

Sessions Related to the Teaching of Philosophy

Wednesday, March 25, 1998—7:00 p.m.

LOS CERRITOS

APA Committee on Pre-College Instruction in Philosophy and The American Association of Philosophy Teachers

Title: Philosophy Through the Ages

Chair: Betsy Decyk, CSU-Long Beach

Speakers: Laurie Shrage, California State Polytechnic University-Pomona: "Philosophy Through Children's Literature"; Jenifer Faust, CSU-Los Angeles: "Cal State L.A. Outreach Program"

Contributors: Mario Calderon, CSU-Los Angeles; Bob Jones, CSU-Los Angeles; Holly Parker, CSU-Los Angeles.

Thursday, March 26—Session II-F, 1:00 p.m.

SANTA ANITA B

Symposium: The Future of Tenure (special session sponsored by the APA Committee for the Defense of the Professional Rights of Philosophers and the Society for Philosophy and Public Affairs)

Chair: Leslie Francis, University of Utah

Speakers: Jeffrie Murphy, Arizona State University; Daniel Farrell, Ohio State University; Mary Gibson, Rutgers-New Brunswick; Nancy Holmstrom, Rutgers-Newark; James Ross, University of Pennsylvania; Wade Savage, University of Minnesota

Thursday, March 26—Session III-N, 4:00 p.m.

LOS FELIZ

Symposium: Teaching Non-Philosophy Faculty to Teach Ethics (special session sponsored by the APA Committee on Teaching)

Chair: Lilly-Marlene Russow, Purdue University

Panelists: Gary Comstock, Iowa State University; Rachelle Hollander, National Science Foundation; Peter Vallentyne, Virginia Commonwealth University

Friday, March 27—Session IV-F, 9:00 a.m.

DOES THE INTERNET CHANGE PHILOSOPHY EDUCATION FOR THE BETTER OR THE WORSE?

Sponsor: APA Committee on Philosophy and Computing

Friday, March 27—Session V-E, 1:00 p.m.

CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN IN THE CLASSROOM

Sponsor: APA Committee on the Status of Women

Friday, March 27—Session VI-U, 4:00 p.m.

INTERNATIONALIZING THE PHILOSOPHY CURRICULUM

Sponsor: APA Committee on International Cooperation

Saturday, March 28—Session IX-N, 4:00 p.m.

PALOS VERDE

Symposium: Beyond Teaching and Research: The Philosopher's Role in College and Community Service (special session sponsored by the APA Committee on Teaching Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges)

Speakers: Dick Burton, Seattle Central Community College; Dasiea Cavers-Huff, Riverside Community College; Louisa Moon, Mira Costa Community College

Call for Papers

The Journal of Teaching Academic Survival Skills invites submissions for its first issue. *Journal TASS* is dedicated to publishing articles and book reviews focusing on at-risk college students across the disciplines. We seek studies that explore instructional strategies, classroom materials, technological innovations, promising practices, student services, program development, and other related topics that assist educators, administrators, student support personnel, and practitioners who work with at-risk college students.

We are interested in articles (12 to 15 pages) and reviews (1,000 words). Please submit three copies of your work, with a self-addressed envelope and return postage, to:

Andrew Stubbs, Editor

The Journal of Teaching Academic Survival Skills
Department of English—University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan Canada S4S 0A2

Author's name, address, and institutional affiliation should appear on a separate title page only to facilitate blind review by outside readers (APA format requested). We will provide immediate acknowledgment of receipt of your work and report to you on its status within eight weeks. Questions may be addressed to: Andrew Stubbs, Editor; phone: (306) 585-4316; fax: (306) 585-4827; e-mail: andrew.stubbs@uregina.ca

Deadline for submissions for 1998 issue: April 17, 1998.

Journal TASS, Volume 1, will be approximately 120 pages. It will be available at the Ninth Annual TASS Conference, which will be held June 11-13, 1998, at Northern Essex Community College, Haverhill, Massachusetts.

PHILOSOPHY TEACHING EXCHANGE

A regular feature of AAPT News sharing course materials and classroom experiences

Replies to the editors or the author are welcome

HOW TO INCREASE ERROR PRODUCTION

David Fielding

Dawson College

Preamble: We may distinguish between two very different approaches to philosophy and the teaching of philosophy:

In the first, the standard or “academic” approach, philosophy is a discipline which aims to raise us above the errors and absurdities of everyday life to a realm of clearer and finer thinking. The great figures of western philosophy offer us models of sound thinking, or if not always completely sound, always superior to the uninstructed. Standard philosophy programs assume students have little to learn from anyone lacking a rigorous training in the field.

In the second, the “folk philosophy” approach, investigated here, the focus is on the ordinary insights of everyday life as expressed in casual conversations.

In caricature: academic philosophy teaches students to distrust and disdain ordinary talk. It leads us out of the everyday world into a world of discourse that only other philosophy graduates have passports to. “Folk Philosophy” on the contrary listens to the chitchat of the everyday world, and gets not further.

Most philosophy teaching operates in the first mode. Even “ordinary language philosophy” is taught in the context of the history of (western) philosophy. So in an academic setting such as this the “folk” mode can’t expect a very warm reception. But it’s not hard to see why Wittgenstein discouraged people from studying academic philosophy. In terms of our own personal identity and place in the world, where does it leave us?

* * *

My introductory philosophy course is a one-semester, roughly pre-university or first year university level, course called “The Philosophy of Communication.” Some two or three dozen students, mostly in their late teens, some in their twenties, usually sign up for the class. Half of these may drop out by midterm. We meet twice a week for a total of 45 hours. Sometimes we proceed as follows:

I first ask the students to choose a set of questions from a large pool of interrelated topics, and to think about them. Then, whereas most courses without more ado get straight to the standard theories, the theories of the famous philosophers; to the ideas of brilliant people, “great minds” who have given the matter a lot of thought—I ask my students to find exactly the opposite

kind of people—ordinary people who know nothing about the subject, or more exactly who have had no formal education in it. The students then try to find out what such people think about those same questions by talking with them, or “interviewing” them. I ask them to tape-record the exchanges.

I then ask them to do some reading on one of those same topics, though still not of anything that would normally be called philosophy, and to write about what they have read. Apart from an introductory text (Jay Ingram’s popular science best-seller *Talk, Talk, Talk*) the reading consists of six articles from *Scientific American* all having something to do with language. The students’ analysis of their chosen article includes an overview, a definition of key terms, a paraphrase of a short passage, and a reconstruction of a diagram, chart, table or map. I ask them to keep their personal opinion, if they have one, for the very beginning or the very end, or both, but in any case to keep it separate from the exposition.

Finally I ask them to transcribe their conversations, examine them, and to see if they can match or contrast any of the ideas they find there with the ideas they have found in the readings. The final product is an essay which they are encouraged to present orally to the class. In what follows we will look at a few examples of transcriptions of those conversations and see what we think can be made of them.

Some of those readings from *Scientific American* which I ask my students to read are, in my opinion, fundamentally flawed. Furthermore, and you may think that this is the last straw, I try to avoid telling them where I think the errors lie. I keep hoping that they will discover the mistakes for themselves. Generally speaking, by the way, they don’t.

I just said that you may think that was the last straw. It wasn’t. *This* is the last straw: Sometimes I do try to tell my students where the errors lie. And when I do most of them don’t believe me. The result is that, at the end of the semester, I leave them with what I believe to be some profoundly mistaken ideas about some of the fundamental notions which are examined in the course. For example here are two propositions which seem to me clearly mistaken:

1. Apes can be taught to produce compound sentences, not vocally but in other ways, and thus show they can master the

rudiments of human language and logic (David and Ann Premack, "Teaching Language to an Ape," October 1972).

2. The grammatical structure of Creole languages, which is the same all around the world in all forms of Creole, uniquely reflects our language bioprogram or "language organ" (Derek Bickerton, "Creole Languages," July 1983).

Bickerton and the Premacks seem to me mistaken on these points. I try to avoid telling my students this, but sometimes it slips out. When it does I find that many of them don't agree with me anyway. Why should they? I'm not an expert in these fields, Bickerton and the Premacks are.

I'll just mention two more of those six *Scientific American* articles which constitute the required reading for the course. These two seem to me to be models of good sense, in contrast to the two I just mentioned: "The Specializations of the Human Brain" (September 1979), by Norman Geschwind, maps the brain in an attempt to locate areas for memory, facial recognition and various aspects of language. "Animal Communication" (September 1972), by the founder of 'sociobiology', Edward Wilson, examines some remarkably sophisticated examples of mammal, bird and insect communication looking for possible links with the origins of human language.

So as I said before, the main idea here is to look at some student work on one of these topics. I've chosen Bickerton's theory of Creole. To get a sense of what this theory is about let's engage in a little *gedanken experiment*—"thought experiment." We all know some of the famous ones: Einstein wondered what it would be like to be traveling at the front of a beam of light, or again, moving through space in a glass elevator, and Plato tried to imagine the mind of a slave who had spent his entire life underground, chained up in a mine. Here is another thought experiment, this one first dreamed up, or at least elaborated, if I remember correctly, by one of my students.

Imagine a scenario rather like that of the *Lord of the Flies*—a bunch of kids stranded on a desert island—except that these are younger children, little toddlers who haven't yet learned to talk. Imagine them somehow surviving on that island without the help of any adults. Impossible? Don't forget that this is only a thought experiment. So if you can permit yourself to imagine such a situation the questions are:

1. Would these kids communicate? Would these insulated toddlers, given enough time to develop a communication system among themselves, without help from adults?
2. If so, would this system be anything like a true language? Would it include a grammar? Or would it remain closer to the level of animal communication, just a set of discrete signs (not a fully syntactic system like, for example, ASL—American Sign Language)?
3. If it resembled our language at all, at what level of grammatical sophistication? Would it, given as much time as you like, match a two-, three- or four- or a ten-year-old's speech, or a fully adult level, or what?

4. Suppose there were two such sets of young children on two such islands and two languages developed. Given that the vocabularies of these new languages were quite different, would the grammatical structures be quite different too? Or would there be any similarities?

There are probably many ways of grouping people's responses to these questions, possibly an infinite number of ways. I'll set out one possible way, one spectrum so to speak, of philosophical perspectives. At one end of the spectrum we can imagine a kind of God-given or Platonic notion of Innate Ideas, or in this case, to be more exact, of *Innate Grammatical Structures, in the mind from birth*. A modern Platonist, or a 'generative grammarian' like Noam Chomsky, might say that we are born with a 'bioprogram' for language. So at one extreme we have what we can call Mentalism, Innatism, or Platonism.

At the opposite extreme there is empiricism or behaviorism, the notion that, in its medieval formulation, there is *nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses*. For many people this approach is identical with common sense. On this view all human beings acquire grammatical structures from their experience, their environment, their training and in any case from outside themselves. Behaviorists like B. F. Skinner thought of—think of—language acquisition as the result of (mostly informal) "conditioning."

Now we can look at some examples of student conversations on this same topic. The transcription of these conversations along with their analysis constitutes the final part of one of their final "term project."

The first part of these final term projects, or essays, included a summary of one of those six articles, definitions of some key terms, a paraphrase of a key passage and so on. The second part is essentially the transcriptions of the conversations, or part of them. With the help of these transcriptions the students compare, in the third and final part of their projects, a specialist

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Submissions to AAPT News

Submissions on disk or as e-mail binary attachments are *much* appreciated. Most major PC word processor file formats are fine although formatting is best preserved in Microsoft Word for Windows 6.0, Microsoft Word for Macintosh 6.0, and WordPerfect 5.1. We prefer MS-DOS, but both DOS and Macintosh diskette formats can be read. If you submit a file on a Mac diskette, be sure to save your file in text (ASCII) format just in case we can't read your word processor's file format (e.g., MacWrite II). Please include a paper copy of your submission.

Files may be sent as e-mail from virtually any e-mail system to dclose@compuserve.com, or by FAX to 419-447-9605. If you need help, call us at 800-968-6446 ext. 3440 (Tiffin University) or 419-772-2197 (Ohio Northern University)—The editors

How To Increase Error Production

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(*Scientific American*) and a nonspecialist point of view. This is why I ask students to choose someone to talk to who has no academic training in the topic.

Some students, usually very few, have difficulty grasping the idea that they should talk to somebody with no knowledge of the subject. I remember one project written a couple of years ago which included an interview with a graduate student in the field in question. And sure enough this person showed no genuine grasp of the issues but apparently felt compelled to pontificate . . .

Conversely in another project a young man interviewed his mother, a somewhat self-effacing and apologetic person. In spite of what might be called her "attitude problem" (with respect to herself) her responses to the questions seemed to me highly intelligent and in any case strikingly similar to some of the points made in the *Scientific American* article her son had chosen for comparison. The sad part of the story is that the son was so convinced of his mother's ignorance and inadequacy he failed to see the points of similarity. Worse, he tried to correct what he thought were his mother's mistakes and in so doing showed his thorough misunderstanding of some key elements of the article.

These two cases may be seen as the Scylla and Charybdis of the method I'm proposing. No method is foolproof.

What follows are the conversations from two projects, one done by a woman and one by a man. Here are the two examples, in outline:

1. David chose his mother, Audrey, to talk to. She turns out to be a teacher—but not to worry, she is an entirely unpretentious person and reveals no special knowledge of the subject.
2. Stephanie, who considers herself an atheist, chose to talk to her father, Bob, a lawyer with strong religious commitments.

1. David and his mother, Audrey

Here is David talking to his mother Audrey, the supply teacher.

David has asked his mother to *imagine a group of people stranded on a desert island; each individual in the group is from a cultural background with a language unique to itself. No one can speak to or be understood by anyone else and they have no connection with the outside world.*

David has his own way of setting up the thought experiment—his version is closer to the historical conditions, as described by Bickerton, which gave rise to Creole languages than the one we have discussed (David may not have fully distinguished the hypothetical from the historical). So stranded on his desert island instead of toddlers, David has adults all speaking different languages.

D[avid]: How would they communicate?

A[udrey]: How would they communicate?

D: Yes, would they use sign language; draw pictures in the sand . . . ?

A: Well, they would talk I guess!

D: They would talk.

A: Yes . . . you can only say so much with pictures.

D: O.K. . . . but what would they speak?

A: They would probably all speak the same language. . . .

D: But what would that language be?

A: They would invent one I guess?

D: How?

A: They would decide on what the . . . it should be . . . how it should sound.

D: What would it sound like?

A: It would sound like a mixture of all the languages, I guess.

D: So they would use words from all the languages on the island?

A: Yes!

D: Would it be a complex language?

A: Probably not.

D: Why?

A: Well it would be hard for it to be complex; it would probably be just a few dozen simple words.

D: Could it ever become more complex than that?

A: After a while maybe.

D: But it would become their official language, right?

A: Yes.

D: Well would their children learn it?

A: Yes.

D: If a similar situation occurred on another desert island, could our island's new official language be the same as the other island's official language?

A: No!

D: Why?

A: Because they would certainly use different words . . . it couldn't be the same.

Call for Proposals

The APA Committee on Teaching Philosophy is soliciting proposals for sessions on any aspect of teaching Philosophy to be presented at the 1998 Eastern and 1999 Pacific division meetings. Full proposals or just ideas are welcome. Contact Rosalind Ladd, Wheaton College, Norton, MA 02766 or rladd@wheatonma.edu.

D: O.K., do you think that animals could somehow communicate with people?

A: Maybe.

D: I mean communicate through language. Could they?

A: Probably not.

D: What is it that makes humans able to communicate and not animals?

A: Intelligence, I guess.

D: Is that all?

Maybe not, but that's all David transcribed for us.

The speech these island people invent to communicate, Audrey suggests, "would probably be just a few dozen simple words," in other words *pidgin*. Or, more exactly, this is how she suggests it would get started. Her approach to the problem looks at first like a simple case of empiricism "After a while" she says the children's speech might become "more complex." But, no, not necessarily empiricism: "They would probably all speak the same language" she says at first. Does she mean they would all *invent* the same language?

David asks her whether "if a similar situation occurred on another desert island" could the languages be the same? It's easy to see why he wants to know. If the answer is yes, he will conclude that his mother believes in some kind of language organ and a universal grammar. This time round, however, Audrey seems to be quite sure that the languages could not be the same.

However, notice that the reason Audrey gives is that the islanders "would certainly use different words." But we already know that Creoles around the world use different *words*. That's not the significant question. The significant question is whether these two islands would develop the same or similar *grammatical structures*. Unfortunately, instead of probing further and generating a genuinely philosophical discussion, David changes the subject—*Could animals communicate with people?* he asks. Although this topic, given the scope of the course, is not as irrelevant as it might seem at first sight, it is a bit of a cop-out, judging from the transcription David has given us.

But what do you think? Was the exercise worth it? Is David making any progress in, or towards, philosophy? Are there any signs here that he has grasped the sense of what the argument is all about? Is there anything philosophical about his conversation?

2. Stephanie and her father, Bob

Stephanie did not contribute as much as I would have liked to our class discussions. When she did speak it was usually to help out one of her less confident or articulate classmates. But actually just about everybody is less confident and articulate than Stephanie, as we discovered when she presented this final term project to the class at the end of the semester. I say all this because otherwise you might run away with the idea that Stephanie is some brash hyper-rational teenager bullying her middle-aged, probably overworked and evidently conscientious Christian

father, Bob. If you had been there for her class presentation you could not have felt that.

What she found was that Bob had great difficulty in giving a spontaneous reply to some of her questions. Did he feel he was being put on the spot, or was he simply aware of the generation gap, or of the difficulty of making a simple old-fashioned church-going Christian moral position sound credible to an adolescent atheist at the end of the 20th Century? Stephanie recorded the conversation and, among other things, carefully timed the delays in her father's replies.

It will be clear at once that we are here witnessing the confrontation of not just two generations but of two modes of thought, the scientific (Stephanie) and the religious (Bob). When Bob sees language as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the human we are reminded of the central thesis of Chomsky's *Cartesian Linguistics*—unlike the cries of animals, human speech is characteristically stimulus-free and unpredictable:

S[tephanie]: So, maybe coming back a bit to before, um, when a child is learning how to speak, ah now, you said before that you didn't think a child would learn to speak if they were in total isolation, right? But say the child is learning to speak, and the child has lots of examples of the language it's learning, you know, hears adults speaking around him all the time, um, how important do you think then, given that he hears language all the time, is it that um, he's corrected by the adults, and that the adults purposefully try to teach the kids how to say things properly. How do you think, how important do you think that is in the kid learning how to speak properly in the long run?

Lapse of 12 seconds

B[ob]: I think it's ah, quite important. I don't know if the child would learn to speak properly if he was never corrected, I guess it depends on the child; some children mimic more than others do. So, but certainly I would say that correction is very important for learning.

3 seconds

S: O.K., um, so, it's a very interesting thing that, it seems that every group of humans on earth, even humans who have lived in complete isolation from other humans for thousands of years, say on an island or something, that they all make use of a spoken language, as opposed to animals, who maybe use noises and signals but who haven't developed this kind of language. Um, what do you think is responsible for that, do you think there's something special about humans that makes them seem to instinctively develop language?

1.5 seconds

B: Yes, I do, I do, I think that, oh, it's because humans are made in the image of god and other living things in creation, are not. That's probably the, the, the most obvious reason for that difference, between humans and all other forms of life, other forms of creation; that other forms, ah, we often talk

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How To Increase Error Production

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about what makes, what makes, ah, humans human, well one of the things that makes them human is this ability to communicate through language. That's one of the distinctions of a human being.

1 second

S: So, when you think of God, do you think of someone or something that speaks?

B: Indeed yes (no pause)

S: Yeah?

B: Indeed, I do, that's one of God's attributes. In fact, ah, Jesus Christ is called the Word for that very reason, that he was the supreme um, way in which God communicated to humanity. So, certainly it is one of God's ah, chief characteristics, that ah, is a God of communication.

1 second

S: What about specifically in our brains, on more on just a physical level, in specific individuals? Do you think there's something special about the human brain, that allows language?

2 seconds

B: As compared to?

S: As compared to say, a dog.

B: Yes indeed, I think there is.

1 second

S: How would you imagine that works, is there a special part in the brain. . . .

2.5 seconds

B: I think so, I'm no neurosurgeon, or ah, neurologist, but ah, I believe there is, yes, from what I'm told.

4 seconds

S: O.K., um O.K., so, have you ev. . . . So, kids learn how to speak through the example of their parents, would you agree with that? Through mimicking?

B: Umm, largely, yes.

S: Largely. Uh, um—why do you say largely?

1 second

B: Well. I think they learn from their mentors, from those around them.

S: Oh, O.K.

B: They may not be their parents.

(overlapping and continuous)

S: They may not be their parents (whispered).

B: But ah, their ah, you know, from parents or from substitute parents, they learn.

0.5 seconds

S: Kay, so do you think that they learn vocabulary, like the parent says, points to the uh, baby and says "baby," do you think that they learn vocabulary from their parents as well as the grammatical structure?

3 seconds

B: Yes.

S: The grammatical structure is taught to the children, you don't think it's something that—

B: Well, I think that it's absorbed, I think it's learned, it may not be specifically taught, I don't, in fact I think in most cases it is not taught, I don't think parents sit down with a two-year-old, and teach them the rules of grammar. I think two-year-olds pick up the rules of grammar gradually, simply by mimicking and by being corrected perhaps.

Stephanie concluded that when her father could sense a clear answer to a question in terms of his religious beliefs his replies would come easily and rapidly. Bob believes *God speaks to man; God is a communicator using language—Jesus Christ is called the Word for that very reason* he says. *Man is made in the image of God; man is not like the animals.* When it is a question of standard Christian doctrine like this Bob had no problems, and there is no delay in his response: 1 second, 0 seconds, Stephanie notes.

Bob's perspective here is innatist. God and man can communicate because man is created in God's image. This is man's nature.

But when Stephanie asked her father to relate all this to the structure of the brain, e.g., does speech have ". . . a special part in the brain?" he slowed down: 2.5 seconds. His answer was: "I think so, I'm no neurosurgeon, or ah, neurologist, but ah, I believe there is. . . ."

Though Bob believes God speaks to us he does not necessarily think our grammatical structures are God-given or inborn. So to Stephanie's question "*how important is it that he [the child] is corrected by the adults . . . ?*" he replies ". . . quite important, I don't know if the child would learn to speak properly if he was never corrected . . ." And when Stephanie tries to hint that the grammar might be transmitted genetically (she says: "*The grammatical structure is taught to the children, you don't think it's something that . . .*") Bob replies without delay ". . . I think two year olds pick up the rules of grammar gradually, simply by mimicking and being corrected perhaps." This is empiricist or even behaviorist. Nothing innate here.

Stephanie makes the quite different kind of observation later in her essay that to correct someone's mistake of language is really an exercise of power and assertion of status. Her father corrects her often, apparently.

The experts we study in this course disagree about almost everything, but there is one thing they all seem to agree about—when it comes to helping children improve their language *correcting their grammatical mistakes is a waste of time.* Not all

the students buy that. And just the other day one of them, Lara, came up with the suggestion that perhaps parents have an innate tendency to correct their children's mistakes. Interesting possibility. Stephanie's project had all the makings of a philosophical debate in the conventional sense of the term 'philosophical'. But for me to have started talking about Descartes would have been gratuitous. The students truly appreciated her oral presentation. I suspect that if they remember nothing else about the course they'll remember that. Many a graduate seminar has less substance.

Final Remarks

Students enjoy this exercise. One reason is surely that it puts them in control. Some complain that it is disproportionately time-consuming in relation to their other courses but my impression is that while they know they put a lot into it, they also know they get a lot out of it.

I enjoy it too. I can almost say I *look forward* to reading their projects, if you can believe that. Well, at the very least, I enjoy reading the transcriptions of their conversations and seeing their videos.

One last observation. Try as I may, and repeat instructions as I do—often—there always seem to be some students who miss the essential point of the whole thing. I've noticed two common pitfalls.

1. Some of my students insist on interviewing someone who fancies himself (its not always a he) to be an expert in the field—psychology, zoology, etc.—so that instead of getting a fresh personal view based on personal experience with kids or pets or what have you, I am presented with, for example, the secondhand and half-digested theories of a self-important graduate student, or even a professor. "My mother has a Ph.D. in linguistics."
2. Other students choose appropriately unsophisticated people to talk to (in a surprising number of cases it is a parent) and then proceed to quiz them in a way which shows that they think they have got the right answer — from the book—and that, look, their mother (or whoever it is) has got it all wrong.

Both of these spring, I take it, from the assumption that there is one right answer and that some expert can be found who has it. *Mais non, non, et non!* as the Quebec Anglos say. Can't you, I plead with them, just listen to what some ordinary person has to say? Let's just listen. What we hear may turn out to be essentially the same as what the expert says. Or, conceivably, it may be right and the expert may be wrong. *In any case you are talking to human beings: please have the decency to listen. And if in the end you still think you have something to tell them, at least find out what they think first.*

In your job as a philosophy teacher do you do that?

David Fielding
Department of Philosophy
Dawson College
3040 Sherbrooke St. W
Westmount, PQ H3Z 1A4

From the President

(continued from page 2)

expectations of what their education can mean. One of the reasons that AAPT has succeeded over the years is that it has helped philosophy teachers to remember this important aspect of their task. Especially through its biennial workshop/conferences, AAPT helps us all to gather ideas and techniques so that we might perform this task better. These workshop/conferences have always introduced me to a number of inspiring colleagues who themselves are striving to make education more enriching. I am hoping to meet many more of you this summer in Mansfield.

James Campbell
Philosophy Department
University of Toledo
Toledo, OH 43606-3390

NOTES

1. *Art as Experience*, volume ten of *The Later Works of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 42.

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 Hancock, Book Review Editor
AAPT
9417 Doral Ct., Suite 2
Louisville, KY 40220
Internet: aapt@juno.com

*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.

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APA CENTRAL DIVISION ANNUAL MEETING

The Third APA/AAPT Teaching Seminar

Thursday, May 7—8:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Focus: Teaching Ethics and Teaching Critical Thinking

8:00–10:00 SESSION I

Chair: Betsy Decyk, CSU–Long Beach

8:00–8:10 WELCOME: Betsy Decyk, CSU–Long Beach

8:10–9:45 CONCURRENT WORKSHOPS

I. “Cognitive Heuristics and Biases”

Leah Savion, Indiana University

II. “Teaching Applied Ethics as Service Learning”

Jerry Kapus, University of Wisconsin–Barron County

9:45–10:10 NETWORKING OVER COFFEE

10:10–12:30 SESSION II

Chair: Robert Timko, Mansfield University

10:10–10:20 INTRODUCTION: Robert Timko

10:20–11:20 TUTORIAL I: “How Not to Teach Ethics: Internalism and Externalism in Ethics”

William Hughes, University of Guelph

11:20–12:20 TUTORIAL II: “How To Think About Weird Things”

Ted Schick, Muhlenberg College

12:20–? CLOSING DISCUSSION

Facilitators: Eric Hoffman, Executive Director, APA; Ken Cooley, University Of Wisconsin–Waukesha

AAPT BOARD MEETS IN PHILADELPHIA

In attendance: R. HART, M. LENSSEN, R. TIMKO, A. WILSON, B. DECYK, and J. CAMPBELL.

The main issues that we considered were three:

1. What procedures we need to adopt to replace our retiring officers: R. HART as Treasurer and M. LENSSEN/D. CLOSE as newsletter editors.

The sense of the group was that we need to go into the meeting at Mansfield with identified individuals willing to assume these responsibilities (so that they can be introduced around, familiarized further by the incumbents, and approved by the Board or membership as appropriate).

To attain this end, we agreed to think about potential candidates. There will also be “advertisements” placed in the next edition of the Newsletter detailing the positions and their availability, and requesting applications. Further efforts may be necessary to reach our pre-conference goal. A related issue was a reminder that we need to survey informally all of our other officers to see what other positions may be coming vacant.

2. Our main interest was the upcoming meeting in Mansfield.

WILSON spoke about the number of proposals that had arrived, whether with him or with L. MOON, and about their efforts to set up three “keynote” sessions.

TIMKO spoke about the local arrangements at Mansfield University: shuttles, classroom and sleeping facilities, meals, daycare, recreation, costs, outside excursions, etc. (The information that has been gathered was to work its way onto the website).

The second mailing—inviting individuals to come to the conference—was the next topic. The contents of this mailing were to be a skeleton of the program, a description of the campus and area, a registration form, etc. (All of this material will be duplicated on the webpage.) WILSON thought that it would be possible to prepare and blanket-mail this mailing c/o the University of Cincinnati.

The third mailing—the specialized mailing to doctoral programs in the target area—will detail (in addition to what is in the second mailing) the special seminar and contain an application, and a special registration form.

3. It was the sense of the group that it would be a good idea for AAPT to institute a pair of awards.

- a. The first was a sort of “distinguished service to AAPT award,” to be given as warranted to individuals whose long-term efforts on behalf of AAPT have contributed significantly to the society’s development and success. CAMPBELL will be working up the nature of the proposal, the nature of the actual award, and a list of potential candidates.

- b. The second was a sort of “distinguished service to philosophy teaching award,” to be given as warranted to individuals whose long-term efforts on behalf of philosophy teaching have contributed significantly to the advance of philosophy. WILSON will be working on the specifics here, in part because we would hope to get a “keynote” type contribution at Mansfield from the honoree(s).

Meeting was adjourned.

Jim Campbell
President

Conference Update

(continued from page 1)

may be purchased and prices will be posted. Children under five will pay half-price for a meal plan ticket—\$28.88.

Planning a Side Trip While at the Conference?

The conference committee is planning on setting aside one afternoon for individuals or groups to visit local attractions. In order to help plan these activities, the committee would like some feedback. Which of the following activities might interest you and your family?

1. A Walking Tour of the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon
2. Horseback Riding
3. A Visit to Corning, New York and a Tour of the Glass Museum
4. A Visit to the Finger Lakes Wine Country and Wine Tasting
5. A Golf Package
6. Having a Volleyball, Basketball, or Softball Game on Site
7. Other _____

Send your responses by e-mail to Bob Timko at rtimko@mnsfld.edu

AAPT TREASURER'S LETTER OF RESIGNATION

After eight (8) years as AAPT Treasurer it is my intent to step down following the August 1998 workshop/conference at Mansfield University. I think it is time to allow new blood and a fresh perspective to function at the officer level.

The Treasurer works closely with the President and Executive Director regarding the ongoing financial affairs of the organization. Principal responsibilities include: 1) maintaining AAPT bank accounts including the review of monthly statements, 2) payment of authorized bills and expenses, 3) depositing of all monies forwarded by the Executive Director, 4) providing

financial support services and counsel to the organizers of AAPT conferences, and other duties as assigned. The Treasurer works at the pleasure of the AAPT Board of Directors.

Those interested in being considered for the position of AAPT Treasurer should contact either the President or Executive Director at the earliest possible date.

It has been my pleasure to serve the organization in this capacity, and I pledge my support in effecting a smooth transition to the next Treasurer. Thank you.

Richard E. Hart, AAPT Treasurer

EDITORS TO RESIGN IN AUGUST

We are announcing our resignations as coeditors of *AAPT News*, effective August 4, 1998. The person(s) appointed to the position must be willing to begin work at that time, preparing the final 1998 issue for publication in November. *AAPT News* is published in Spring (March), Summer (July), and Fall (November).

Editing *AAPT News* requires both copy editing and organizational skills. The editor must also have up-to-date computing skills to prepare the articles for the typesetter, communicate with AAPT board members, and to receive newsletter submissions via e-mail or on diskette. Page composition, typesetting, printing, and mailing are provided under contract with the Philosophy Documentation Center. The editor and the PDC typesetter work together on newsletter design. The editor must have sufficient institutional support for secretarial work, telephone, fax, and

parcel service, up-to-date Internet e-mail (binary attachment support required), and up-to-date computer software. APA membership is important for the editor, given AAPT's strong relationships with the divisions of the APA.

We will provide transitional support to the new editor(s) by phone and e-mail, so the learning curve should not be terribly steep. If you are interested in applying for the editor's position, please contact AAPT President Jim Campbell at jcampbe@utnet.utoledo.edu with a copy to one of us.

We thank the AAPT membership and board members, our contributors, and our readers for your support over the many years, and we wish the new editor the very best.

Daryl Close
Tiffin University
dclose@compuserve.com

Mark Lenssen
Ohio Northern University
m-lenssen@onu.edu

AAPT BOARD MEMBERS

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Richard Wright
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Nancy Slonneger Hancock
Transylvania University
Executive Director

Calendar of Events


March 25–28, 1998—American Philosophical Association (APA), Pacific Division, Bonaventure Hotel, Los Angeles, CA.

May 6–9, 1998—American Philosophical Association (APA), Central Division, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, IL.

July 30–August 3, 1998—12th International Workshop/Conference on Teaching Philosophy, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, Mansfield, PA. Sponsored by AAPT.

August 10–16, 1998—Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, Boston, MA. Theme: Paideia: Philosophy Educating Humanity. Papers due September 1, 1997. For more information, visit the Congress Web site at: <http://web.bu.edu/WCP>

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

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American Association of Philosophy Teachers

Membership Dues Form

Memberships are for the period beginning with date of payment of dues. Upon receipt of dues, your name will be placed on the mailing list and you will receive *AAPT News* beginning with the next issue scheduled.

The expiration date of your membership will be listed on the address label for each newsletter. If you have any questions about the status of your membership, please feel free to contact the Executive Director by e-mail at "aapt@music.transy.edu" or write to: **Dr. Nancy Slonneger, AAPT, Transylvania University, Lexington KY 40508.**

MEMBERSHIP RATES

	1 yr.	2 yrs.
Regular	\$20	\$30
Student	\$12	\$20
Emeritus	\$12	\$20
Life	\$500	

(The full amount for life membership may be paid over the period of one year)

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

INCLUDE:

- * Discount on conference registration
- * Subscription to *AAPT News*
- * Subscription to AAPT-L (upon request)
- * Access to the AAPT Web Page

Please detach and return this form with your membership dues to: Dr. Nancy Slonneger, AAPT, Transylvania University, 300 N. Broadway, Lexington, KY 40508.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State/Province: _____ Country: _____
Zip (+4): _____ Telephone: (W) _____ (H) _____
E-mail Address: _____

Is this a renewal ____ or new membership ____ ?

Please check membership type: Regular ____ Student ____ Emeritus ____ Life ____

Do you need a copy of the AAPT Constitution? Yes ____ No ____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____