AAPT'S 8th IWCTP Better Than Ever!

August 6-10, 1990 was a stimulating week as over 120 people gathered at Indiana University to share ideas about teaching philosophy at the AAPT’s 8th International Workshop-Conference on Teaching Philosophy.

New this year was an intensive seminar for beginning teachers and advanced graduate students specifically on problems in, and strategies for, teaching philosophy. The seminar, which met every morning from 9:30 a.m. until noon, was led by Martin Benjamin (Michigan State University). Funds to support his innovative program were provided in part by the Machette Foundation and by AAPT.

Also new this year was an eye-opening (both literally and metaphorically) group session held from 8:30-9:30 each morning. Each session centered on a thought-provoking theme of general interest. Topics covered over the course of the week were “Student Relativism”, “Teaching about Racism”, and “Cultural Pluralism and Diversity in the Curriculum.” Lively discussion ensued.

At the core of the conference were the individual workshops on teaching philosophy. There were eight different sessions and approximately 70 workshops given. The workshops addressed both the content of philosophy courses and techniques for improving the teaching of philosophy. There were workshops in Aesthetics, Ethics, Critical Thinking, Logic, Feminism, the History of Philosophy, and Introductory Philosophy as well as workshops on Evaluation and Grading, Teaching Methods, Using Social and Political Issues to Teach Philosophy, Using Computers in Philosophy, and Teaching Philosophy to Children.

The AAPT honored Arnold Wilson, the editor of Teaching Philosophy, and in return Arnold gave a spirited keynote address “Improving Teaching in Philosophy.” Anita Silvers gave a special address “The Philosophy Major as a Higher Education Artifice and What We Can Do About It” discussing the Association of American Colleges’ forthcoming national review of arts and sciences majors. Rosalind Ekman Ladd presented the presidential address, “Teaching Philosophy to Jane and Dick”, which was based on her experiences in teaching philosophy at Wheaton College as Wheaton changed from being a women’s college to being coed. Her talk focused on the elements involved in achieving a gender-balanced classroom.

In addition there were numerous discussions in hallways, dorm rooms and over meals as people dedicated to teaching philosophy shared their insight.

(Cont'd on Page 14)
The Eighth International Workshop-Conference on Teaching Philosophy, held at Indiana University in August, was a big success. I would like to express both for myself and for AAPT, thanks to our host, Indiana University, and congratulations to Phil Hamlin, Paul Eisenberg, Betsy Decyk, and the twenty other people who served on the Program Committee. Also, a special thank-you is due to Richard Wright, whose organizing and record-keeping efforts made it all work out. A highlight of the conference was the special seminar for graduate students and beginning philosophy teachers, conducted so ably by Martin Benjamin. And, of course, there was the terrific keynote address by Arnold Wilson. Because of the dedicated efforts of such colleagues, AAPT remains a vibrant and growing organization.

Although AAPT sponsors other events, such as sessions at APA meetings and jointly run conferences with other organizations, clearly the most important AAPT activity is the biennial workshop-conference. For the past fourteen years, it has been our unique contribution to the profession. No other conference comes close to its richness of resources—and its inspiration—for philosophy teaching. And few other conferences can match its friendly, sharing, family-oriented atmosphere.

In 1973, when I first had the idea of putting together a national workshop-conference on teaching philosophy, I did not imagine that the conference would eventually lead to AAPT. That first workshop-conference (Union College, August 1976) was an overwhelming success! Over 300 people attended and provided a momentum that gave birth to AAPT!

Looking back, I’ve been trying to figure out why that first workshop-conference was so successful. The hard work and enthusiasm of a large Program Committee clearly were important factors. But there were other factors as well. Concern for quality philosophy teaching was “in the air.” Metaphilosophy had recently added its “Philosopher as Teacher” section, the journal Teaching Philosophy had just been born, and the APA had recently appointed special committees to consider teaching. A national conference on philosophy teaching seemed overdue!

All of these factors were important to the stunning success of the first workshop-conference. But I’m convinced that the most important factor of all was our desire to reach out to everyone who had an interest in teaching philosophy. The program committee included not only people from the APA, but also the Canadian Philosophical Association and the American Catholic Philosophical Association. There were, as well, leaders in philosophy for children, high school philosophy, two-year college philosophy, women in philosophy, blacks in philosophy, philosophy in prisons, philosophy in senior-citizens’ homes. We reached out to and welcomed everyone who shared our love and concern for the teaching of philosophy.

I know that AAPT still welcomes everyone who share such concerns, but I think the time has come for us to explicitly reach out again. Actually, we already have begun to do so. The workshop-seminar that Martin Benjamin conducted for graduate students in August at the 8th IWCTP was a fine beginning. Graduate students, after all, are the future of our profession, and we should continue to reach out and welcome them into AAPT. Every workshop-conference in the future should include such a seminar.

In addition, I believe we should reach out again to other organizations and groups, inviting them to join us in projects and conferences. (Cont’d on Page 7)
Teaching Philosophy

An Intensive Seminar for Beginning Teachers and Advanced Graduate Students

This year for the first time AAPT's biennial Workshop-Conference on Teaching Philosophy included an intensive seminar for beginning teachers and advanced graduate students. Supported in part by a grant from the Matchette Foundation, the seminar consisted of four 2½-hour sessions on successive mornings. The schedule, topics, and readings, (which were provided to participants prior to the seminar) are listed below.

Seminar participants came from all parts of the country and represented a wide variety of teaching and scholarly interests. The sessions themselves compared favorably to the best seminars I have participated in, both as a student and as a teacher. Participants raised penetrating questions about the readings and made many thoughtful comments based on their experience as students, teaching assistants, and teachers. One mark of a successful seminar is, I believe, that participants (including the instructor) learn from each other and this seminar scored very high in this respect.

Some of the deepest and most interesting discussions focused on the relative merits of different kinds of introductory courses and the fair and educationally significant evaluation of student performance. Readings on these topics served as springboards to reflection. We also came, through our interaction, to a renewed appreciation of the wide variety of student backgrounds, abilities, and expectations that philosophy teachers are likely to encounter.

My experience with this seminar reinforced my conviction of the importance of teaching as a subject worthy of disciplined seminar-like reflection. I hope both that graduate departments will expand their horizons in this regard and that AAPT will continue to include intensive seminars of this nature as integral parts of subsequent workshop-conferences.

*************

7 August (Tuesday): PHILOSOPHY TEACHING: AN OVERVIEW

8 August (Wednesday): THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS, TEXTS, TESTS, GRADES, AND OTHER IMPORTANT STUFF
--Jeffrey Wolcott, "The First Day of Class," in

9 August (Thursday): THE INTRODUCTORY COURSE: METHODS, PERSPECTIVES, AND RESOURCES

10 August (Friday): TEACHING ETHICS AND THE ETHICS OF TEACHING

Martin Benjamin
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI
AAPT Business Meeting Held

The AAPT business meeting began with recognition of and a hearty thanks to all those who worked to make this year’s conference the success that it was: Paul Eisenberg, local arrangements; Arnold Wilson, who arranged for the Machette Foundation grant to support the graduate seminar; Martin Benjamin, who arranged and taught the graduate seminar; Phil Hamlin, program chair, and Betsy Decyk, vice-chair, and all the many members of the program committee and Terry Bynum, vice president. Also, other board members who met in Atlanta, New Orleans, Bloomington, and by phone: Daryl Close and Mark Lenssen, AAPT News editors; Nelson Pole, past president; Frans van der Bogert, treasurer; Richard Hart, nominating committee chair; and Jim Campbell. And to all the workshop presenters, whose expertise and efforts are at the heart of the conference, and to all the hundreds and thirty or more attendees, whose participation contributes to the richness of the experience for everyone.

The moment of self-congratulation was immediately followed by an appeal for volunteers for committees to begin the long planning process for the next conference in the summer of 1992, and to take part in the on-going activities of AAPT. Members are urged to send in contributions to the association’s newsletter, AAPT News, in the form of short articles or notes on teaching, teaching materials and ideas, book reviews of printed or video resources, queries, or responses. Members are also invited to join the program committee for the next conference and are urged to attend AAPT-sponsored sessions at each of the regional APA meetings during the year.

President's Report: an informal review of activities during the past two years.

1. A formal Treasurer’s report will be printed in the February newsletter, but it can be said that the organization is in good financial shape, that a “profit” was realized on the conference held in 1988, and that paid membership stands between 300 and 350.

2. A grant for $2000 was received from the Machette Foundation to help fund travel costs and expenses of 10 graduate students or first year teachers to attend the seminar for beginning teachers. The Board has also allocated some AAPT funds for this purpose, and conference registration fees were set at half price for all graduate students.

3. The Board has affirmed that workshops on teaching for graduate students are a high priority for AAPT, and every effort will be made to have another workshop at the next conference.

4. Plans are underway for a conference to be held in California next summer, to be co-sponsored by AAPT and San Jose State University. The conference will be focused on two topics: critical thinking and teaching ethnically diverse students. Inquiries should be directed to Cynthia Rostankowski at San Jose State.

5. During the past two year period, the executive office of AAPT has moved from Toledo to Oklahoma, and we thank the Univ. of Oklahoma for its support of AAPT activities. In the next month or so, the office of the Treasurer will move from North Carolina to New York state, when Richard Hart assumes the office of Treasurer.

6. AAPT will co-sponsor the National Conference on Computing and Values on August 12-16, 1991. Inquiries should be directed to Terry Bynum. AAPT is also cooperating with the APA Committee on the Status of Women in Philosophy and will try to co-sponsor a session at one of the APA regional meetings. Other organizations are invited to submit proposals for co-sponsoring conferences with AAPT.

7. Another idea the Board will consider is how it might set up a speaker’s bureau to facilitate workshop presentations on teaching for graduate or other philosophy departments. (Cont’d on Page 10)

In Boston

Environmental Ethics Workshop

William Vitke of Clarkson University will lead an AAPT-sponsored workshop at the December meeting of the APA’s Eastern Division. Vitke’s topic, “Teaching Environmental Ethics,” is based on a very successful workshop which he conducted at AAPT’s Eighth International Workshop-Conference on Teaching Philosophy held in August at Indiana University. AAPT President Terry Bynum will chair the session.

Vitke will share his syllabus and other curriculum materials with attendees, then lead a discussion of books, topics, methods, and pitfalls in the teaching of environmental ethics. Those who attended Dr. Vitke’s workshop in Indiana found it to be rewarding and very helpful.

This special AAPT session was arranged too late to be placed on the printed APA program. Those planning to attend should look for a flyer at the APA meeting giving details about time and place.
Teaching Philosophy to Jane and Dick

by Rosalind Ekman Ladd, Wheaton College

A generation ago many of us would be spending our academic careers teaching philosophy either to Jane or to Dick. Most of us now are engaged in teaching philosophy to both Jane and Dick, together, in the same classroom.

The transition from single sex education to coeducation has been accomplished in different ways at different institutions. But for those women's colleges, like my own, which have recently made the move after nearly a decade of re-examining the place of women in society and developing the strengths of feminist scholarship in the various disciplines, there is a new interest in the nature of gender-specific learning styles and male/female/professor interactions in the classroom.

Assuming that institutions of good will have made good progress toward achieving a gender-balanced curriculum, it is now time to turn attention to achieving a gender-balanced classroom.

The gender-balanced classroom

There are four measures that can be used to determine whether or not a classroom is gender-balanced.

1. **Who speaks and for how long?** Do women and men participate equally in class discussions, i.e. proportionate to their numbers in the class? Do women or men tend to be called on first, thus having a chance to determine the course of the discussion?

   General impressions of equal participation tend to be inaccurate. Someone really needs to observe and keep track of what actually goes on. An interesting experiment is to try keeping track in a non-classroom situation, say at a faculty meeting. In one such experiment I know of, rather pronounced inequalities were discovered. The ensuing spirited discussion gave clues to differences in expectations and style: the men, who had participated to a disproportionately greater degree, urged the women to speak up more. The women urged the men to limit themselves!

2. **Who gets the most and best responses from the professor?** According to education theorists, there are four types of response that teachers give to students contributions to class discussion: (a) criticism or evaluation; (b) praise; (c) remediation or correction; and (d) acceptance. Empirical data show that all the way from grade school through graduate school, more than 50% of the teacher responses fall into the “acceptance” category. An acceptance response is a mere nod of the head or an “Um, yes.” It is vague and not very helpful. Thus, whether women or men get a disproportionate number of non-acceptance responses (especially remediation or correction responses which are said to be the most helpful to the student) is a determining factor in judging a classroom to be gender-balanced or not.

3. **Is the language, especially examples and metaphors, gender-specific?** By now, most people are aware of the forms of language that are gender-biased, but the content, too should be examined. For example, in the video series, *Ethics in America*, each segment begins with excerpts from some of the roundtable discussion. Justice Scolia is heard making this comment: “We don’t begin on an even playing field.”

   Note the assumptions underlying this now-popular metaphor: it implies familiarity with sports such as football and baseball, it rests on a competitive model of human interaction with notions of winning and losing, and it places emphasis on the concepts of justice and fairness. Further, there are echoes of the famous remark attributed to the Duke of Wellington, that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, conjuring up reference to the “old boys’ network” as well.

   Without making generalizations about sports and gender or ethics and gender, just note that this metaphor
does not work for those who do not follow sports, who do not see life as a game with the goal of winning over others, and who do not subscribe to an ethics of competition. One can understand it, of course, and play the game of “unpacking the metaphor,” but this leads to a separation between intellectual exercise and what the person really cares about. Falling into metaphors and language about things which many students do not care about does not make for good teaching and learning and can contribute to gender bias in the classroom.

4. Is the teaching style gender-specific? As long as society continues to socialize females and males differently, we can expect different behaviors and learning styles between female and male students. The instructor’s teaching style can help perpetuate or help change behaviors and learning styles. For example, calling on the person whose hand is the first that goes up reinforces competitive behavior, whereas assigning group projects, team reports, and facilitating study groups outside of class reinforce cooperative behavior. Relying on a traditional, competitive style can be a sign of gender bias in teaching.

Empirical studies about gender bias

At the precollege levels, studies have shown evidence of gender bias. For example, teachers tend to praise boys for the intellectual quality of their work, put praise girls for neatness. When boys’ work is criticized, teachers tend to attribute the problems to lack of effort, thereby implying that boys have the ability to do better. When girls’ work is criticized, the problems are typically not attributed to lack of effort, thereby indicating lack of confidence in the girls’ ability to do better.

In a 1986 study done of college classrooms, 10% of the students observed contributed 25% of all interactions, and of these 10% mostly were men. About 45% of the students observed were totally silent, and these were mostly women.

A more recent study done at Harvard showed that males spoke up to 12 times longer than females, and that a class approached equal participation only when the instructor is female. Studies at other colleges, however, show that even with female instructors, men dominate classroom discussion. In addition, women tend to have lower-order, i.e. factual, questions addressed to them, whereas men are asked higher-order questions, e.g. why, or how do you explain this?

Women students are also more likely to be interrupted by the instructor.

There are a lot of things researchers do not know about these findings. One would want to ask whether male-female differences are correlated with social class, type of institution, e.g. community college vs. private, or ethnic background, indicating different cultural patterns, size of institution, or size of class.

Importance of gender differences

The researchers who choose to study classroom interactions make certain assumptions. First, they assume that students learn more by active participation in class, and this assumption is supported by empirical studies. Further, in our society, at least, people are rewarded for being articulate and quick-thinking, skills which are developed by class participation. Thus, if students learn more by active participation, and if it is true that males participate more, then it follows that males learn more.

Secondly, it is assumed that students who receive more, and better, quality teacher attention learn more. Thus, if females tend to be silent and receive only acceptance responses, then females learn less.

These conclusions were summed up in a recent New York Times headline addressed to parents: “You get more for your money when you pay for your sons’ education than for your daughters!”

A further compelling argument for paying attention to the gender difference research is an argument from justice. People should be treated fairly, and if American classrooms are gender-biased, then this is wrong and should be corrected.

Critique of assumptions

We should not be too quick to accept all the assumptions made by the researchers cited. Teaching and learning are complex activities, and we must be clear on what we are measuring before we draw conclusions.

Teaching and learning, after all, are not confined to the classroom. Thus, we should ask of those students who are silent in class, how do they do on papers and exams? If it is true that women students are disproportionately silent in class, then we can con-
clude that perhaps they are not learning to speak in public, but we cannot conclude that they are not learning philosophy, or even that they are not learning as much or as well as those who do speak in class.

In a similar way, teachers' response to students is not limited to classroom interactions. Is there any evidence of gender bias in written comments on papers and exams? If so, can it be eliminated by reading papers with students' names hidden? And what happens during office hours? Teaching takes place there, too.

The most important criticism of the research that looks only at class participation is that it seems to reinforce the model of a competitive classroom and thus indirectly a competitive larger society. Instead of accepting the system which rewards those who speak up first and loudest, we might try to sensitize ourselves and our students to finding ways to include and pay attention to those who choose not to participate in that way.

Practical hints

Probably all of us who care about teaching think that we have gender-balanced classrooms. Actual observation of what takes place may show otherwise. The best test is to ask a colleague or student to sit in on a class and observe and take notes. How many women and how many men speak? For how long? Which are called on first? Is there a difference in who is addressed with higher-order vs. lower-order questions? What kind of teacher response does each receive?

Another way to gauge the situation is to ask for anonymous written student evaluations after the first few weeks of the semester, asking specifically about students' perceptions of their own participation and their perception of other students' silence of "over"-participation.

If there is evidence of gender bias, there are ways to try to eliminate it. Individual students could be asked privately to make space for others to speak. The class as a whole could discuss how discussion time can be equitably allotted. The instructor could vary question and answer periods with small groups discussions or group projects where each student is responsible for contributing to the whole. Asking students to write informally for five minutes at the beginning of class gives everyone something to say, so the instructor can call on people who have not raised their hands. Or, following the usual procedures of hand-raising, the instructor can simply say no one will be called on until at least five hands are raised, and then not necessarily call on the first one.

Conclusion

In an essay entitled, "Taking Women Students Seriously," Adrienne Rich writes,

As ... teachers, we can either deny the importance of this context in which women students think, write, read, study ... or try to work with it. We can either teach passively, accepting these conditions, or actively, helping our students identify and resist them.

Nor does this mean we should be training women students to 'think like men.' ...

It is not easy to think like a woman in a man's world.

Our goal should be to make our classrooms less like a man's world and more like the gender-balanced world we hope for in the future.

References


From the President

Finally, the time seems right for AAPT to reach out to the world. In particular, I think we should find ways to cooperate with colleagues in Europe and Asia—especially in central Europe and Japan. And, I think we should take the lead in organizing "The First World Congress on Teaching Philosophy."

As President of AAPT, I welcome your ideas and comments on these thoughts. And, indeed, I would be very pleased to receive any suggestions you wish to offer to make AAPT a better a more effective organization. AAPT is here to serve its members and to advance the cause of philosophy teaching. How can we do these things better?
Highlights from the 8th International

Above. The opening session and keynote address brought everyone together for the first time.

Above. Book displays gave S. Uto, and others, a chance to examine potential course materials.

Above. Computer programs and journals were also available for purusal.

Right. Evening social hours were a relaxing way to make new friends and visit old ones.
Conference on Teaching Philosophy

Above left and right. The annual Ice Cream Social gets everyone together as one big family.

Above. Phil Hamlin, Program Chair, made the evening announcements.

Above. Terry Bynum, AAPT President, presented keynote speaker Arnold Wilson with a plaque honoring his 15 years of service as editor of Teaching Philosophy and his tireless promotion of the importance of philosophy teaching.
Inside View of 8th IWCTP Teaching Seminar

This summer I had the privilege of attending the intensive seminar for beginning philosophy teachers that was held during AAPT's 8th International Workshop-Conference on Teaching Philosophy at Indiana University. As a graduate student who is anticipating a career as a philosophy instructor, I found a number of things about the seminar extremely helpful. I would like to mention a few of them in order to give a feel for the sessions.

One thing that struck me was that every person in attendance had very similar concerns. Going in, we all felt somewhat inadequate for the task of teaching a large introductory course that would likely be many students' first exposure to formal philosophy. This was evidenced by the similarity of questions, as well as by the unanimous affirmation of those questions. The participants also voiced concerns about a variety of topics that ranged from what types of exams are most effective, to whether an introductory course should be devoted to a single issue handled from different perspectives or whether various surveys work better.

Professor Martin Benjamin, the seminar leader, was extremely helpful in that he knew our feelings and had real "nuts and bolts" advice for us. He gave us helpful hints about many areas of teaching which ranged from developing a course syllabus to criteria for judging whether a paper is excellent, merely adequate, or failing. Some of the ideas he presented reinforced notions that were already held, while others challenged us to examine our concepts with completely new thinking.

The discussions that took place during the sessions were both challenging and uplifting. This was certainly the case when we talked about grading. We all expressed a desire to be just in grading, but sensed that we lacked the experience necessary to develop proper guidelines for grading. Professor Benjamin presented some guidelines which he uses that are applicable to almost any situation. One very helpful remark was that grades should be viewed as earned by the instructor and students alike. We should not feel obligated to have the class average come out to a "C" for a term, nor are we better teachers because students have a difficult time.

These, and the other areas covered during the seminar, made for a most enlightening week. It was well worth the investment. I want to thank the AAPT, the Matchette Foundation, and especially Professor Benjamin for providing what I hope will be the first of many such seminars.

James Smalley
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI

Business Meeting Held

(Cont’d from Page 4)

New Business

The Board asked the membership for a straw vote on the principle of allocating funds to subsidize travel by board members to one board meeting a year. The sum would be not more than $2000 per year, awarded by some equitable plan yet to be devised. The reason is that travel expenses are increasing at the same time that AAPT is trying to make the Board and the organization truly national in representation, and planning for a conference of the size and scope that AAPT is requires at least one meeting a year, in addition to mail and phone communication.

Board meetings will be held on this two year schedule: August (at conference), April (Central APA), December (Eastern APA), and August (at conference). AAPT funds would not be used for travel to the August conference.

The straw vote was in favor of the proposal, and the question will be put to a vote of the entire membership in a mail ballot.

Suggestions and invitations are solicited for the

next conference site. There was a generally favorable response to the idea of holding it on the East coast, thus alternating between the Midwest and the East coast.

Open Discussion

A general discussion period followed, during which these suggestions were made.

1. That AAPT continue its efforts to provide workshops on teaching philosophy to graduate students.

2. That AAPT send letters documenting the participation of the members of the special seminar for beginning teachers to the participants' home departments.

3. That AAPT make an effort to attract more minorities. Some suggestions of how this could be accomplished: hold the summer conference on a black campus; highlight relevant topics on the conference announcements; try to attain funding to subsidize travel expenses for more minority participants.

4. That AAPT make strong efforts to become more international in membership and programming.

The meeting ended with the introduction of the new president, Terry Bynum, and was followed by a fine wine and cheese party, complete with old shoes and the singing of appropriate and inappropriate songs.

Rosalind Etman Ladd, AAPT Past President
Wheaton College, Norton, MA
"Out of the Mouths of Babes"

or

"Quotable Quotes"

In the last Qqs column we generously shared with you the solutions to some worries we had, just in case you had the same worries we did and you couldn't come up with solutions on your own. Since then, we here at the Qqs Center have been bombarded with inquiries asking for solutions and answers to more worries and questions that have been plaguing you as philosophers and philosophy teachers. Because of the vast numbers of letters we have received, we are unable to answer them personally; so in this column we will address the inquiries we thought most urgently needed attention. But don't thank us for the answers; thank STUDENTS for their wisdom and insight.

Dear Qqs Center,

After being in philosophy so many years it suddenly occurred to me that maybe the type of conclusion I reached in a paper wasn't important after all. This thought has been haunting me; so how can I tell my students that a conclusion is important if I personally am no longer sure that it is?

Signed,
A Conclusion Skeptic

Dear Skep,

We are very sympathetic to your worry; fortunately, we found a solution to your problem:

"The importance of what type of conclusion is drawn matters because the conclusion determines if the paper has said what it intends to say in the introductory paragraph. Drawing the wrong conclusion can contradict the rest of the paper. A conclusion is one of the most important parts of a paper."

And if that doesn't convince you about the importance of a conclusion, here is another answer to your question:

"It matters that conclusions are drawn because people would be walking around with problems and no conclusions. Conclusions exist because questions about things exist. If one was to take away one from the other it would be taking the female away from the male and wouldn't be too bright and neither would we without conclusions. THINKING IS IMPORTANT and conclusions are thinking so if there wasn't conclusions then what would be thinking."

And if that doesn't help you out, it is probably because you are so far gone that you have taken away one from the other and your brain has turned to mashed potatoes so you must have ceased to think because you obviously don't have any conclusions. (We believe this follows but we aren't too sure about our conclusion.)

Dear Qqs Center,

I just started teaching philosophy and I was wondering if it is important to get students to question what is real. If I do, but students don't think it is important, they won't like my course and I'll never get the Teacher of the Year award. Should I try to convince them that questioning such things as what is real is important?

Signed,
Want To Be Popular With Students,

Dear Pop,

What with your aspiring to win a popularity contest, we should recommend that you simply give all students A's. But since you are new at the teaching philosophy game, we will give you a real answer. And the real answer is: no, not really. The reason is as follows:

"Questioning such things as what is real does make you rethink many of your dearest held beliefs, but in the end that is all it does, and therefore might bend your views a little but continue to live your life in the same general way. All it really does is give you a wider sense of being."

What you must now ask yourself is whether you want a wider sense of being. If you do, we suggest you put on a few pounds, depending on how wide you want your sense of being to be.
Dear QQs Center,

What can I say to convince students that philosophical discussions about robots are enlightening? I could probably come up with an answer on my own but your job is to help us philosophy teachers.

Signed,
Not a Slave To My Work

Dear Not,

In your case, the best answer is this:

“Humans always expect someone to do their work for them; whether it be cleaning dishes or completing complex mathematical problems. In this aspect, a robot would be useful because most robots do not know what it is like to clean up after oneself.”

Since you are obviously one of those humans who always expect someone to do your work for you, you probably don’t know what it’s like to clean up after yourself either. And we bet that you don’t even complete complex mathematical problems. You no doubt live in a pig sty and haven’t balanced your checkbook in years. We realize this doesn’t answer your question but we thought maybe your cleaning your dishes and completing some complex mathematical problems should take precedence over any pedagogical concerns at this point.

Dear QQs Center,

When I discuss artificial intelligence in Intro, almost all my students bring up the very boring objection that robots and machines can only do what they are programmed. What is the best answer to that objection?

Signed,
An AI Advocate

Dear Art,

We suggest you point out to students that robots and machines have gotten a bum rap and that actually they can be quite contrary when they feel like it. Mention how machines have their own problems which can account for why they don’t always do what they’re programmed to do. You might put it this way:

“Robots and machines have the reputation of only doing what they are programmed to do at the time they are programmed to do it. However, computers do things they are not supposed to do when you think you know what they are going to do. The causes of these unpredictable actions could be a number of things such as stress, temperature, or damage. The machine has its own intentions when it does something out of the ordinary.”

The overwhelming questions we received concerned mental states. Which of course didn’t surprise us. We thought the following letters needed our immediate attention.

Dear QQs Center,

Might plants have mental states? If so, what would be some evidence? It is really important that I get an answer because I’m thinking about giving up teaching philosophy and going into the plant business. If plants have mental states I want to help them improve their mental states. Then they’ll want to be healthy and grow and I can make a whole lot more money off plants than I’m making off philosophy.

Signed,
Thinking of Making A Career Change

Dear Thinking,

In your case a career change would be good and we strongly recommend that you switch from philosophy to plants. Now here’s the answer to your question: Yes indeedy plants have mental states! May we elaborate on this.

“Humans, animals and plants can make a satisfactory adjustment to the environment so that they have a healthy mental state, whether good or bad. ... A plant has a bad mental state if it does not get water and nutrients and dies. The plant knows that it will die if it does not improve its state of being. ...plants have a mental state because they are trying to improve their mental and physical states. Sure they cannot move if they are getting abused by the weather, but they have roots that stretch out to help their mental and physical states.”

We wish you all the luck in changing from students to plants. We hope you will be able to distinguish the two.

Dear QQs Center,

One day when I was having a few beers with some philosophy buddies I began to wonder why mental states exist at all. If some things like rocks can exist without mental states, why can’t we? Then I began to wonder why some individuals have mental states and others do not. I know it would be a real bummer if every thing had mental states. I mean, who wants to be around conscious
beings all the time? When I came home I like to feel I can let my hair down because it's just me and the furniture and I don't have to worry about dealing with mental states except my own. All this wondering I've been doing about why me and my buddies have mental states and why beer cans and bar stools don't have interfered with my teaching because my wondering naturally extends to students and desks. Can you help me out?

Signed,
In Mental Anguish

Dear Mental,

OF COURSE we can help—we have just the answer to your questions. First, here's why some individuals have mental states and others do not:

"Some individuals, such as rocks, do not need mental states to function. Therefore God created rocks without mental states. Individuals like humans and animals have mental states because they need them in order to be themselves and to function."

So you see? If you didn't have mental states you wouldn't be able to function; but more importantly, you wouldn't be yourself, in which case you would be faced with the additional problem of trying to find out just who you really are.

And now for an answer as to why some individuals have mental states and others do not:

"While debatable as it may be whether or not dogs have mental states, it is not too difficult, however, to determine that some individuals have mental states and others do not. I believe the reason that only some individuals have mental states is for the benefit and convenience of those who in fact do have mental states. In other words it allows those with mental states the chance to relax and let down their guard when they are alone. This way he doesn't have to go through life constantly considering the feelings or presence of something or someone else.

"What an uncomfortable thought to think that everything that exists had mental states. This would mean that even if you were the only 'human being' at home, you still would not be alone because you would have to consider the feelings of your furniture. And you would find yourself walking around the house making ridiculous comments to yourself such as 'I hope I'm not hurting this chair' or 'I wouldn't want to suffocate this couch by lying all over it'. The reason some individuals have mental states and others do not is for the simple reason of keeping those with mental states from going completely insane, especially when they need time to be alone and get away from the crazy world."

And there you have it—beer cans and bar stools don't have mental states in order to keep you from going completely insane. (Unfortunately, we aren't sure just who it is that is keeping you from going completely insane. However, we might mention—but we wouldn't swear to it—that part of your problem seems to be having a few beers with your buddies; you probably need to have lots of beers with your buddies.)

Finally, we received this inquiry:

Dear QQs Center,

I have been working on a major project in philosophy of mind; the problem I'm having is in saying what the mind is. I can't really get started on my project until I do. And if I don't publish something soon I won't get tenure and then I'll have to find another job. Do you have any ideas about what the mind is?

Signed,
Stuck on Mind

Dear Stuck,

We sure do!

"The mind is the backbone of the person."

This of course means that "Strong back, weak mind" is a contradiction; it also means you can become more intelligent by strengthening your back. So if you want to get tenure, we think it'd be a good idea if you started working out in a gym; your backbone is obviously weak.

Mary Ann Carroll
Appalachian State University
Boone, NC 28608

Teaching Philosophy

Teaching Philosophy is a quarterly journal which serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information about the teaching and learning of philosophy. Articles, discussions, reports and reviews are published on topics such as:
• theoretical issues in the teaching of philosophy
• innovative methods and classroom strategies
• experimental and interdisciplinary courses
• faculty development and student counseling

1990 Subscriptions: $19.50 individuals; $45 institutions. Add $4 for all subscriptions outside the U.S. Order from the PHILOSOPHY DOCUMENTATION CENTER, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403-0189 USA.
Edited by: Arnold Wilson, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0006.
National Conference on Computing and Values

During the past year, AAPT has cooperated with five other national organizations in planning “The National Conference on Computing and Values,” which will be held on the campus of Southern Connecticut State University next summer, August 12-15, 1991. AAPT President Terry Bynum co-chaired the Planning Committee with Walter Maner of Bowling Green State University, and AAPT Executive Director Richard Wright also served on the Planning Committee. Other cooperating organizations include the American Philosophical Association, the Association for Computing Machinery, the Canadian Philosophical Association, Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, and the Computer Society of the Institute for Electrical and Electronic Engineers. The conference is made possible by grants from the National Science Foundation.

According to Conference Co-Chair Terry Bynum, the conference will be “the event of the decade in computer ethics.” Attendees will:

- Hear major addresses by key figures in the field of computing and values,
- Participate in working groups to develop a “research agenda” for the next decade,
- See a major exhibit of books, journals, films, software, organizations, documents, etc. in the field of computing and values,
- Take home “a briefcase full” of materials, including articles, flyers, government documents, model curriculum materials, and a copy of the “Resource Directory on Computing and Values,”
- Receive a two-year membership in the Research Center on Computing and Society at Southern Connecticut State University.

The Conference will bring together people from five different professional groups, who normally do not get the opportunity to work together on the same project: philosophers, computer professionals, social scientists, public policy makers, and business leaders. The Conference will address the broad topic of “Computing and Values” via six more specific “tracks:”

- Computer Privacy and Confidentiality
- Ownership of Software and Intellectual Property
- Computer Crime and Computer Security
- Equity and Access to Computing Resources
- Teaching Computer Ethics
- Computing and Values Issues Arising on the College Campus

Conference co-chair Bynum, who chaired the first two of AAPT’s International Workshop-Conferences on Teaching Philosophy in 1976 and 1978, reports that the National Conference on Computing and Values will be modeled on these popular biennial August conferences. The conference will be held on a college campus, will have a friendly and sharing atmosphere, and will be family-oriented like the AAPT workshop-conferences. Bynum expressed hope that the forthcoming NCCV will be as successful as AAPT’s workshop-conferences have been.

AAPT members are encouraged to attend the National Conference on Computing and Values. To be placed on the mailing list and receive conference announcements, contact:

Terrell Ward Bynum, Director
Research Center on Computing and Society
Southern Connecticut State University
New Haven, CT 06515 USA

Phone: (203) 397-4423
FAX: (203) 397-4207
E-MAIL: BYNUM@CTSTATEU.BITNET

Better Than Ever!

(Cont’d from page 1)

And it was not “all work and no play”. There was a barbecue, our traditional ice-cream social, a wine and cheese party, and a trip to Nashville, Indiana to see an Indiana University production of “A Thousand Clowns”. For those who remember the heat (100°F) of Hampshire (AAPT 1988), we had beautiful weather in Bloomington all week (and air-conditioned rooms, just in case!).

We heartily thank Phil Hamlin, the 1990 program chair, and the Board of the AAPT for creating such an outstanding conference, and Paul Eisenberg, the local coordinator, for being so graciously helpful!

Looking ahead to 1992 and the 9th International Workshop-Conference on Teaching Philosophy, if you have suggestions (people to invite, topics to explore, conference organization, etc.) please fill out the top section of the accompanying form. If, in addition, you would like to serve on the program committee for 1992 please complete the form. [Form appears on the next page.]

Betsy Newell Decyk
California State University
Long Beach, CA 90840
American Association of Philosophy Teachers
9th IWCTP Program 1992

Xerox this page and mail to: Betsy Newell Decyk, Dept. of Philosophy, California State University, Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840

Yes, I would like to serve on the 1992 Program Committee:

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________________

Work Phone #: __________________________ Home Phone #: ________________
E-Mail Address: ____________________________________________________
Institutional Address (if different from above): ____________________________

Department: ______________________________________________________
Specialties and Special Interests in Philosophy: __________________________

Ways I Am Willing to Help: __________________________________________

(Please attach additional sheets if necessary)

Suggestions for the next IWCTP Program:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

(Please attach additional sheets if necessary)
Calendar of Events


November 9-10 - Central States Philosophical Assoc. and Illinois Philosophical Assoc. joint meeting. Southern Illinois Univ. at Edwardsville, University Center, 2nd Floor.


December 27-30 - American Association of Philosophy Teachers (with APA). William Vitek of Clarkson University will conduct a workshop, "Teaching Environmental Ethics." Terry Bynum of Southern Connecticut State Univ. will chair. Check bulletin board in convention hotel for room and time.


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