National Conference on Computing and Values

With several hundred registrations in hand and an impressive roster of speakers, the National Conference on Computing and Values promises to be one of the major events this summer. (It is not too late to register. See details below. —Eds.)

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 this summer, August 12-16. 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 of Computing Resources
- Teaching Computer Ethics
- Computing and Values Issues Arising on the College Campus

(Continued on Page 4)

Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computing and Values Conference</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Weeks Away</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago AAPT Session Features</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAPT Conference in California — Last Call</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy Teaching Exchange</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Far?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Naomi Zack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy Teaching Forum on CompuServe</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotable Quotes, Mary Ann Carroll</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review: Business Ethics: A Philosophical Approach, Kevin Funchion, Krishna Mallick, and Edward Meagher (eds.)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewer: Salvatore E. DeSimone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar of Events</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued on Page 4)
Grad Students Presenters at Chicago Session

This year's annual AAPT session at the Central Division meetings of the American Philosophical Association was held at the Palmer House in Chicago from 12:15 to 1:30 on Saturday, April 27, 1991. The topic was Student Relativism; the attendance was about thirty; and, as has been the case in recent years, discussion following the presentation was sufficiently lively that it could easily have continued well beyond the scheduled end of the session.

What was unique about this year's session was that the presenters were all graduate students. Last summer's AAPT workshop-conference, held at Indiana University—Bloomington, featured a special seminar, taught by Professor Martin Benjamin, for graduate students and new teachers of philosophy. Three participants in that seminar chose the topic and did the presentation for the Central Division AAPT session. While the three presentations varied in length and in formality, all were thoughtful and thought-provoking. Reference was made to several articles dealing with Student Relativism which have appeared in Teaching Philosophy. The article referred to extensively by all three panelists was Stephen Satris, "Student Relativism" (9:3, 193-205).

The first panelist was Nancy Slonneger (University of Nebraska—Lincoln). Ms. Slonneger suggested that we ought not consider only the negative features of Student Relativism and of students' use of it. Rather, she suggested that we should regard students' acceptance of Student Relativism as a stage in their cognitive development. The student accepts Student Relativism because the student is not yet at the point of being able to provide good arguments or facts in support of his beliefs, but is at the same time too terrified to give up long-held beliefs. As a result Student Relativism is a sign that students are growing and developing, and we philosophers should view that aspect of it positively.

James Smalley (Michigan State University) was the second panelist. Mr. Smalley maintained that instructors need to draw students into critical thinking, rather than letting their criticisms of Student Relativism become intimidating. Students should be invited and encouraged into the exciting world of learning. They need to develop a better competence in moral decision-making. The use of polarized moral topics in class may be a hindrance in this development. Students need to be encouraged to take students themselves seriously, as the instructor takes them seriously by engaging them in philosophical topics of mutual interest. The instructor should avoid confrontational and authority-oriented approaches. Smalley also reminded the audience to be aware of gender and racial bias; what seems to be student passivity (expressed in Student Relativism's unwillingness to argue for one's position) may reflect the social setting of the classroom.

The third panelist was Rebecca Pagen (Michigan State University). Ms. Pagen, as a section leader in an introductory ethics course, discussed Student Relativism with her class, but found that many students still defended the position in papers. "Those students in favor of relativism did not hesitate to go from the descriptive thesis of cultural relativism to the normative conclusion of ethical relativism. In addition, they easily ignored what we reviewed to be the unacceptable consequences of holding the relativist views." Ms. Pagen believed this occurred because students are not yet able to grasp all the philosophical material presented to them. They made use of what they could grasp (the favorable aspects of relativism), while not using what they could not grasp (its unfavorable aspects). So, Pagen recommends selecting argumentation in this area with care. Students should be encouraged to develop as philosophers, and we can help them by using current and pertinent examples and showing that the complexity of moral thinking is not something to be feared.

The session, I thought, went very well. Should there be another AAPT summer seminar for graduate students, I would suggest the opportunity to participate in a panel at an APA session like this be given as an incentive to those students. Encouraging "apprentice philosophers" is a way in which we in AAPT can further philosophy teaching. [Please send proposals for presentations for the 1992 Central APA meetings in Louisville to Professor Schnetzer by October 15, 1991. —Eds.]

O. Dale Schnetzer
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Bowling Green State University
Huron, OH 44839
AAPT News - June 1991

Last Call

AAPT Conference in California

AAPT and the Department of Philosophy at San Jose State University will hold a conference on “Teaching Philosophy in a Multicultural Context” on the campus of San Jose State July 15th to 17th, 1991. Conference speakers and topics are:

MONDAY, July 15th

Keynote Address: “Listening as a Moral Imperative,” Laurence Thomas, Syracuse University

“Critical Thinking and Cultural Diversity,” Nancy Glock, California State Chancellor’s Office

“Mainstream and Oppressed Voices in the American Philosophical Tradition,” Ken Stikkers, Seattle University.


“Incorporating the Black Experience into the Philosophy Curriculum,” Tommy Lott, San Jose State University

“Writing a Multicultural Introduction to Philosophy Text,” Gary Kessler, Cal. State U. at Bakersfield

“Native American Philosophies and Western Culture,” Clara Sue Kidwell, U. of Cal. at Berkeley

“Multicultural Activities and Simulations,” John Lennsen, Oregon Department of Education

TUESDAY, July 16th

“Teaching Introduction to Philosophy in a Multicultural Setting,” David Adams, California State Polytechnic

“A Necessary Adjunct to Teaching Philosophy in a Multicultural Context: Dealing with Difference,” Fred Edmondson and William Hayes, Cal. State U. at Stanislaus

“Using World Literature and Film to Explore the Multicultural Dimensions of Philosophy,” Betsy Decyk, Cal. State U. at Long Beach

“Integrating Spanish and Latin American Materials into the Philosophy Curriculum,” Rene Trojillo, San Jose State University

“Thinking About Multicultural Teaching,” Laurence Thomas, Syracuse University

“Teaching Confucian Ethics: A Primer,” Craig Ihara, Cal. State U. at Fullerton

“Multicultural Education and Personal Knowledge,” Dennis Matthies, Stanford University

“Developing an Understanding of Others in the Multicultural Context of a Prison Classroom,” Helene Poland, University of Wisconsin, Baraboo

“Roles and Stereotypes: Recognizing Diversity,” Dick Schubert, San Jose State University

Barbeque and Social (family members invited)

WEDNESDAY, July 17th

“Aesthetics, Culture and American Popular Music,” Joel Rudinow, Sonoma State University

“Techniques for Handling Discussions of Difficult Topics in the Multicultural Classroom: Respecting Diversity,” Jo Sprague, San Jose State University

“Stay Close to the Light, You will be Bright,” Jon Dorbolo, Oregon State University

“Teaching Philosophy in a Culturally Diverse Context: Cultivating Philosophy Majors,” Albert Flores, Cal. State U. at Fullerton

“Using Group Tests to Encourage Intercultural Interaction,” John E. Sallstrom, Georgia College

“Multiculturalism and Philosophy: The Fiction of Charles Johnson,” Richard E. Hart, Bloomfield College

“Philosophically Correct Speech and the Education of Philosophy,” Dennis Rohatyn, University of San Diego

Concluding Plenary Session

For registration forms or further information, contact

Dr. Cynthia Rostankowski
Philosophy Department
San Jose State University,
San Jose, CA 95192.
Phone: (408) 924-4504,
Evenings: (408) 354-5844.
Environmental Ethics Society Invites Members

The International Society for Environmental Ethics serves as a network for persons interested in environmental ethics in theory, practice, and teaching. In a quarterly newsletter, there is regular notice of new books and articles in the field, conferences and symposia, teaching materials including bibliographies, videotapes and films, notices of courses and graduate programs in environmental ethics and animal welfare issues, and current events which can serve as classroom discussion resources. Back issues of the newsletter contain many useful resources.

The Society also sponsors sessions at the American Philosophical Association meetings, the American Academy for the Advancement of Science, the Canadian Philosophical Association, the Joint Session of the Mind and Aristotelian Societies (UK), and other learned societies.

Membership in the Society is $10.00 per year, with similar rates in other currencies. Student memberships are half-price. Contact Professor Laura Westra, Secretary, Department of Philosophy, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4, Canada (telephone: (519) 253-4232 ext. 2334).

National Conference on Computing and Values
(Continued from Page 1)

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 register or to receive registration materials, contact conference co-chair Walter Maner:
Professor Walter Maner
Department of Computer Science
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH 43403
Telephone: (419) 372-2337/8719
BITNet: maner@bgsu.org.bitnet
InterNet: maner@andy.bgsu.edu(129.1.1.2)
CompuServe: 73157,247

Pre-College Philosophy Resource Roster

The Committee on Pre-College Instruction in Philosophy is compiling a list of people currently or recently participating in pre-college philosophy teaching or with a special interest in the field. Those on the list may be asked to serve as resource persons for APA programs, for referral in answer to outside inquiries, and as mentors to those just entering the field.

If you would like to be on this list, please send your name, address, telephone/E-mail, and a brief description of your area of experience or interest to Rosalind Ekmann Ladd, Department of Philosophy, Wheaton College, Norton, MA 02766. For further information call (401) 861-3824 (home) or (508) 285-7722 (office).

If you are willing to share a syllabus or other teaching materials, please enclose them.

Send Your Submissions!

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

Submissions on disk (or E-mail) are much appreciated. Editing is done in WordStar 6.0, and WordStar’s file conversion utility can import virtually any MS-DOS word processor file format. So, files from PFS Write, Word, WordPerfect, and others are fine. Please include a hard copy.

Diskette formats other than MS-DOS (Apple, Atari, Amiga, Macintosh, etc.) cannot be read. Files may also be sent as E-mail to Daryl Close, CompuServe 76547,3311 or by FAX to 419-447-9605. If you need help, call us at 419-447-6442 (Tiffin University) or 419-772-2197 (Ohio Northern University).—The editors
How Far?

by Naomi Zack, SUNY, Albany

How far can one draw innocent people into philosophy without boring or otherwise disafflicting them? By 'innocent' I mean those who have not acquired the taste for, or felt the need to consider, the abstract and fundamental questions about which only philosophers seem to care. By 'philosophy' I mean academic philosophy because that is what I teach. I am assuming that philosophy can benefit innocent people by enriching their inner lives and adding depth and clarity to their work in other fields. Philosophy is also an absorbing form of communication among those who practice the discipline. I think that this "How-far" question presents interesting teaching challenges with at least five classes of students:

(1) ordinary and average undergraduates at two or four year liberal arts colleges;
(2) students who are majoring in fields outside of the humanities, especially technical fields;
(3) adults returning to higher education;
(4) all students from diverse cultural backgrounds;
(5) grade school and high school students. (I include this group for completeness although I will not be referring to them in what follows here.)

What are the characteristics of these innocent people? Usually they are not totally ignorant of philosophy. If they have signed up for an introductory course then they have at least heard the word 'philosophy' and they have probably asked other people what philosophy courses are like. The chances are high that the answers they got did not give them a good first impression of the subject. They may have been told that philosophers play games, that we play with words, that we raise problems where there are no problems, that we cannot speak without arguing or criticizing, that our speech is boring, that we are irrelevant, and that it would be best to put off taking the required philosophy course or two for as long as possible. So the innocent people may already be "wise" about philosophy as a subject and they may come into the introductory classroom prepared to resist it. Or, if they do not enter the classroom with prejudice, many of them, after they have completed their philosophy courses, will sneer politely when they hear the word 'philosophy' and try to avoid talking about the subject. They will not go out of their way to read philosophy texts and they will be skeptical of anything which is said to them by people whom they know are philosophers or philosophy majors. For present purposes, however, the main characteristics of innocent people are that they have not themselves done philosophy, they have read little or no philosophy, and they are as likely as not to resist the subject in the classroom. I think it is necessary to overcome this resistance as a philosophy teacher.

First of all, what is the material one wants to teach innocent people? I will try to define this material ostensively, so as not to describe it in a controversial manner. The material of academic philosophy is twofold: There is content and there is method. The content divides sharply into two bodies of texts:

(1) The great classical works in the history of philosophy (from the ancients, the medieval and the moderns) and a smaller number of acclaimed twentieth century works (from the British, the Continentals, the American pragmatists and the logicians and philosophers of science) ("the History," below);
(2) The ongoing contemporary articles, meeting papers and books written by living philosophers, primarily for other philosophers ("the Literature," below).

The History is a relatively closed body and an varying amount of familiarity with it are assumed in the Literature. The Literature is a vast, amorphous, inconclusive body, in constant motion, which is the ongoing professional work of the philosophy profession. Under most circumstances the Literature cannot be used as teaching material for innocent people and the reasons for this are fairly straightforward: much, although not all, of it is inconclusive work in progress; too much of it represents strategic alternatives to professional failure, which is not the business of nonprofessionals; the Literature is often incomprehensible to innocent people; and the "foundation" of the History is required for an understanding of the Literature. Generally speaking, and perhaps most important, many individual works in the Literature are contributions to larger ongoing discussions in the Literature.
and it is impossible to fully understand any one such work without a knowledge of the contemporary background. This embeddedness leads to a problem with reading volume for students and all too often the surrounding discussion is only of interest to professional philosophers, anyway. Therefore, by default, the material which can be taught to innocents, and to which the "How-far" question applies, is the history of philosophy, along with the twentieth century landmarks and perhaps small numbers of carefully selected works from the Literature. Criteria for selection of contemporary works might be the ability of students to understand the piece if it is read alone, the acknowledged value of the piece in the philosophy profession, and the relevance of the piece to the rest of the student’s assignments.

I think it is important that students be assigned readings in primary sources in the History because in philosophy the interpretation of a text is itself a philosophical work. And, there is no reason why beginning students should not begin at the beginning.

Students can also be taught method in introductory courses, as in other disciplines, such as the sciences. And this is where theoretical problems begin because in philosophy the choice of a method is itself a philosophical problem. Philosophical method is debatable, varied, personal, and as such, an integral part of every piece of content, both in the History and in the Literature. Philosophy, regardless of its content, is something which is actively done in particular and diverse ways. Method cuts across both content and time periods. But I want to submit that in addition to teaching innocent people about the history of philosophy (e.g., What are Hume’s objections to the argument from design?), one can teach them how to “do” philosophy, despite the embarrassment implied by the quotes around ‘do’.

Of course, the proposal that one teach method is fraught with theoretical problems. How can one teach something about which there is no consensus among philosophers, something which professional philosophers cannot even define, something which one may not have good reason to believe one can do oneself? Yes, these are serious problems but they are philosophical problems and as such can be addressed in the classroom.

It is not merely the case that one must have something to teach students in addition to the History. Unless students can learn how to do philosophy, the chances are high that they will develop the negative attitude towards philosophy mentioned earlier. They will merely have been “exposed” to the subject as an educational requirement and the subject will not have “taken” in them. This kind of exposure can be oddly traumatizing to students, intellectually. If students do not learn how to do philosophy, they will always resist it. And of course, their teachers will complain about the unwillingness of students to think abstractly, or even to just plain think at all. The most effective way to overcome initial resistance is to get students to participate in the discipline. They can begin by verbalizing their resistance. Philosophers themselves resist philosophy—why else would they spend so much energy criticizing what other philosophers have said and written? Philosophy is all about resistance.

**Background**

Last semester, I returned to philosophy, and academia, after an absence of twenty years. While much of my intervening experience is not relevant to philosophy, as a whole, this experience motivates me to make the activity of teaching and the experience of students in my classrooms, as interesting and important as possible. After choosing to return, I wanted to do more as a teacher than what I had experienced from teachers when I was a student. But, of course, I did not know precisely what to do that first semester. So I did everything positive which I knew of and observed the results.

This is what I did. I restricted my lectures to the essential ideas in the texts and spent as much time as I responsibly could setting up discussion questions and listening to what students had to say. There were strong dialogues and animated discussions in the classroom; and students talked to me about their work during my office hours. Sometimes, discussions among students appeared to go on in my absence and I was encouraged by this because it was a filter on possible efforts to impress the teacher. I encouraged the academic necessities of good writing, promptness and evidence of having read the assignments. I tried to keep interest in the subjects alive by introducing issues relevant to student concerns (although I found that the students did this far better than I could). I assigned long and difficult readings in primary sources. I allowed the rewriting of term papers. I structured exams to check for their understanding and absorption, as well as to allow for independent opinion. I was good-natured, humorous, flexible about late papers, and I did not take attendance systematically. I graded generously and wrote at length on their papers, as necessary.

The results? The students thought that I was well-prepared and that they had been well-treated. They found the class discussions interesting and the reading assignments too long. They were often not prepared for class. There was no systematic evidence that philosophical thinking had developed. Exams and papers were mixed as to quality. Key concepts were often poorly grasped. Classroom attendance was lax and students were often hampered by their ignorance of what had
already been covered in class. I decided that these results were fairly typical of pedagogical liberalism.

I had taught four courses at two schools, on a part-time basis. At a large public university, I taught Philosophy and Feminism and Introduction to Philosophy of Science. At a nontraditional college for adults, I taught a correspondence course called Modes of Inquiry (philosophy and history of ideas in the sciences), and an autobiographical writing study group.

The committed level of student participation in classroom discussions in the feminist class was instructive to me. There is a current movement to make philosophy more culturally relevant by including feminist research in the curriculum. While there are problems with the appropriateness of the ideology of feminism as teaching content, there are strong contributions which can be made concerning method. Thus, Belenky, et al., in Women's Ways of Knowing, endorse a midwife model of drawing knowledge out of student, rather than a banker model of depositing knowledge into students. If I had been more authoritarian in setting up the course requirements for the feminist course, I believe I could have turned the ideological enthusiasm in the classroom to better use philosophically. For example, even though the course had students who were crossregistered from the Women's Studies Department, I had been hired by the Philosophy Department. I should have made it clear at the outset that we were going to do philosophy, primarily, and focused on the differences between philosophy and ideology more sharply than I did. I should have taken attendance at all classes and assigned brief oral reports based on the readings.

In both the Modes of Inquiry and Philosophy of Science courses, all of the students were innocent of both the scientific content and the philosophical methodology which were required in order to assess that content. They were not only innocent of these things but reluctant to have anything to do with them. My priority was to get them to understand the material. I found that this was facilitated if I raised their energy levels to where what was alien was no longer frightening. I did this in early telephone conversations with the adults by discussing their work situations and long-term educational plans. With the undergraduates I used contemporary social topics and accessible medical issues to stimulate class discussions. But basically the assigned material was very difficult for them. The Philosophy of Science students did best on their term papers which they were required to deliver in front of the class. I think that if they had been required to orally report on their readings in progress that this material would have had more vitality for them.

In terms of student progress, the autobiographical writing study group, (a pre-enrollment course which met once every three weeks), was to my surprise, my most successful course. Every student, except for one who dropped the course, showed striking improvement in both technical writing skills and the ability to discuss and write about ideas. Similarly, in the feminist course, students were most eloquent and insightful when they spoke and wrote about the lives of women they knew, often their own mothers. In all of my classes the students who had the most to say in discussions wrote the best papers and handled abstract concepts with the most skill. If they could speak their minds in class, they showed independent thinking on paper.

The Proposal

At this time I have hypothesized that innocent people can be taught to do philosophy if the material is connected to their own perceptions and susceptible to first-person discourse. This use of the self or of 'I' need not in any sense be personal or confessional—what is important is that it positions the speaker or writer. When you tell students you want to hear from them in class, they automatically assume that it is all right for them to talk about their own experience. But everyone understands that the issue is not the students' experience but the subject of the course. So when they introduce their own experience, this is their manner of making the subject of the course relevant to them. The teacher can continually point out the abstractions relevant to the philosophical subject, and as students are able, they will do the same. Thus, the students make the subject relevant to themselves and the teacher makes their contributions relevant to the subject. I think that the parallel to first-person writing by students is speech in the classroom. Ideally, I would like to have student participation count for 50% of final grades in all introductory philosophy courses, but I am not in a position to do this and must settle for 25%. This semester, I am teaching three large classes of innocent people, as follows:

1. Introduction to Ethics, technical school, seventy students.
2. Reasoning and Analysis, university students, fifty students.
3. Morals and Society, university students, fifty students.

To keep discussions as philosophically relevant as possible, I am going to assign questions to be answered by specific students in each class, based on the required readings. The readings will be in primary sources as much as possible so that students have to do the philosophical work of interpretation. No late papers will be accepted—this is for my convenience. Attendance will be taken at all classes and more than two or three
unexcused absences will result in a loss of one-half a letter grade for the course. This is so that students will be present for class participation and have a sense of the continuity of the course.

My aim is to use my power over them to empower them philosophically. This is a paradox and it raises all of the objections to older authoritarian teaching methods and attitudes. However, one can always make a case that the university classroom is inherently coercive: the students in some sense have been required to take the course. The students in some sense have to obey the teacher. This is the background of academic coercion—it is the power vested in the teacher by the employing institution. The students are all too aware of this background coercion. I intend to be explicit about what I am doing, that I am coercing them to be present in class. Then I will point out that there are benefits to them: they will get relatively painless credit for their class participation; they will find the time in the classroom more interesting; they may learn how to do philosophy. I think that most young people respond to demonstrations of honesty more positively than to any other statement of an ideal.9

In the ethics course there will be no exams but four short papers and two reviews of ongoing journals. Students will be asked to write a half of a page on a question or problem before each class and then to write another half-page on how the problem was dealt with in class, as their journal entries.10 The journals will provide their autobiographical philosophical discourse in writing. The short papers will be their most finished work and will be my basis for evaluating the success of both the journals and class participation, in more formal and traditional terms. For the Morals and Society, and Reasoning and Analysis courses, there will be exams, and term papers will all be written on the same assigned thinker, who will not be discussed in class. Exams will give me a variable on the effectiveness of the 25% class participation requirement. Assigning the same topics for term papers will provide me with a more uniform standard for assessing written work than if students are allowed to choose their own topics.

My working assumption is that the most active philosophical work of the courses will take place in the classroom. I will explain the essentials of the readings as they relate to the students' oral assignments.

I would also like to make students aware of the differences between their philosophical speaking selves and their philosophical writing selves. Basically, there is an element of voice in both cases. But this distinction points to a philosophical self as an aspect of a person, which is a concept requiring an investigation in teaching contexts, which space does not permit here.

Of course, if student participation can be invoked reliably in class, there is still no guarantee that the predicted improvement in the philosophical quality of their work will result. It may be that only students who participate without special prompting are capable of what a philosophy teacher considers high quality written work. Or, it may be that insofar as philosophy is a spoken discipline, (another subject outside the present scope), that full and active class participation is a pedagogical end in itself.

Naomi Zack
SUNY, Albany
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Empire State College

Notes

1. This "How-far?" phrasing may be optimistic. Often, the question is whether innocent people can even be taught to understand philosophy.

2. I first heard the word 'innocent' used of undergraduates in introductory philosophy courses, by Berel Lang and Josiah Gould in the Philosophy Department at SUNY, Albany (Spring, 1990).

3. For a description of the intellectual psychology behind this resistance, see Stephen A. Satris, "Student Relativism," Teaching Philosophy, 9:3 (September 1986).

4. Stephen A. Satris pointed out this problem of the interconnectedness of the Literature in comments on an earlier version of this paper.

5. There is a parallel to this resistance to philosophy by philosophers, in what Paul de Man calls "resistance to theory" in literary studies. In the literary sense, de Man claims that there is a resistance to language which is an integral part of language. See The Resistance to Theory, University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

6. I encountered ideological barriers against criticisms of feminism, as well as feminist resistance to philosophy, which I do not think would have been as strong if the context had been more clearly set in philosophical terms. For a detailed discussion of this problem, see Ellen R. Klein, "Teaching Feminist Philosophy: A Senior Seminar," AAPT News, 13:1, February, 1990.


8. The course was designed by Michael Kiskis, Dean at Empire State College. At first I was skeptical that autobiographical writing could prepare students for college level work, in general, but the progress of the students taught me otherwise. I am indebted to Michael Kiskis for making me aware of the important rhetorical spaces which exist between writers and readers, students and teachers, and students and
students, as well as the importance of helping students to appreciate the world of reading and writing, as such. I think that these rhetorical spaces can be seen as self contained in limited contexts of study. The student learns to appreciate him or her self as someone who functions in the various worlds of reading and writing. Relevance, as such, does not have to be struggled for—what the student has studied is automatically relevant to other aspects of life if the student has participated actively in the study.

9. As of this writing, I have had my first class of 70 students. I explained the mechanics of the coercion to them. They did not seem to mind. At least 50 of them participated in the introductory classroom discussion about moral theory.

10. This format for journal entries was suggested to me by John Koller, Chair of the Philosophy Department at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

Calendar of Events

(Continued from Page 16)


March 27-28, 1992 - International Society for Business, Economics and Ethics. Columbus, Ohio. Contact Richard De George, Philosophy, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045.


These listings are drawn in part from Nancy Simco (ed.), The Philosophical Calendar, published by The Conference of Philosophical Societies.
students, as well as the importance of helping students to appreciate the world of reading and writing, as such. I think that these rhetorical spaces can be seen as self-contained in limited contexts of study. The student learns to appreciate him or her self as someone who functions in the various worlds of reading and writing. Relevance, as such, does not have to be struggled for—what the student has studied is automatically relevant to other aspects of life if the student has participated actively in the study.

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Calendar of Events

(Continued from Page 16)


Bynum, Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT 06515.


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

The American Philosophical Association’s Committee on Teaching Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges will place members’ papers in CompuServe’s EDFORUM forum for discussion and criticism, beginning immediately.

CompuServe, the world’s largest commercial electronic information utility, has about 750,000 subscribers; and supports over 200 special interest “forums,” including the EDFORUM forum whose “sysop,” Chuck Lynd, is a philosophy graduate of Antioch.

One of EDFORUM’s sections, Higher Education, will accept committee members’ papers and reports on teaching, curriculum, career development, and faculty training as “library datafiles.” The committee will then conduct discussions either as realtime conferences or “message threads”—approximating the traditional reading of a paper at a conference with subsequent discussion.

Since the file length limit is 30K, a forum file is about the length of a twenty minute APA conference reading: twenty pages doublespaced.

A technical note: data library text files containing our philosophic discussions should use the extension ‘.42n’. In the extension’s scheme, the “A” stands for American, the “2” stands for the Committee’s name, and the terminal digit, n, will allow for us to distinguish succeeding versions of the same essay. When we reach “9,” the next paper will “roll over” to zero again.

In adapting the MLA style sheet standard to the constraints of CompuServe ASCII files, we’ll omit pagination, and use endnotes instead of footnotes.

Superscripting will be indicated simply by enclosing numbers in parentheses — thus(1). At the end of lines, one should not hyphenate words; rather, end the line short. Underscoring or italics may be indicated either by surrounding the word or phrases by double asterisks — **thus** or with underscores in preceding blanks: _thus_.

There are some significant differences, positive and negative. The responding discussion is mediate—the reader can look up references before pronouncing on the paper’s detail. And he/she is under some constraint to be brief. Unlike discipline exclusive conference panels, the “audience” will include nonphilosophers. EDFORUM’s members are generally professional educators. Since CompuServe forum files are posted without refereeing, some qualitative standard may be sacrificed—but there’s no haggling over submissions, no delay in getting to public access.

If you are presently a CompuServe subscriber, you need only GO EDFORUM, join the forum, register in the EDFORUM directory, and perhaps drop me a note on the message board.

If you’d like to subscribe to CompuServe, you’ll need a personal computer with a modem and any standard “terminal” program. I can recommend CompuServe Information Manager (CIM) if you haven’t already purchased one of these terminal programs which tell your computer how to talk to CIS’ computer over the telephone line.

A signup kit costs about $40 and most terminal programs cost around $80. CompuServe charges $12/hour for connect time. You can get a signup kit and terminal program at most software stores or, call their Telephone Sales and Inquiry department at (800)848-8199, Monday-Friday 8:00AM-10:00PM EST. In Canada, call (614)457-8650.

It will take a few hours’ study and experimentation to get CompuServe working for you, but you may find it worth the effort.

If you have an INTERNET or BITNET accession number, you can transmit messages and files to me through the CISINTERNET portal.

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I’ve discussed this scheme with several journal editors; they seem to feel that this doesn’t count as “publication.” Posting on CompuServe’s EDFORUM forum is more like reading a paper at a conference before submitting it to a journal.

(Continued on Page 15)
"Out of the Mouths of Babes"

This column is under the supervision of Mary Ann Carroll, Appalachian State University. Readers are urged to share their own Q.Q.s with or without commentary. Responses to commentaries and Q.Q.s are invited.

Has Reality been bugging you lately? Do you have difficulty talking about it? Do you feel there might be something terribly wrong with you? Would you assent to the following?

"I consider myself a relative criterion or reality."

If your answer to the first three questions is yes, then this column should take care of the problem. If your answer to the last question is yes, there is probably not a whole lot we can do for you here. However, we might suggest that you try to consider yourself to be something else, such as an absolute symptom of pretense.

For the rest of you normal weirdoes, you will be relieved to find out there is nothing wrong with you; the problem is with REALITY. Here's why:

"Reality is truly an awesome subject. ... The subject of reality requires a fairly high level of knowledge of the subject to carry out an intelligent conversation."

So no wonder you have trouble talking about it. Because it is TRULY and not FALSELY awesome, it should come as no surprise that reality has requirements that must be met before it allows itself to be talked about. Of course it only requires that one be fairly smart and not real smart which is very nice of it. This should really make you feel a little better. And by all means mention this to your students so they won't be intimidated by reality.

If you include a section on reality in your Intro course, you really must include a discussion of quantum theory in order to really impress students about how really smart you are when it comes to being really informative about the really real. Quantum theory, however, is by no means easy to explain, especially if all you know about physics is that it comes after philosophy in the dictionary. Lucky for you we have prepared a couple of ways to explain to students the famous problem Schrödinger had with his cat. (We admit we did get help on this.)

"What happens is that Schrödinger poisons his cat with cyanide ... [First], the cat [is] introduced to the cyanide. Secondly, the cat is ... in a hybridized state, half alive and half dead. Quantum theory states that with reactions you don't get only one single product but you get a hybridization product, halfway between both products. This is neat and true with reactions but I don't think Schrödinger's children will like petting his hybridized cat, half dead and half alive."

And we think Schrödinger should have been reported to the Humane Society. But he also should have been given an etiquette award by Miss Manners for first introducing his cat to cyanide and not just letting them get acquainted on their own.

Or you might explain the problem this way:

"As for the paradox of Schrödinger's cat, ... this goes along with the theory of a particle or a wave except that half the time the cat is viewed as dead and half the time as alive. This cat is both dead and alive at the same time until it is observed by a person; then it is dead half the time and alive half the time that it is observed."

This avoids the pitfall of giving animal rights' activists a reason to get on Schrödinger's case since the cat can be both dead and alive; and when you look at the cat, at least half the time the little guy is alive and not dead.

Some of your more astute students will remind you that a cat has nine lives and ask what is there to worry about. You can forestall such a comment if you point out that

"Of course it has often been said that a cat has nine lives; however, in most cases, if a cat is dead, there is no resurrection of its soul. Dead is dead. Regardless of one's beliefs concerning ghosts a cat will not be able to make its presence known to us. Occasionally there may be a trail of Friskies cat food but I am sure that it can be
contributed to a neighboring cat rather than Fluffy coming back from the 'pet cemetery'."

This is a good way to divert students' attention from all that physics stuff which you know absolutely nothing about; just give them a group discussion project in which they debate the pros and cons of naming a cat "Fluffy" and the nutritional benefits of Friskies, and to consider what might happen to those dead cats in the minority for whom "Dead is dead" does not apply and where there is a resurrection of their souls.

Rather than give students a chance to discover that you really have no idea what quantum theory is all about, give them reason to think you're really just a humble sort of professor who is really not out to impress them with your ignorance (oops, sorry—we meant your SMARTS). And so we suggest this ending to your lecture:

"The quantum theory is thought to be one of the hardest things to comprehend. I think our existence is similarly complicated. Of course if I knew all the answers my name would be above Einstein's on the list."

You might also mention that just because Einstein was so smart, it doesn't mean he was always right: so add this as a postscript to your lecture:

"When people think of Einstein they automatically think of him being intelligent and therefore correct. I disagree, I mean he was a homosexual does that make him right?"

(And if you follow THIS advice, you have a problem that goes beyond what we can help you with. You are suffering from a major case of the Stupids.)

We really didn't mean to get sidetracked—we said we would help you with your RTs (reality troubles).

We realize, however, that not all of you out there feel you are suffering from RTs. If you are one of them, it's because you are suffering from delusions of grandeur instead; in reality, you are out of touch with reality and hence mistakenly think that everything is cool with reality. We are therefore obligated to give you some mental slaps:

"[A point] worth mentioning ... is that the universe is constantly branching. This is great, the universe is always branching and our lives follow only one path. What is even worse is that we don't have any way of knowing if the pathway we are following is correct. We can't stop and look at ourselves because who would be looking at who."

Now try answering the following questions:

1. Just HOW great is it that the universe is constantly branching?
2. If our lives follow only one path in spite of the universe constantly branching, yet we worry that the pathway we are following is not correct, should we sue the travel agent for giving bad directions which caused us mental anguish?
3. Should you decide that you want to stop to look at yourself but can't to whom do you complain? (Forget Schrödinger—he has a problem with his cat and can't be bothered with your whining.)
4. Suppose you somehow did manage to stop to look at yourself: if you didn't like what you saw, could you get a refund? and even though you wouldn't be sure who is looking at who, would you be worried that you might be spying on yourself and not know it?

Your attempting to answer these questions should guarantee that we have been successful in getting reality to bug all you philosophy teachers reading this column. (We don't want anyone to feel left out.) So let us begin dealing with RTs and how to cope.

It just so happens that Doctor Reality is on staff here at the QCs Center and advises anyone with RTs not to become obsessed by them and suggests the following guideline:

"You may question the reality of people around you, but you know it is selfish to believe you are the only true being."

There you have it: it's OK to have RTs—just make sure you aren't selfish. (We must remember to ask Doctor Reality whether it is unselfish to believe you are the only false being.)

Because we had a feeling that all of you were suffering from RTs (or would be, once you started reading this column), we consulted some reality experts (REs) in advance to try to find out some possible causes of RTs. Here is what one said; fortunately, this RE had personally experienced RTs and so also gave us a suggestion for a cure:

"Atoms don't possess real qualities, yet they make up our structure. These atoms make up our brain which
is connected with our mind. Something unreal constructs the mind which is sure of its reality, this causes problems with our personal identity.

"What pulls myself out of this problem is the fact that I am thinking. The study of atoms is still ambiguous, yet by all testing, my thoughts exist. I will not and cannot abandon my ideals for tests that can never be positive. I continue thinking, therefore there is a loophole in the unreality of atoms which still allows me to be."

If you will take the time to do the appropriate testing, you too may find that your thoughts exist. You must be careful to continue thinking; otherwise the loophole will not allow you to be. Loopholes can be very strict, you know.

Given what this RE said, it is pretty obvious that one major problem RT sufferers have is whether or not they should believe they exist. Here is how one of our REs handles the problem:

"I believe that I exist as does the quantum theory. In fact, I might exist because of the quantum theory, it may have been that a certain atom being in the correct place at the right time resulting in my conception. Nevertheless, I do not question my existence, I just accept it. I understand that scientists can't just accept things and that they need proof. Being rather uneducated in this aspect, I'm afraid I just have to believe that I exist."

If you too have been wondering whether to believe you exist, you should now feel a lot better knowing that the quantum theory believes you do. And if that belief is good enough for the quantum theory, it's good enough for you. After all, the quantum theory probably caused you to exist in the first place. Besides, you're not a scientist so it's OK for you simply to accept that you exist even though you don't have proof. And you don't have to be afraid no matter how uneducated you are (you're not going to let SCIENTISTS intimidate you, are you?): just go ahead, throw caution to the wind—BELIEVE THAT YOU EXIST!! What have you got to lose?

The consensus of the REs we consulted was that, as intimated above, the real culprits are atoms (even though they don't have real qualities, according to the RE just quoted): they are the source of RTs. In order to get rid of RTs, how should one think of oneself? This is what one RE told us:

"Although I think of myself as one object, I am truly made of billions of atoms. Atoms are looking more and more like they are beings of their own. Under this train of thought, maybe I should stop thinking of myself as I really exist, as billions of little objects working together to function as one. I guess we could think of ourselves as one very elaborate system."

Apparently some of you are afflicted with RTs because you have been thinking of yourself as you really exist. If that is the source of your RTs, all you have to do forget about how you really exist and start making up stories about how you exist. Note that you don't have to think of yourself as one very elaborate system; that was only a suggestion. You might want to think of yourself as a university committee instead.

Your RTs could also be a result of a bull-headed insistence on most things having an explanation which you can't always find. We asked Doctor Reality about this, who gave a very simple yet profound response:

"If the world is full of ghost particles and reality can not be defined until it is observed and the one doing the observing is part of reality then most things can be explained."

Now if you get nitpicky about how most things can be explained, you're probably one of those narrow-minded logicians who insists that a conclusion must actually follow from the premises. If so, don't expect us to help you with your RTs; go suck an egg and chow down on some worms. It's ingratitude that REALLY gets to us at the QPs Center.

Mary Ann "Reality" Carroll
Director of the Really Real Reality and the
Really Real Quotable Quotes Center
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(Maybe the Editors of this Newsletter aren't REALLY real; maybe they're just SORT OF real, or a LITTLE real. We don't really know; we just send them this stuff that we aren't sure is real. Reality has been bugging us to—which we really shouldn't mention because we really try to keep our REAL personal problems to our REAL selves since only REAL selves can deal with REAL personal problems, which is to assume that there is a REAL and a REALITY, not to mention a REAL REALITY.)

This is a text which, according to its editors, "combines a general approach to the study of ethics with a special emphasis on ethics as it is applied to and within the business community." The text is divided into three parts to accomplish this task. Part I presents some excerpts from some of the leading normative ethical theories. Part II presents some reading selections dealing with social, political and economic issues with a special emphasis on economic justice. Part III contains a selection of readings on topics specifically related to issues regarding business practices. The text is also complemented by several case studies and a list of ethical issues relevant to business. The purpose of the text is to introduce students to general ethical theory to enable them to illuminate and solve some of the ethical problems and dilemmas within the business decision-making process.

In Part I the student is introduced to ethical theory by an interesting selection by Ruth Benedict entitled "Anthropology and the Abnormal" from her classic text Patterns of Culture. Her thesis that "Morality is culturally approved habits" or that morality is culturally conditioned, challenges the student to consider the other alternative that there are moral absolutes. It also raises the questions of the relationship between fact and value and the relationship between "is" and "ought." Immediately, the student is introduced to a rather subtle philosophical discussion. Benedict’s article is followed by “A Critique of Ethical Relativity” by Funchion, in which he demonstrates in a clear and straightforward manner the serious flaws in basing moral philosophy (normative theory) on anthropological or factual claims.

A brief excerpt from Plato’s Euthyphro clarifies the distinction between the divine command theory of ethics and the belief of Socrates in the autonomy of ethics; that is, a moral principle has intrinsic value which is not dependent upon the approval of the Gods or God.

Krishna Mallick, in her essay on “Freedom vs. Determinism,” clarifies the difference between the two while offering Jean-Paul Sartre’s existential freedom and soft determinism as an alternative. The essay makes the student aware of one’s personal freedom and accompanying responsibility in spite of the environmental constraints and pressures to compromise one’s values and act in an unethical manner. She gives the example of a bank teller, facing financial ruin for her family, who is tempted to embezzle $500 with little chance of being discovered. Other examples come to mind, such as the systems analyst for a major corporation who is pressured by his superiors to falsify data concerning safety standards for the sake of profit. His refusal to cooperate subjects him to charges of being disloyal and of not being a team player, and even to dismissal.

In his essay on “Egoism,” Funchion clarifies the distinction between psychological and ethical egoism and in the process questions the validity of the latter since it is based on the specious scientific claims of psychological egoism.

Other important essays deals with selections from John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant and John Rawls presenting utilitarian ethics, the categorical imperative, and justice as fairness. Each selection is prefaced with brief explanatory comments by the editors which tend to sum
up and clarify the concepts involved for the student. Funcion and Meagher also collaborate on a brief essay to clarify rule utilitarianism. In addition, Meagher’s exposition of David Ross’ prima facie duties is clear and to the point. There are a few other essays by other philosophers which I have not mentioned, but I have tried to suggest that Part I’s emphasis on general ethical theory is well taken and provides sufficient philosophical material for the beginner.

The focus of this review has been on Part I (general ethical theory) because I believe it to be the heart of any course in applied ethics. Therefore, I shall quickly mention some of the essays and themes in Part II dealing with social, political and economic issues. This section leads off with an excerpt from Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and makes the student aware of the origins of “real-politic” and the thesis that the ends justify the means. Other essays consider the invisible hand theory of Adam Smith and Milton Friedman’s conviction that the sole social responsibility of business is “profit maximization.” These tenets of laissez-faire capitalism are challenged by Singer’s “Rights and the Market” and by Michael Lerner’s provocative critique of capitalism “Powerlessness.” These readings give the students a balanced view of supporters and critics of capitalism and make them sensitive to the issue of social responsibility on the part of the business community, to the plight of the workers, and to the problem of economic justice and the distribution of wealth which tends to be extremely unfair in an advanced capitalistic system.

Part III is entitled “Readings in Specific Issues in Business Ethics.” Some of the topics cover affirmative action, pay equity, whistle-blowing, a devastating critique of advertising by Jules Henry, drug testing, privacy, aids in the workplace, employee theft and environmental issues. The concluding essay by Lynn A. Isabella entitled “Downsizing: Survivor’s Assessment” provides some tips and advice to the individual employee to help him or her survive as large corporations tend to downsize their operations.

The editors have also provided some case studies to be analyzed and resolved using the ethical theories presented earlier. The case studies are rather brief and abstract allowing the instructor and the students to provide additional facts and details. Finally, a rather extensive list entitled “Ethical Issues Specifically Relevant to Business” is offered as possible outside assignments or as projects to be presented in class.

The text is also complemented by a careful selected bibliography.

*Business Ethics: A Philosophical Approach* combines the philosophic with the social, political and economic to illuminate, clarify, and resolve business problems and issues with serious ethical consequences and implication. In my judgment, it succeeds fairly well and is a good text for a basic course in business ethics.

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**Call for Reviews**

Review submissions in the following categories are requested:

1. books directed at philosophy teachers (e.g., the review of *Demonstrating Philosophy* in a previous issue of *AAPT News*),
2. books that you have used in your classroom either successfully or unsuccessfully (the focus here should be on the book as a teaching tool, and explicit reference should be made to students’ experiences with it), and
3. books designed for classroom use (the focus here should be an assessment of the book’s likely success in the classroom).

In addition, we will print reader requests for comments on the classroom success of specific volumes.

Finally, any reader who is willing to review books is urged to submit his or her name to the editors. As we receive books from publishers, we will contact you regarding a review.

**Committee on CompuServe**

(Continued from Page 10)

If it’s important to you, and you have in mind a later publication in a particular journal, it might be a good idea to correspond with the journal’s editor on the matter. (Get his/her position in writing.)

I’ve queried eight academic departments on this matter. None of them would be willing to consider a CompuServe posting as publication (as an alternative to perishing). All eight chair(men) seemed to think that CIS discussion might catch mistakes and sharpen up an essay’s content.

Other organizations are conducting substantive philosophic dialogue on CompuServe: the ISSUES forum, whose staff include Drs. Jesse Yoder and Elias Baumgarten; the Retired Philosophers Association (RPA) which will post papers and conduct discussions in the “Village Elders” section; and the Society of Philosophers at Work in the World (SPWW) in the Ethics section. These groups invite your participation in the discussions.

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