1994 AAPT Conference in Montreal

[The following comes from AAPT President Phil Hamlin. —eds.]

Present plans are for the 10th International Workshop Conference on Teaching Philosophy to be held in Montreal, Quebec, August 4-8, 1994. The conference will be hosted by Marianopolis College, with dormitory accommodations at McGill University, just a few blocks from the heart of Montreal, on the side of Mount Royal, the famous mountain after which the city is named. This is one of the most exciting announcements I have had the pleasure to make. This will be our first conference in a large city, and our first conference in Canada!

Richard Wright, our former executive director, who is now in the Provost’s Office at Western Michigan University, very kindly agreed to go up to Montreal in mid-June to examine the site and the accommodations. I thought that we needed an experienced person to look over the place and make an evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. I have discussed aspects of what he told me about Marianopolis as a site for our conference with most of the members of the board, and they are in agreement that we should have our next conference at Marianopolis.

Professor James Pettit, who teaches at Marianopolis and who authored the site-proposal, has organized a group of Montreal philosophers in the area to help set up the conference. He has agreed to be the local arrangements chair person, and assistant program chair. He will help us get the word out to the many philosophers who teach in Canada, especially in the Montreal area, the provinces of Quebec and Ontario, and the Maritime provinces.

Betsy Decyk, who was recently elected as our Vice President, has graciously agreed to serve as program chair for the 1994 conference. She and I invite you to start developing proposals for workshops on teaching philosophy. One theme from our earliest conferences we want to engage again: we want to have a variety of workshops on teaching... continued on page 4
Richard Wright resigned in January as Executive Director of AAPT, a position which he held for several years. He ably performed the duties of this position with dispatch and style. While it is true that he leaves large shoes to fill, he has agreed to help his successor work into the position.

So now we are searching for a new Executive Director. Richard has helped me to formulate the description of this position for this newsletter.

AAPT's Executive Director (ED) performs the most important tasks of the organization, in the sense that s/he sees to the day to day running of the organization. The ED maintains the membership records and the records of dues payments; s/he sets up the major mailings for and works out the physical details of the conferences which we hold every other year (working closely with the local arrangements chairperson), and s/he handles the running of the conference (registration, room and key assignments, meal plans, name tags, etc.) The ED works with the Treasurer to double check the financial records of the organization and handles all inquiries about the organization and its activities.

Richard says that the work of the ED takes an average of one or two hours a week, but tends to come in spurts. The bulk of the ED's work is associated with setting up the conferences.

The ideal candidate would be a person with some organization skills who also is able to work effectively with people, whose institution is supportive of having the national office of AAPT housed there. AAPT can afford some support for the secretarial functions required by the position. However, it seems unrealistic to expect a long or even short list of ideal candidates for the position (certainly you have not managed to get anything like an ideal president this time!), so I would like to issue an invitation to anyone who is interested to contact me or Richard (his e-mail address: wright@gw.wmich.edu) or Betsy (her e-mail address: bdecyk@beach1.csulb.edu). AAPT needs you!

Betsy Newell Decyk was elected the new Vice President, and she will serve in that capacity until August 1994, at which time she will automatically become the new President of AAPT. Betsy will then serve as President for two years, and finally serve two more years on the Board of Officers as Past President.

Anthony M. Coyne and Krishna Mallick were elected to the Board as At Large members, and they will serve until August 1996.

About half of AAPT's voting members actually voted, and this was a very tight election: only eight votes separated the Vice Presidential candidates, and a handful of votes separated five of the At Large candidates.

Congratulations to all the election winners!
Teaching Just War Theory

Jeffrey P. Whitman, Catherine G. Haight
United States Military Academy

On March 16, 1968, a unit of American soldiers (C Company of Task Force Barker) entered the Vietnamese hamlet of My Lai, a suspected enemy stronghold, on a search and destroy mission. Finding no enemy soldiers there, they rounded up the villagers and slaughtered some 500 of them—mostly women, children, and old men.

This event, perhaps more than any other single event during the Vietnam war, had a profound influence on the United States Army for years to come. It became, and still is today, the centerpiece of just war theory instruction at all levels of the Army, from basic training to the Army War College. At the United States Military Academy at West Point, the responsibility for this instruction to cadets is largely in the hands of the Philosophy Division of the English Department. As part of an introductory philosophy course, second year cadets receive instruction on the Laws of Land Warfare (found in the Hague and Geneva Conventions) and the just war theory that undergirds these laws.

While the need to teach the basics of just war theory to cadets (as professional soldiers in training) should be obvious, other colleges and universities have also recognized the need for a similar introduction to just war theory for their students (as citizens in a democratic society and potential soldiers in the defense of that society). With this in mind, we would like to offer a brief synopsis of the course taught at West Point that others may find helpful in developing their own introductory course.

West Point cadets begin their military experience as civilians, but they take their first oath of office at the end of a very long first day of training in what has come to be less than affectionately known as “Beast Barracks.” The oath of this first day, although similar to the commissioning oath they take as fledgling officers four years later, is also rather different in one significant sense. Ascadets, they affirm that they will support the Constitution of the United States; as officers, they will vow “to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, . . . .” Exactly what does it mean to “defend” the Constitution? How far does one go in its defense? What is the scope of a soldier’s moral duties and legal duties? What if these duties conflict? Based upon these sorts of questions and the issues they raise, it should be clear that while there is much for our students to learn and consider, we cannot expect closure on these issues in any strict sense. Instead, our method is to expose our students to moral discourse and try to convince them that reflection and critical analysis are essential to them in their role as professional soldiers and as citizens of a democratic republic.

Our course, entitled Introduction to Philosophy, is designed to give the cadets the rudimentary skills they need to engage in moral debate as it applies to just war theory. Organized into three blocks, the first portion of the course deals with elements of critical reasoning. The cadets study about ten lessons of logic with an emphasis on critical thinking and clear writing. We devote the following ten to fifteen class periods to a survey of classical ethical theories: egoism, utilitarianism, Kantian absolutism, virtue theory, rights theory, and relativism. The cadets gain an appreciation for the major elements of each of the views and become familiar with the language and methods of philosophical moral discourse. The remaining twenty class periods are spent on just war theory. We use an assortment of films and Michael Walzer’s book, Just and Unjust Wars to examine the theory in its abstract, philosophical context and in its concrete, historical context.

The films we use play a particularly important role in the course. They take the cadets from abstract theorizing about hypothetical situations to real life situations they may face on the battlefield. We often begin the semester with a film entitled “Interviews with My Lai Veterans.” Produced in the early seventies, it is a mosaic of clips from interviews with the soldiers who had engaged in the massacre. For many of the cadets, Vietnam is in the distant past, and they are far more familiar with tales of the atrocities committed by our enemies in various wars. This film is particularly effective for our purposes because it shows the typical American soldier, the kind many of them will supervise during their first assignment as platoon leaders. The soldiers on film speak of their atrocities candidly and often in callous, unreflective tones. They offer naive and inconsistent moral arguments in continued on page 6
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basic philosophy courses, that is, workshops on teaching introductory philosophy, ethics, epistemology and metaphysics, the history of philosophy, logic, critical thinking, philosophy of religion, philosophy of science, aesthetics, political theory and philosophy, American philosophy, philosophy of history. Of course, we want workshops on others areas and topics, like medical ethics, business ethics, environmental ethics, feminism, Eastern philosophy, professional ethics, Marxism, existentialism and phenomenology, among others.

One important aspect of the conference will be a focus on philosophy courses as a requirement. In Quebec province there is such a requirement, and in many colleges in both Canada and the US there is a resurgence of thinking about a “core” curriculum, or general education, which includes philosophy courses. Our colleagues from Quebec will be preparing informative sessions on their system so that others may learn from it, and we will all be sharing our experiences in teaching similar courses.

Betsy will soon be putting together a Program Committee. She has a preliminary list of persons who have already indicated interest in this vital task. If you are interested in serving in this capacity, please inform her as soon as possible. Write to her at home, 4837 Maytime Lane, Culver City, CA 90230, or call her at (310) 559-6080. James Pettitt will be assistant program chair, and will be receiving materials submitted from Canada, and be available for discussion with philosophers in his region. James can be contacted at Marionopolis College, 3880 Cote des Neiges, Montreal, Quebec, H3H 1W1, Canada. His phone at the College is (514) 931-8792.

We are working on plans for the conference, even as you read these words. Please send me or Betsy your suggestions for what we should do again, do differently, and do that is new to improve our conference. The quickest way to contact me is through e-mail. My Internet address is hamlin@utkvs.utk.edu.

I hope that you will make your plans early to attend this our tenth conference. I want to quote from a recent letter from one of our members, Courtney Furman, about the value of these conferences: “The bi-annual workshops are invaluable and ought to be continued; their loss would be a tragedy. They are one of the few meetings I still look forward to, and attend with much profit.”

APA Electronic Bulletin Board Expands

[Received over the Internet. —eds.]

You may have tried our older system, available to anyone with access to telnet. That Bulletin Board contains a list of e-mail addresses of APA members, a Philosophical Calendar, news from the National Office, information on joining the APA, and other items of interest to the philosophical community. We are now introducing a beta version of a new system called “gopher.” The gopher has all the information currently in the Bulletin Board, but it also has some added features. We invite you try both of these systems. We would like your feedback, especially for the gopher system. Following are instructions on how to use each system...

Please send your responses to these questions, and any other comments, to panero@oxy.edu.

Thank you, and enjoy.

Instructions to use gopher

From most systems, just type:
gopher apaoxy.edu

If the response is “Command not found,” you need to ask your system administrator to install a gopher “client” in order for you to use the APA gopher.

Once you are in the system, you can move through the system of menus easily.

Instructions to use the bulletin board

To access the bulletin board, initiate a telnet session and connect to eis.calstate.edu or 130.150.102.33 Once connected, type “apa” (without the quotes, of course) at the login prompt. Follow the menus from there.
APA Bulletin Board...
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Note: Your system must support telnet. If you are unsure about the capabilities of your host computer, please contact your campus systems administrator.

[Below "<enter>" means hit the enter or return key.]

------------------ sample session ------------------

you type > telnet eis.calstate.edu
response> Trying...
response> Connected to eis.calstate.edu.
response> Escape character is '\".
response> login:
you type> : apa <enter>

Bulletin board appears as below

[1] Introduction to this Bulletin Board (update: 6/4)
[5] Philosophical Calendar (7/11)
[6] E-mail Addresses of the Membership (5/11)
[8] Bibliographies and Journal Information (2/23)

Electronic Bulletin Board for Members of the APA

System Administrator - Saul Traiger, Occidental College
*** For submissions and suggestions, send mail to traiger@oxy.edu ***
- Latest Update: 7/1/93 -

Please enter a number, (q)uit, (m)ail, or (h)elp:

------------------ end sample session ------------------

Please send e-mail responses to panero@oxy.edu, or, less preferable, snail-mail responses to Jan Panero, Box 391, Occidental College, 1600 Campus Road, Los Angeles, CA 90041

Transforming Academic Dishonesty Into Academic Integrity

The AAPT session at the American Philosophical Association conference in San Francisco this past spring drew a substantial audience as such gatherings go, perhaps because its topic related to an issue which pervades contemporary society: academic and professional dishonesty. Dr. Carol White, associate professor of philosophy and former associate dean of curriculum at Santa Clara University, who has also chaired the task force on academic integrity there for many years, gave the presentation and led the discussion which followed.

Dr. White began with some extraordinary and unfortunate examples of plagiarism, perhaps the most well-known form of academic or professional dishonesty. One of the most outrageous instances had to do with a manual on plagiarism which was plagiarized by one major western university from another major western university! The plagiarizing institution "self-corrected" when discovered by submitting an apology to the university from which they "borrowed" the document. Nothing else by way of amends were made.

All branches of academe have experienced dishonesty in some form or other as well as newspapers, television and even the ministry. While some professional organizations and government agencies have sought to provide professional guidelines (as of this writing, neither the APA nor the AAPT have produced any official documents relating to the topic), most offer no explicit sanctions, unlike guidelines for academic dishonesty which apply to students, which often require various threats and punishments, depending upon the gravity of the offense. Even in the student context, however, Dr. White noted that academic dishonesty is not treated as a "moral breach or problem in moral development," which would require a very different kind of response, "not just routinely meting out the punishment." Very few schools even bother to keep track of cheating cases on their campuses, so they have no way of keeping track of repeat offenders. Further, very few have an office or person assigned to oversee the academic process regarding academic dishonesty. Training for faculty in promoting academic integrity in their classes is typically not

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favor of their behavior or deny wrongdoing altogether. The cadets find this film disturbing and see almost immediately that Americans do not always wear a white hat in the conflict. They wonder why the officers did not stop the slaughter. That is our starting point in their studies of philosophy, and, after their study of critical reasoning and ethical theory, we return to it often in the just war portion of the course.

Since the horrors of war seem to pale in the face of the tidy utilitarian calculations that appear in the pages of history books, we use two specific films to remind the cadets that war is far more harrowing than we tend to understand from our history courses. Both the victims and the enemy soldiers have a human face. The first film is perhaps the most graphic of the films we use. Entitled “Prophecy,” it confronts the cadets with the short and long term damage done by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Produced by the Japanese Ten Foot Society, this film juxtaposes the wry gallows humor of U.S. military weapons system training films with the unspeakable damage those systems ultimately caused. Although initially as a group very much in favor of nuclear weapons, the cadets are very sober and thoughtful after this film. They begin to think in terms of the suffering caused rather than in terms of the cold, high-tech appeal of a neat new weapons system. This is an important shift for a group of young people who, during the Gulf War, watched the nightly news to see thrilling video footage that emphasized only the dazzling capabilities of expensive state-of-the-art weapons, but saw little bloodshed and mutilation.

The second film, though not as graphic, also has a very powerful effect. Alain Resnais’s “Night and Fog” offers a surreal depiction of Nazi treatment of the Jews in World War II. It raises questions of military responsibility and reminds the cadets of precisely the level of horror Walzer has in mind when he uses the phrase “Nazi-like regime” to describe his limiting case. Both “Night and Fog” and “Prophecy” have direct application to Walzer’s chapter on supreme emergency which deals with one of the great dilemmas of war: what are the moral limits on a nation’s actions in war when it faces a choice between certain destruction at the hands of a truly evil enemy or committing a heinous act of war against that enemy in order to thwart certain defeat? Needless to say, the discussion on this point is animated.

For the portion of Walzer’s book that deals with military and political responsibility, we complement our lectures and discussion with a return to the My Lai question by viewing the Frontline episode entitled, “Remembering My Lai.” Much more powerful than the first My Lai film, this program presents a description of the events leading up to the massacre at My Lai, revisits some of those interviewed earlier, in-

Notes
6. Some of these other films include “Under Orders, Under Fire” (part of the PBS Ethics in America series) and “Bombs in the Casbah,” Part II of The Algerian War: A Question of Conscience (available from Peter Batty Productions, Kingston, Surrey, England KT27NT).
Philosophy Clubs: Revisited

A couple of years ago I published a little piece called "Philosophy Clubs: A Challenge," in Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association ("Issues in the Profession," September, 1991, Volume 65, #1). In the present article I will take up the themes and issues raised in that piece, while highlighting some of the developments over the past two years related specifically to undergraduate philosophy clubs, and more generally to undergraduate philosophy education. I hope to serve two purposes in this endeavor; first, to share with other teachers of philosophy some positive experiences associated with philosophy clubs; second, to invite other interested teachers of philosophy to participate in the ever-increasing number of activities stemming from the growth of undergraduate philosophy clubs.

The Regis College Philosophy Club continues to flourish and expand as it enters its fourth year. Regis College is a private, liberal arts college located in Denver, Colorado, with about 1000 traditional undergraduates. Our club, which has about 10-15 regular members, meets on a weekly basis, and we read and discuss materials of interest to members of the club. At our off-campus meetings — held sometimes at my home, sometimes at the homes of student members — we have read over the years everything from The Communist Manifesto to the Tao Te Ching, from Plato, Aristotle, and Kant to Kristeva, Derrida, and postmodern theology. We have no time limits, and depending on the quality of discussions we will meet anywhere from an hour or so to four or five hours at a clip. We welcome anyone to our meetings, though it is mostly majors and minors that attend. We have maintained this format for three years, and though older members have graduated we continue to get new members primarily by word of mouth among students.

Because of our format, we sometimes read and discuss materials associated with students' classes, either directly (when we read the same texts that are discussed in a class) or indirectly (reading, say, existentialists not covered in a class on that topic in which a number of our members were enrolled). Yet, no matter what we read in club meetings, because we are not constrained by syllabi, time limits, and formalities associated with formal academic settings, we can go at our own pace and "do our own thing." The result is that the freedom to question is cultivated, the extent of discussions enhanced, and the depth of understanding intensified. These discussions are often continued throughout the week, and they inevitably feed back not only into subsequent meetings but into classroom discussions as well. This has helped our members gain a much greater competence with whatever materials we may cover, and to gain a great deal of self confidence in their own philosophical abilities.

In addition to our meetings, the club has engaged in a variety of activities that I believe have profited our students. For two years now our club has published a journal, Premium Cartridge, featuring the work of undergraduate students from around the country. In addition to crafting articles for this publication, members have had to learn to read with care and evaluate the submissions of others, thereby developing the kind of critical appreciative reading required of editors, an ability that will benefit them in the future, whether in graduate school or in professional life. They have also learned much about all the rest that goes into the publishing of a national journal.

We have, for the last two years, also taken trips to philosophy conferences. A couple of years ago we attended the Mid-South Philosophy Conference, held at Memphis State University, and one of our students had the opportunity to read a paper during the undergraduate sessions. This past year we attended the Pacific Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, held in San Francisco. Many students found these trips most valuable, especially in terms of becoming better acquainted with the professional activities of philosophers, and as such feel more familiar and comfortable with the kinds of environments they will begin to encounter directly as graduate students.

The activities of the Regis College Philosophy Club are not unique, however. At meetings of the APA and the AAPT I have organized sessions that have allowed me to meet other teachers of philosophy who are involved with or interested in philosophy clubs. Two of the folks that I have met at these meetings have spoken to me about experiences with their own clubs — with their own formats and agendas — which I will share briefly with you.

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Transforming Academic Dishonesty... continued from page 5

provided, nor is preparation for dealing with dishonesty when it arises. According to White, only 6 out of 200 schools surveyed by a researcher on the subject had any kind of educational program for students caught cheating.

One significant impediment to keeping records on repeat student offenders is the legal concern of due process. On Dr. White’s campus, the policy submitted to the university by its Academic Integrity Committee, which she chairs, was sent back to the committee for further work because of a concern over the lack of an adequate procedure for handling dishonesty, and the possibility of lawsuits because of its absence. According to Dr. White, “the most important policy a university can develop is not the statement of penalties in its bulletin or any elaborate procedural guidelines for adjudicating cases but its strategies for raising the consciousness of both its students and its faculty around the issues of academic integrity.”

Dr. White advised that professors make sure that their “own house is in order” before proceeding with the clarification of such issues for students. She also suggested straightforward discussions with students about the requirement of effort for the development of cognitive skills; also urged is teaching in a way that inspires student self-confidence because questions and comments are taken seriously rather than viewed as “intellectual one-up-manship” and criticism by the professor. She also suggested talking about academic dishonesty and its forms, and explaining why cheating is wrong, and what the problems are with plagiarism. Giving examples is also important, so students are very clear in their understanding of what constitute instances of academic dishonesty. It is important that students realize that acknowledging their sources does not detract from their writing, but rather “shows that they know a good idea when they see (or hear) one”.

Dr. White concluded her presentation by pointing out that “the pursuit of truth is a cooperative enterprise,” and one’s readers may wish to know who inspired one’s thoughts and carry on the investigation into those thoughts further. As one teaches, one ought to mention those who inspired one’s own interpretations, as well as views of thinkers with which one disagrees and why. Fairness, independent thinking, and intellectual honesty are all demonstrated this way. Be willing to say “I don’t know” or “I never thought of that” when it’s true. Dr. White quoted Steven Cahn who said that “such responses may constitute greater praise (to a student) than ‘good’ or ‘right’ in response to set-up questions.”

A good deal of discussion followed the session. Participants recounted their own problems and successes with academic dishonesty. Some of the most fascinating remarks came from a professor teaching as a visiting scholar in this country from the former Soviet Union. He found that his students were more helpful than his colleagues concerning the “etiquette” of student-teacher interaction as well as appropriate contexts for discussion a student’s work (e.g. not by name in front of the whole class!). He also reflected on what academic integrity and dishonesty mean for him and his colleagues in Russia who are struggling to emerge from a system which stipulatively defined such notions along party lines, and which rewarded and punished one’s scholarly pursuits accordingly.

Dr. White offered a handout of suggestions for all in the audience, listing strategies intended to discourage academic dishonesty. Dr. White has thought long and compassionately about these issues, and the results are worthy of our attention and potentially beneficial in our classes.

Cynthia Rostankowski
San Jose State University
San Jose, CA

[AAPT News hopes to present Professor White’s observations in a future issue. —eds.]

SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS

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

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

Diskette formats other than MS-DOS (Apple, Atari, Amiga, Macintosh, etc.) cannot be read. Files may also be sent as E-mail to Daryl Close, Internet 76170.2351@compuserve.com; or Mark Lenssen, Internet 71165.533@compuserve.com.

Please call us at (419) 447-6442 (Tiffin University) or (419) 772-2197 (Ohio Northern University) for guidelines for submissions.—The editors.
AAPT Book Review
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For those who are looking for "hard stuff" two sections of part one of the book are particularly interesting: the section on "Causality and . . . Health and Illness" and the piece on "Individuality, Community and the Moral Order." Both sections dwell on Yoruba realities and depending on a philosophy professor's own background and interest, both may be tailored to fit the needs of classes in moral philosophy and metaphysics or even medical ethics. If one is reading Robert C. Solomon's Introducing Philosophy (4th ed., New York: HBJ, Inc. 1989), one can incorporate Dr. Gbadegesin's piece on "Causality . . . " into Solomon's chapter on "Mind and Body." In the former, Professor Gbadegesin presents and analyzes certain African views on the problem of causality. A closer reading of this section will reveal that, just as causality is explained in terms of "forces," natural and/or supernatural, by our author, the relation between mind and body could be explained also in terms of the interplay or intervention of "forces." "Forces" function, in view of this interplay, as the nexus between objects, between persons, as well as between body and mind or spirit. Another section which may be incorporated into Solomon's first chapter is Dr. Gbadegesin's section, "On the Idea of an African Philosophy." In twenty-six pages, Professor Gbadegesin enunciates what could be used to instruct and to challenge students' understanding and appreciation of the first three sections in Solomon's "Introduction." The language is lucid, non-technical and written in plain English. The only unfamiliar words are, perhaps, names like Tempels, Kagame, Gyekye (pronounced, ger-chi), Senghor, Mbiti (biti), Hountondji (hon-ton-gee), Wiredu, Oruka - all of whom are authors; and, the word, "Bantu," which refers to a linguistically related tribal group of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa. Beyond these, anyone at an American college will be able to read this piece.

Finally, I will recommend that the philosophy professor who wishes to use this book knowing he or she has limited knowledge on the subject of African philosophy should read first, Richard A. Wright's African Philosophy, (1st ed. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977) specifically, the "Preface" and the piece entitled, "Investigating African Philosophy." Wright addresses two fundamental concerns which are at the core of Professor Gbadegesin's book; viz., "What trends are there in Africa that are related to philosophy?" and, "Can we outline and isolate a tradition of philosophical activity for Africa in the future?"

Despite the questions and doubts about the "how," "why," and "what," regarding multiculturalism, I believe we can add to the bold but important step taken at the recent AAPT conference held at the University of Vermont where two workshops devoted to multiculturalism were conducted. If a philosophy department does not presently offer a course on African and Asian philosophy, the way to begin is to incorporate relevant sections of African and Asian books on philosophy into our syllabi, selecting specific subjects, topics, areas and ideas as we see fit. We have a ground-breaker in Professor Segun Gbadegesin's book. Besides, the book offers the graduate student a unique opportunity to expand his own openings to philosophy's ongoing search for meaning and relevancy in a complex and ever-changing world.

NOTE: Dr. Segun Gbadegesin is now professor and Chair of the Department of Philosophy at Howard University. Previously, he taught philosophy at Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria, University of Wisconsin-Madison and Colgate University.

Elliot Wreh-Wilson
Boston University
Boston, MA

NOTES
2. The word "Yoruba" refers to a tribal language group in Nigeria. Their total population is estimated at about thirty-five million.
4. "Negritude" is not related to racism. The reference is something I have borrowed.
5. Before Senghor, Aime Caesar used the term "Negritude" to refer to African realities and identity or "blackness."
6. According to Gbadegesin, "forces" include the supreme deity as ultimate cause, the deities, forces in nature, and human beings endowed with innate abilities.
7. By this I am referring to words and names not commonly found in the usual philosophy books used at American universities.
AAPT Book Review


This book of “African Philosophy” is the latest and perhaps the best written documentation on African philosophical thought in recent times. It comes in the midst of the ongoing exercise\(^1\) as Africans and philosophers with an interest in African philosophical issues continue to reach out and to draw out of past and present African realities what is of interest to philosophy in general. This book does very well what was once lacking when African philosophy was first introduced to the world, viz., to show the philosophical content and the relevancy of traditional ideas to the study of philosophy anywhere.

The book is written in two parts. The first part presents and discusses what the author regards as the philosophical ideas of the Yoruba people\(^2\) of Nigeria. In order to effectively communicate his thoughts with those who are not familiar with the issues and the whole question of “African philosophy,” namely, whether or not there is an “African philosophy,” the author outlines past and present attitudes and positions on the question. He reduces these to four general groups or schools of thought; all of which are competing views on what ought to constitute and define “African philosophy.” According to the author, the first group sees African philosophy as the philosophical thought of traditional Africans as could be sifted from their various world-views, myths, proverbs, and so forth. The second group, he says, regards African philosophy as reflections on, and analysis of, African conceptual systems and social realities as undertaken by contemporary professional philosophers. African philosophy is viewed by the third group as the philosophical thought of traditional Africans as could be sifted from their various world-views, myths, proverbs, and so forth. The fourth group says that African philosophy refers to none of the above, but simply, any collection of texts produced by Africans and specifically described by their authors as philosophy. Our author investigates all four views by considering their merits and demerits for African philosophical discourse as well as for philosophy in general.

In part two, our author complements the past with a review and discussion of present day realities and attempts to show how the African [Yoruba] past has impacted the social, economic, political, religious and philosophical ideas now in place in Africa. The reader will notice too that sometimes, ideology and philosophy are taken to mean the same thing. For example, the discussion on “negritude”\(^3\) a term that may be useful in discussing “African racism”\(^4\) or “African identity” or the relation between being African and non-African, a term based on a certain ideology, will be shown as the basis of a philosophy in Africa. However, the discussion may be very useful, if handled properly, in multiculturalist discussions of a “Philosophy of the Person” class or an introductory class in Existentialism. Also, and this is important, “Negritude” has been presented as an anti-Marxist ideology in Africa. Thus, a discussion on “Negritude” will fit into a syllabus of a political philosophy class. The way our author does this is by suggesting that, rather than the hostility with which others greeted Marxism, the African response was ideological or hermeneutical; this way, ideas confronted ideas, arguments confronted arguments, and, interpretations confronted interpretations. Our author further shows how the concept of “Negritude” was used to fend off the Marxist tendency toward atheism by showing that “Negritude” as an ideology was born out of the synthesis of Senghor’s\(^5\) own African religious heritage and his newly found French enlightenment; both of which can be shown to have traces to a belief in God.

Accordingly, the “multiculturalist,” by this I mean the philosophy professor who has an authentic desire to venture beyond the confines of his own cultural standpoint or his present philosophical interest and milieu, will discover that what Professor Gbadegesin’s book has accomplished is (i) to effect a marriage or synthesis of the past and present histories and development of African philosophical thought and (ii) to make intelligible the key issues and ideas at play in the continuing search for an identity for what is termed “African philosophy” today.

If one is not acquainted with names like Danquah, Tempels, Kagame, Mbiti (pronounced, biti), Wiredu and so forth, one should get ready for a brief lesson on African names. These are names of prominent African philosophy professors and writers. Not only does our author go to great lengths to present the central themes and ideas of these great masters, he has also critiqued their arguments; this helps the student of philosophy to follow easily the debate on “African philosophy.”

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Do you realize how much is expected of you just because you are a philosopher? Expectations for philosophers go way beyond being popular in the classroom and publishing definitive texts while teaching a full load and serving on seven committees. You should know that you are also expected to test the amount of people’s identities. However, if there is a demand that you do this by using memory, you can avoid doing so by simply pointing out that “Philosophers cannot test how much identity someone has against how much memory they might have had.”

Now it is possible that some people will want to test their own identity instead of having philosophers do it for them; you must inform them, however, that they should not try to use their memory to test it:

“If [a person has] forgotten a memory, they won’t be able to remember, in order to test their identity. So the theory of memory can never truly be tested, which makes philosophers very suspicious.”

Personally, we don’t think anyone who has a lick of sense would actually use a theory that makes philosophers suspicious.

Now here is where you can make an important contribution: if people can’t find some theory to test their identity themselves other than the memory one, more than likely they will call upon you, as philosophers, to do it for them. But what, you may ask, is a philosopher to use in the test? Well, forget about using the concept of a soul because “The first problem involves the fact that no philosopher can physically see a soul.”

Which might lead you to believe that if you stop being a philosopher you might be able to physically see a soul, or that you might try seeing a soul in some manner other than physically. However, you would be wrong on both counts because “[Another] problem proposed by philosophers states that they cannot measure what exactly consists of same soul.”

Furthermore,

“If a soul is unobservable, then how would philosophers know if a new soul had entered the same body they were studying? There is no way for them to be sure. If identity is housed in the soul, then philosophers will have no way of judging sameness of soul.”

So we suggest that you simply continue to study the same body (assuming you are fortunate enough to have been studying a body you find attractive). Besides,

“We know for certain that soul and body are inseparable; not by personal experience but by the observation of others.”

This is good news because it forestalls the following question:

“If the soul of a person were to stand in a corner by itself how would another person recognize it was the soul of a particular person?”

We advise that you not even mention this question to your intro students for it can easily lead them to ask all sorts of others, such as, why would a soul stand in a corner by itself in the first place? wouldn’t it get lonely? and wouldn’t it wonder what it might do to get itself recognized? and just how long could it stand in a corner without its feet starting to hurt? Once your students start asking questions like these, it is rather difficult to get them to stop; and then you have to try to answer them, and if you can’t you will give your students the appearance of being stupid.

While we’re on the subject of souls (we’ll ignore stupidity), we have an answer for you to give students who are bound to inquire about the various possible connections a soul can have with a body. Here it is:

“One possibility is that only one soul may occupy one body; another possibility, on the other end of the spectrum, is that the body is simply a place where a continuous flow of souls passes through. One answer to this question is that surely only one continued on page 12
Quotable Quotes
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soul is 'allotted' per body while we are alive, because one of the most concrete ideas that we have is that we are the same person we were yesterday."

You should be aware that students might ask follow-up questions such as, does the body charge rent? If so, how much? and how long does each soul get to stay? Who does the allotting? and is that a good job to have? At this point, you're on your own. Don't expect us to do all your thinking for you. Next you would expect us to show up at your tenure or promotion hearing to say what a really original thinker and terrific teacher you are and how you can come up with answers to students' questions which they can actually understand. But if we did that for one of you, we would be having to do it for everybody and his duck who asked; and that might necessitate us showing up at two places at the same time. Which is obviously something we cannot do, because it would require the ability of one mind to control at least two bodies (since the one body we currently possess can only be at one place at one time). Then you would have to explain to your department chair and the bunch of phonies who make up your personnel committee why we refuse to appear to testify in your favor without making it look like our refusal was based on your ineptness at being able to answer the above questions. Lucky for you we have prepared an explanation you may use as to why we couldn't appear before your department's personnel committee on your behalf:

"The concept that a mind can control two bodies rests on the idea that a mind has that capability. If this is true, then those two bodies would share the same identical mind. That mind would be the controller of two separate personal identities, presupposing the idea that those two bodies could never always share identical worldly experiences and therefore could not send identical input to the mind. If a mind was incapable of separately controlling the two points of view, then the two bodies would share the same mind by dividing it. But in turn the two bodies could not be considered human beings due to the presupposition that by definition a human being has one complete body and one complete mind. ...The main problem being that until scientists can control the mind and perform the necessary experiments, the actual ability of the mind to control two separate bodies will never be able to be measured."

You would then be immediately granted whatever you were applying for because your inteligence would appear to be so beyond the understanding of your philosophy colleagues' minds that none would dare ask you to explain what you said for fear of appearing philosophically incompetent. But we have digressed. We were talking about the best ways to find out who someone is. And here we should insert a word of caution, along with a piece of advice:

"Never base identity on sight or sound of a person, because look-alikes are out there. Always talk to a person to make sure they have the same experiences as the person you think it is. If everything checks out, the person probably has the same soul as the person you once knew."

You should find that reassuring, as well as this:

"...the identity is rooted upon the fact that you are a human being and you at this very moment have a point of view upon the outside world that travels through your body and into your mind. In other words wherever you are, there you are."

We are ashamed to admit, however, that we weren't all that reassured because we found ourselves wondering just how fast a point of view must travel in order to guarantee that wherever you are, there you are. What happens if it goes too slow? Does that mean that wherever you are you might not be there until the point of view catches up? We must apologize—we should not be burdening you with our own insecurities for that is to neglect one of our duties, which is to warn you about the dangers of taking certain approaches to the problem of personal identity. One of our researchers pointed out one such approach:

"People are not the same from moment to moment. ...body cells are constantly dying and others are being created, therefore you can't be the same person as each second passes. By taking an approach such as this, a person could never get anywhere in philosophy."

Since you have probably gotten somewhere in philosophy (where, though, we would not venture to guess), you must not have taken this approach (whatever it is). Congratulations. We thought it would be a good idea to find out what view about personal identity would be rejected by a member of our research staff chosen at random. This is the answer we got:

"The main view I reject as far as finding an identity is that of looks. After all if a person's identity is determined by their looks who is to decide whether or not they look good or bad? There is really no clear cut way. Also supposing a person

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only has a good looking face and the rest of them is not attractive, then this must mean they have two different identities. It is also important to mention that a person can manipulate their physical appearance to look as though they want it to look. This then means that their identity is ever changing and by my view a person can have only one true identity."

We knew we had some real geniuses on our staff here but we didn't realize we had anyone so intelligent as to come up with a view that a person can have only one true identity! That shocked the pants off us and we bet it just now shocked the pants off you too.

About that time we started thinking out loud about who we are and what factors we had to consider when thinking about who we are. A researcher happened to be passing by, heard us, and casually remarked that

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

and added that

"I believe that your identity is the characteristics that make you different from everyone else."

Well, needless to say, we were once again astonished beyond belief at the sheer brilliance of another QQs researcher. To top matters off, this researcher must have been reading our mind, for just as we were silently and smugly thinking that it's probably pretty darned easy to realize our own identity, we were informed that

"Realizing your own identity is very tough to do."

Even though that remark really took the wind out of our sails and forced us to eat humble pie, we feel honored to be in such quick-witted company as this. And would you believe that, precisely at the time when we were about to ask why is this so tough, we were given the answer—it's because

"How we think people feel about us is certainly an element of how we identify ourselves."

Now in case you didn't know, we here at the QQs Center do not give a rat's behind when it comes to thinking about how people feel about us. Nor do we give one when it comes to being able to identify ourselves either. (By the way, this is why the wind was restored to our sails.) As a matter of fact, we even mentioned this one time to a student and got this response:

"Many people in today's society take the topic of personal identity very lightly. They believe that who they are at one moment is identical to the person they will be the moment after. Is this what you believe?"

Fortunately we had memorized a relevant QQ and could respond quickly:

"I believe that sameness, in relation to someone being the same, simply involves that the individual carries on the same ideas and values within them. It is an existemological question to themselves of what do they know to be true."

From then on, that particular student has regarded us with the highest esteem. We think, though, that it is not so much due to the profundity of the idea as it is to the use of the word “existemological,” we decided that it was one fine word and have since used it when talking to other philosophers like you out there and who have likewise begun to regard us with utmost admiration and respect. But once again we digress.

Have you ever wondered where personal identity is discussed? (If you have not, then why have you not? You are supposed to be philosophers, and philosophers are supposed to wonder about stuff like that.) Based on our research, we can tell you where it is not discussed—and even why it isn't discussed there:

"All in all, personal identity is a very complicated issue that is not commonly discussed at America's dinner table."

We can also tell you where psychological continuity is argued:

"Psychological continuity is argued in the manor that a brain in its eternity is most important..."

Unfortunately, we are unable to tell you where this manor is except to say that it must be somewhere near the brain's eternity.

Writing this column has resulted in our inability to tell where we are. If you find out, we would appreciate your letting us know. The Good Editors would probably appreciate it too; then again, maybe they wouldn't. So just forget it.

Mary Ann Carroll
Wherever University
[Appalachian State University, Boone, NC]
Philosophy Clubs: Revisited . . .
continued from page 7

here. Joram Haber, at Bergen Community College in Paramus, New Jersey, has a philosophy club that on a regular basis brings in speakers to discuss philosophical topics addressed to the entire college community. The Bergen Community College club also produces a journal, Orthos Logos, the first volume of which was published this spring. In addition, for over a year now this club has produced a cable television show, comprised of interviews with well-known philosophers, that is available to much of the metropolitan New York area. Another philosopher involved with philosophy clubs is Tom Miller, of Marywood College in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He is the faculty advisor to a philosophy club whose members focus their energies to a great extent on writing and presenting philosophical essays that are eventually read publicly and serve as the basis for club discussions. As you can see, the formats and activities of philosophy clubs is greatly varied, and can serve many purposes tailored to the interests of the faculty and the needs of the students.

The small but sturdy group of us who have shared our ideas, interests, and activities with one another have found our discussions most fruitful. Some — who were not involved with undergraduate philosophy clubs — have started clubs at their schools. Some — who were already involved with clubs — learned from others about different formats and activities that have subsequently been incorporated into their clubs. On the basis of the value we have found in these discussions and activities, in concluding I would like to invite readers of the AAPT News to join our efforts to cultivate faculty interest in and student involvement with undergraduate philosophy clubs.

A group of us held an informal meeting at the APA Eastern Division meeting in 1991, and an even larger group met for an organized session on undergraduate philosophy clubs at the AAPT meeting in Burlington, Vermont, during 1992. The success of these meetings has convinced me, and others such as Joram and Tom, that there are people out there who would like to get involved. I hope that sessions can be organized at future APA and AAPT meetings — and wherever else seems possible or feasible — in order to discuss these matters. I am willing to organize and/or coordinate such efforts, and to involve all parties interested in these matters. I am open to all suggestions AAPT News readers may have regarding philosophy clubs. Specifically, I would like to hear from those interested in any of the ideas or activities discussed in this essay, and/or from those who have suggestions about ways to promote opportunities for discussion of philosophy clubs and their role in undergraduate education.

Though some progress has been made over the last couple of years, I am convinced that there is much more that can be done. As such, I will conclude here as I did two years ago by saying that the past three years have "convinced me that philosophy clubs can and do play an immensely important role in undergraduate philosophical education, yet little seems to have been done within the profession to understand the dynamics and make explicit the advantages of such groups. To all philosophers who also consider themselves teachers, such a situation can no longer be tolerated."

James P. Cadello
Regis College
Denver, CO 80221

Premium Cartridge

PRIMIUM CARTRIDGE is a bimonthly independent journal featuring primarily the work of undergraduate philosophy students. PRIMIUM CARTRIDGE especially encourages submissions from undergraduates on any theme, thinker, or topic of philosophical interest. All submissions will be reviewed by the editorial board, whose decisions regarding publication of submitted materials are final. All submissions should be accompanied by a copy of the essay on a WORDPERFECT DISK and sent to:

The Regis College Philosophy Club
Department of Philosophy
Regis University
3333 Regis Boulevard
Denver, Colorado 80221

Submission Deadlines for 1992-1993
Fall Issue: November 1, 1992
Spring Issue: April 1, 1993

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The Bulletin Board is a new feature of AAPT News. All items concerned with teaching philosophy are welcome. You may send us your postings at any time. E-mail correspondence is not required, but if you have it available, we appreciate it. — The editors

Board

- If you're looking for something fresh for your Introduction to Philosophy class, you may wish to consider Bernard Suits' The Grasshopper (in paper from University of Toronto Press). Suits begins with the Aesopian fable but transforms his grasshopper into the tale's hero, for the grasshopper knows the truth: the only way to live well is to play games, where "games" are the voluntary attempts to overcome unnecessary obstacles. The book is written in dialogue form, spends much of its time in careful pursuit of definitional and conceptual clarity, and provides an exemplary introduction to the tools of the philosophical trade. Witty and well-illustrated, this book has been very well-received by beginning philosophy students.

For more information, and to find out how you can get a VHS copy of a recent program, write: NDOPA, P.O. Box 10325, Arlington, VA 22210-1325. Voice: (703) 536-7502; FAX: (703) 908-9239; BBS: (703) 920-7564.

While Weeding Through Our Mailbox Department


[The following notice was received over the Internet—eds.]

- “No Dogs or Philosophers Allowed,” the weekly call-in philosophy talk-show, will be “on the bird” this fall each Sunday night, 8:30-9:30 EST. A live feed of the program is being made available free to any institution in the U.S. with a C-band downlink if they commit to putting the show on live on their campus or community educational access channels. (Come on the show and think with us if you’re going to be in the Washington, D.C. area!) Help us establish a philosophical agent for the emerging videopolis being created by the technology of signal.

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Calendar of Events


August 12-14, 1993 - Eighth Annual Conference on Computing and Philosophy, Carnegie Mellon Univ. Contact Robert Cavalier at rc2z@andrew.cmu.edu or CAAE, Smith Hall, Carnegie Mellon Univ., Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

November 10-13, 1993 - Fourth National Conference on the Training and Employment of Graduate Teaching Assistants. Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Contact Marne G. Helgeson, Office of Instructional Resources, Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 307 Engineering Hall, 1308 W. Green St., Urbana, IL 61801.


March 30 - April 2, 1994 - American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Pacific Div., Bonaventure Hotel, Los Angeles, CA. Papers due September 1, 1993. Submit to Wanda Taylor, Executive Secretary, APA, Univ. of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716.


May 4-7, 1994 - American Philosophical Assoc. (APA), Central Div., Hyatt Center, Kansas City, MO. Papers due September 1, 1993. Submit to Wanda Taylor, Executive Secretary, APA, Univ. of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716.


June 1994 - 14th Annual Conference of The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Vancouver, B.C.


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

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