

PhiloNews

ΦΙΛΟΝΟΥΣ

Philosophy Department Newsletter, April 2008



From the Chair

by Andrew Bailey

As the summer research semester begins the Department and its members are coasting evenly from the hurly-burly of final exams to the equally intense, but generally quieter, focus on independent research. Faculty members and graduate students will be travelling around the world on conference trips (to Europe, Asia and Australasia as well as North America) and continuing work on books and papers and theses.

This summer will also see several conferences in the Department.

- The Philosophy Graduate Students' Association have organized a one-day conference, *Identity and Roots*, on May 24, which will draw students from Queen's, Toronto, Ottawa, Waterloo and as far afield as Rhode Island.
- The American Association of Philosophy Teachers will be convening here from August 6–10 for the Seventeenth International Workshop-Conference on Teaching Philosophy, and we expect several hundred attendees from all over North America. Visit this website for more information and to register: <http://www.philosophyteachers.org/>.
- In early September some of our present and former M.A. students will be presenting the fourth iteration of *Irreconcilable Differences*, an annual conference on the relationship between philosophy and religion. See this website for more details: <http://www.irrdiff.ca/>.

The Department has also seen the recent establishment of a Feminist Philosophy Research Group (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/philosophy/page.cfm?id=798>), which will no doubt see some activity over the summer, as will the Philosophy of Science Reading Group, which meets every couple of months and includes a physicist, an ecologist and a literary theorist among its regular members.

Good luck to everyone with your research!

Faculty Research

Each issue of *PhiloNews* we feature the research activities of four of our faculty.

Peter Eardley

I'm currently in the process of completing a book that I'm under contract to co-author with C.N. Still of St. Thomas More College at the University of Saskatchewan. It is a primer entitled *Aquinas: A Guide for the Perplexed*, and it is due to be released in 2009 (London & New York: Continuum). I'm also under contract to complete a 4,500-word piece entitled "Happiness [True/False]" for *The*

Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine, ed. M.W.F. Stone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2010). This volume is part of the After Augustine Project—a five-year research project funded by the Leverhulme Trust—which is housed in the School of Classics at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, and which is devoted to exploring the influence of Augustine on the western tradition. In my chapter, I explore the ways in which later medieval thinkers reconciled Augustine’s theological view of the final destiny of human beings with that of Aristotle’s secular view. Third, I am in the process of completing a manuscript entitled “Some Sources for Scotus’s Theory of the Will.” As for pieces to be released imminently, I have a book review of S. Brown and J.C. Flores’s *Historical Dictionary of Medieval Philosophy and Theology* (Lanham-Toronto: 2007), which will appear in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* in their Fall volume. Finally, I received a SSHRC standard research grant (3 year term) for my project “Conscience and the Natural Law from Aquinas to Luther.”

Karen Houle

My second book of poetry, *During*, published by Gaspereau Press out of Kentville, Nova Scotia, was released in April. I have a series of readings scheduled, culminating in the Eden Mills Writer’s Festival (Sunday, Sept. 7th), which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

I’m a member of the “CoPEH-Can” Research Team, (which stands Complex Approaches to Ecohealth), an emerging field of study which promotes taking a more holistic approach to solving complex human, animal and environmental issues. My chief role on the team is as a conceptual and ethical expert. The research team, backed by a \$1 million grant from the IDRC, is made up of 9 Professors from three Canadian universities: UQUAM, UBC and U of G. The U of G professors include me, Bruce Hunter, Department of Pathobiology and David Waltner-Toews, Department of Population Medicine. We (Copeh-Can) are the Canadian node of an international consortium of researchers into ecosystem approaches to health, joining nodes in Central and South America, North Africa, South East Asia, and the Middle East. Our first order of business is to design a first-of-its-kind course in ecohealth. The first course will be offered Aug. 5 to 15 in Vancouver. Guelph will host it in 2009, and Quebec in 2010.

In addition to designing the course, the professors are building a community network of Canadian academics and researchers who have expertise in ecohealth, with the aim of influencing future research, education and public policy.

Related to this work is a paper that I’m working on, and presenting this summer at two Philosophy conferences. The trial run is at the Canadian Society for Practical Ethics, at the Congress at UBC in early June. Then, I’ll present it at the “Human Flourishing and Restoration in the Age of Global Warming” conference, a major environmental philosophy think-tank, at Clemson University, in September. The paper is entitled, “Responsibility and Proximity,” and it’s basically updating the liberal concept of moral responsibility via post-structuralist and post-normal science insights.

An essay “Keeping House with Deleuze” (a critical reading of Marilynne Robinson’s novel, *Housekeeping*, through Foucauldian genealogy) will appear this month in *Gilles Deleuze: Images and Texts* (Edited by Charles Stivale, Eugene Holland and Dan Smith).

Stefan Linquist

One of my current research projects uses experimental philosophy to analyze the concept of innateness. The term ‘innate’ remains popular in psychology and cognitive science despite its vagueness and ambiguity. Many philosophers argue that there is a single, coherent notion of innateness that either does or should underlie the use of the term. For example, some argue that innate traits are necessarily unlearned. Others argue that innate traits must be genetic (a problematic concept in itself). Still others argue that a trait is innate only if it is a part of an organism’s “inner nature.” Such proposals are typically defended with the use of thought examples designed to probe our semantic intuitions. My collaborators, Paul Griffiths (Sydney) and Edouard Machery (Pittsburgh), and I take an alternative experimental approach to elucidating the “folk” conception of innateness. Using a paper and pencil survey, we’ve found that the standard usage of this term is highly unsystematic. Lay people rely on a variety of cues when identifying a trait as innate (e.g. present at birth, species typical, unlearned, etc); any one of these properties is considered sufficient for a trait’s qualifying as innate, but no single property or subset of properties is necessary. The next phase of this project will involve administering questionnaires to members of the scientific community. Our prediction is that different scientists adopt different senses of ‘innate’ according to their particular research interests. So, a developmental biologist might use ‘innate’ to refer to traits that appear reliably during the life cycle. An evolutionary psychologist might use this term to refer to adaptive traits, and so on. The upshot is that if both lay people and scientific experts use ‘innate’ to refer to a wide range of unrelated properties, then this term should be abandoned by psychologists and cognitive scientists in favor of more precise concepts. My colleagues and I have submitted the first of a series of papers on this subject to *Philosophical Psychology*, and we hope to have another manuscript finished this summer.

I am engaged in a second research project investigating the use of theoretical terms in ecology and conservation. Much like the disagreement among psychologists over the meaning of ‘innate,’ there is considerable disagreement

among ecologists over the definitions of key theoretical terms like 'biodiversity,' 'ecological stability' and 'ecosystem health'. Often these terms are used in public policy and legal contexts as if they had precise scientific meanings when in fact this is far from true. Interestingly, I've found that many of these terms refer in the first instance to properties of abstract ecological models and not directly to properties of real ecosystems. Any attempt to analyze an ecological term must therefore distinguish two quite different projects: identifying the property within a class of models that the term describes, and determining how (or whether) those models apply to the world. Perhaps more importantly, I argue that a theoretical concept can be useful and illuminating in a modeling context even when its empirical applications remain obscure. This perspective conflicts with the longstanding dogma that unless a term designates some measurable ecological property it is useless or even meaningless. In a forthcoming paper in *Biology and Philosophy* I show how this misguided perspective has had unfortunate consequences on recent developments in conservation biology. I am now writing an article that explores the role of simple ecological models in determining whether biological diversity promotes stability.

Peter Loptson

Peter Loptson has a new book, published early in 2008, titled *Freedom, Nature, and World* (University of Ottawa Press). A new, paperback edition of an earlier book, *Reality: Fundamental Topics in Metaphysics*, will also be published by the University of Ottawa Press, in late 2008 or early 2009. Other current research activity include continuing work on a biography of Hume (co-authored with Roger Emerson), and papers on the philosophical history of Auguste Comte, Rawls and liberalism, and Kantian ethics. He will be giving a paper at the World Congress of Philosophy, in Seoul, South Korea, in July; that paper is part of a further book project, on naturalism and rational agency. In addition, he continues work as Co-Editor of *Hume Studies*.

In Memoriam: Mark Adams



The Philosophy Department is deeply saddened to report the death of one of our graduate students. Mark Adams died on April 30th of injuries sustained when he was hit by a car in a Fredericton, NB, crosswalk. He was 25.

Mark was an M.A. student in the department. His M.A. degree was very close to completion, and he had been accepted into the Philosophy Ph.D. program to begin in September. Mark was a pleasant and bright person, and showed a great deal of promise for future success in the philosophical profession; he will be missed.

Our thoughts and condolences go out to his family and friends, including his good friends here in the graduate program.

We have established a Memorial Fund in Mark's name and are beginning to solicit donations for the fund from the Guelph philosophical community. The fund will be used to establish a Mark Adams Memorial Graduate Prize in Philosophy. If you are interested in contributing, you can contact the Philosophy Department or email the Chair at abailey@uoguelph.ca.

Graduate Matters

by Omid Payrow Shabani

A year of hard work has finally come to an end for all of our hardworking graduate students. From those who began their program last Fall to those who are near completion of their degree, the end of the Winter term sums up the result of a year's work enabling them perhaps to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The productivity of this year was crystallized in the month of April when we had six Oral Qualifying Exams and two M.A. defenses:

- Michal Arciszewski, "The Model Worm: A Controlled Reduction."

- Pablo Escobar, "Motivation, Shame and Personhood: The Implications of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*."
- Andrew Robinson, "Apprenticeship in Difference: An Ethical Education in Receiving the Other."
- Aaron Masecar, "How Intelligent Habits Overcome the Theory vs. Practice Divide in Charles S. Peirce."
- Suzanne McCullagh, "Resourceful Interventions: Discerning Capacities and Action with Constraints."
- Matthew Furlong, "Force and Freedom."
- Greg Kirk, "Striving for *Eudaimonia*: Friendship and the Cultivation of Character in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*." (M.A. Defense)
- Ian Mathers, "Art as an Intentional Object or Generative Performance: Investigating the Ontologies of Roman Ingarden and David Davies." (M.A. Defense)

Our warm congratulations to all of these students for successful defense of their projects.

Unfortunately, not all the news in this month was happy. Mark Adams, an M.A. student, upon his return home for the summer was involved in a serious automobile accident, and subsequently died in hospital. Mark was going to finish his thesis over the summer in time to start the doctoral program at U of G to which he had been accepted. Our community has been deeply saddened by this news. Our deepest condolences have been extended to Mark's family. Mark will be awarded the M.A. degree posthumously.

Awards Report

by Karen Houle

Fall 2007 (Undergraduate):

- Emily Bingeman was the recipient of the Michael and Virginia Walsh Undergraduate Scholarship in Philosophy.

Fall 2007 (Graduate):

- Jared Babin won the Michael and Virginia Walsh Graduate Scholarship in Philosophy.
- The William Hughes Memorial Scholarship was awarded (for the first time) to Matthew Furlong. This award goes to the incoming graduate student with the highest cumulative GPA.

Winter 2008 (Undergraduate):

- The Kip Hunter Prize went (for the second year in a row!) to Jason Ferreira for his paper "Against Sensorimotor Knowledge and the Enactive Approach to Perceptual Experience," which he wrote for Bailey's PHIL*6120 class.
- The Jakob Amstutz Prize recipient is Ben Hoy, who is finishing his 8th semester, a double-major in History and Philosophy, is *en route* to a Ph.D. at Stanford (in History), and has the highest cumulative GPA in Philosophy courses of any Philosophy Major: 87.25%.

Winter 2008 (Graduate):

- Matthew Furlong is the winner of the Robert Carr-Wiggin Prize. His paper, "Deleuze and Foucault: Recontextualizing power, freedom, and critique," was presented at the Foucault Conference at Brock, in February.
- The Department's Governor General's Award Nominee is Evan Clarke. Clarke's dossier was reviewed by the College of Arts Awards committee, and his dossier was forwarded to Senate, to be considered in the University-wide pool. Evan finished his M.A. last summer, and is going on to Boston College to do a Ph.D. in the Fall of 2008. His final cumulative GPA was 89.86%.
- The Department's Forster Medal Nominee, a nomination also forwarded from the College level to the Senate Committee, is Chris Parsons (who convoked in W08). Chris is on his way to the University of Victoria to start a Ph.D. in Political Studies. Chris's cumulative GPA was 90%.
- Two M.A. students—Brooke McIntosh and John Yolkowski—were awarded SSHRC CGS Master's scholarships for 2008–09, and Rebecca Olivier won a SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship.
- Students in the Department who were awarded Ontario Graduate Scholarships for 2008–09 include: Mark Adams, Matthew Furlong, Suzanne McCullagh, Brooke McIntosh, Rebecca Olivier, Andrew Robinson, and Reiner Schaefer.

Other News

Our colleague Ken Dorter is to be honoured with the degree Doctor of Literature (*honoris causa*) by Brandon University at a convocation at the end of May. Hearty congratulations to Ken on this very significant, and well-deserved, recognition of his national and international stature as a scholar.