

Noûsletter

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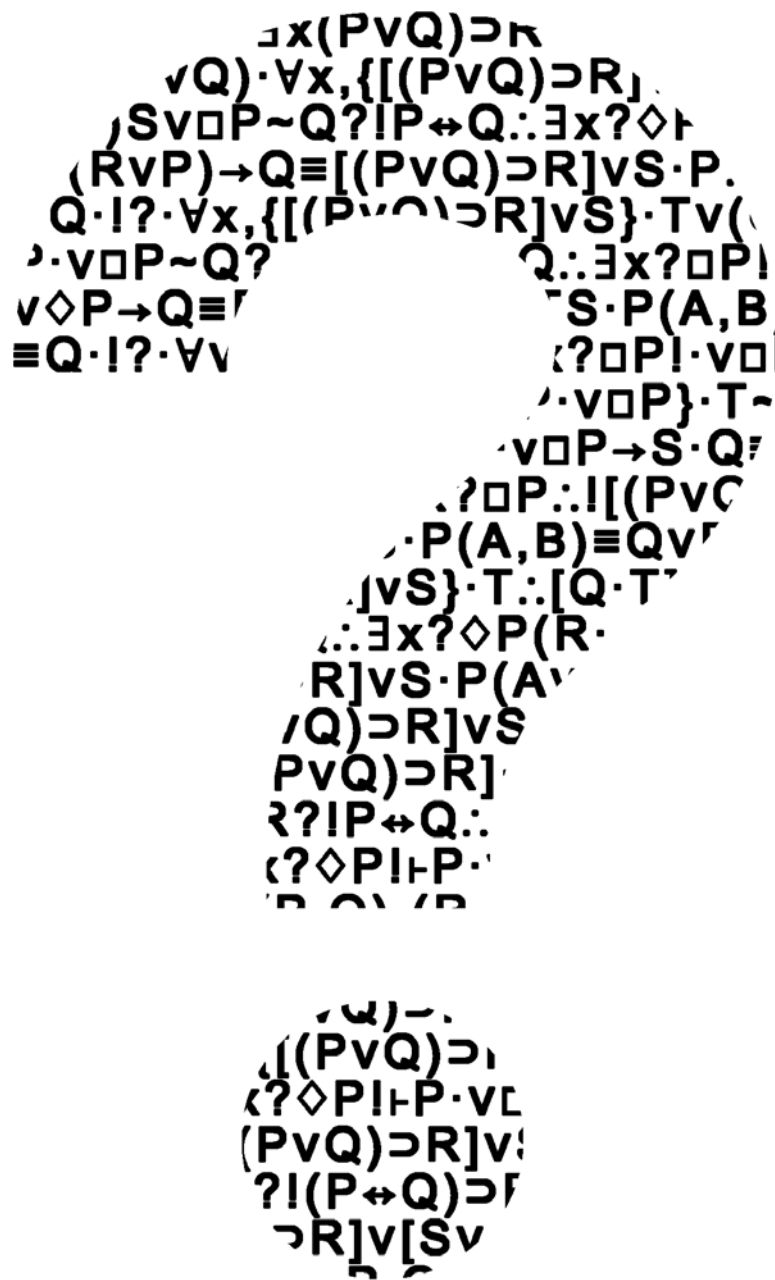


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Introduction



Letter from the Chair

This will be my last Chair's Letter as I will be stepping down from my position as department chair after serving in that role for two consecutive three-year terms. I will be leaving the position in the capable hands of Neil Williams.

He has been the Director of Graduate Studies the last two years and so he is very well prepared to take over. These changes pale in comparison to the far more profound and permanent personnel changes confronting the department. Carolyn Korsmeyer retired in the summer of 2016. See the interview with her on page 13. Randy Dipert accepted an early retirement offer and taught his last class in the spring of 2016. He held the Charles Peirce Professorship. Randy will be on a research leave in the Fall 2016 and then will be an emeritus professor. Ken Shockley left UB to take a job at Colorado State University that begins in the Fall of 2016. John Kearns and Kah-Kyung Cho announced their plans to retire in 2017. It is not just some valuable teachers and researchers that the department is losing. There has been a complete turn over in staff as the graduate administrator, Liz Felmet, retired at the end of the 2015 summer. The department's undergraduate administrator, Patti Hahn, resigned in December 2016. The department administrator, Theresa Monacelli, announced that she will be retiring early in the August of 2016 to devote more time to the care of her mother. Theresa has basically run the department the last seven years with just occasional input from the chair.

Fortunately, the changes to the department haven't just been departures. Ryan Muldoon joined the department this past year. See the interview of Ryan on page 6. He has been a most welcome addition to the department. He is the department's Renaissance man,

completely at home in his specialization in political philosophy as well as the philosophy of science, philosophy of social science, and virtually every theoretical and applied branch of ethics. He just published a book with Routledge Press entitled *Social Contract Theory for a Diverse World*. There are already two roundtable discussions of the book planned for upcoming conferences.

Ryan isn't the only faculty member with a new book. MIT Press published Barry Smith's *Building Ontologies with Basic Formal Ontology*. Palgrave Macmillan Press announced that it was publishing a Festschrift in honor of Barry Smith. It will be entitled *The Theory and Practice of Ontology*. Barry is a leader in ontology and there is no philosopher working in that field who approaches the level of grants or citations that Barry has garnered.

Barry hasn't been the only department recipient of honors. The department doubled the number of sub-fields that it was ranked highly in by the *Philosophical Gourmet Report* (PGR). The department was previously ranked in four specializations, now it is ranked in eight! We added epistemology, the philosophy of cognitive science, metaphysics and medieval philosophy to our earlier rankings in Chinese philosophy, philosophy of art, feminist philosophy and the philosophy of language. Jiyuan Yu deserves the credit for earning UB a PGR ranking as one of the top 13 departments in Chinese Philosophy. Carolyn Korsmeyer deserves the credit our ranking as one of the top 28 departments in feminist philosophy and as one of the top 27 in aesthetics. David Braun is to be thanked for UB's PGR ranking as one of the top 37 departments in the philosophy of language. Neil Williams and Maureen Donnelly are equally responsible for UB's ranking as one of the top 39 programs in metaphysics. Also contributing to our ranking in metaphysics are the reputations of Smith, Dipert and Jorge Gracia. Gracia deserves the credit for UB's PGR ranking as one of the top 18 departments in medieval philosophy. James Beebe warrants the accolades for UB's PGR ranking as one of the top 32 departments in the

philosophy of cognitive science and top 37 departments in epistemology. Beebe has also made the department known as a major center for research in experimental philosophy. He hosts the premier annual conference devoted to experimental philosophy (X Phi). The most prominent figures in X Phi, as well as the upcoming stars in the field, come to the conference every year. The department also brings in some impressive speakers for its annual George Hourani lectures in Ethics and its biannual Paul Kurtz lecture. Both lecture series honor past members of the department. Phillip Kitcher was the 2016 Kurtz lecturer and Rae Langton was the 2016 Hourani Lecturer.

Things slow down during the summer break but there is the bioethics and philosophy of medicine PANTC conference that takes place at the end of July each year. PANTC stands for Plato's Academy, North Tonawanda Campus. The group consists of local WNY professors and past and present graduate students who meet once a month at a local restaurant to discuss a contemporary paper. The group has created an intellectual philosophical community in WNY when before there were hardly any contacts between UB philosophy department members and faculty at the various Buffalo area schools. As a result, WNY philosophy faculty frequently lecture at UB, co-author papers with UB faculty, and even mentor, write letters of recommendation, and provide philosophical feedback to UB graduate students. Two dozen papers and a handful of books were fine-tuned at the PANTC meetings. The 2015 summer PANTC conference was the best philosophical conference that I have ever attended. There were two keynoters, Jerry Wakefield and Christopher Boorse. They are widely regarded as the two leading philosophers of medicine. They each gave two lectures and two commentaries attacking the other's positions. They first defended their own general account of disease and attacked the other's. Then they took opposite sides on the issue of whether normal grief was pathological. It was a heavy-weight battle that PANTC members still talk about a year later. PANTC is not the only UB-based philo-

sophical group with a facetious name. There is also a reading group devoted to discussing the topics of free will and moral responsibility called "Blameless Buffalo?" The question mark is there in the title since about one third of the reading group's members are skeptical of the existence of free will and dubious of the claim that wrongdoers deserve blame. The group's name has inspired graduate students with an interest in reading philosophical anarchists to start a reading group known as "Lawless Buffalo?". They brought in the libertarian philosophers Jason Brennan and David Schmidtz to give talks and put on workshops about their research.

Perhaps I will see you at a future Blameless Buffalo? conference or a Lawless Buffalo? lecture. I hope you all keep the department updated about your activities so they can be publicized in future Nousletters.

Sincerely,
David Hershenov

Faculty News

Faculty Updates

James Beebe's article *The Epistemic Side-Effect Effect*, co-authored with Wesley Buckwalter, and published in *Mind & Language* was, according to Google Scholar, one of the top ten most cited academic papers between 2009-2013. James has worked closely with graduate students, holding experimental philosophy workshops where their research proposals are refined. The result has been several co-authored papers currently under review.

Nic Bommarito, current Bersoff Fellow in the philosophy department at NYU, was interviewed by the magazine *3AM on Buddhist Ethics* where he discussed the virtues of attention, the rationality of self-describing oneself as an anti-expert, and the importance of appreciating philosophical wisdom outside the western canon.

Richard Cohen will be leaving us to join the new UB CAS Department of Jewish Thought as Director.

Randy Dipert, our Pierce Professor, will be retiring this year. In retirement Randy will continue his work on cyber-warfare, cyber-terrorism, and the logical underpinning of the Basic Formal Ontology.

Jorge Gracia, Samuel P. Capen Chair, received rave reviews for his 2015 work *Debating Race, Ethnicity, and Latino Identity: Jorge Gracia and his Critics*, in which he engages fifteen prominent scholars on issues surrounding his work in these areas.

David Hershenov will be taking a much-deserved sabbatical to spend time with his family and complete a book project on the metaphysics of personal identity. He was voted Professor of the Year by the department graduate students for 2015-2016. David's tireless diligence in promoting graduate student development shows, having won the inaugural 2012-2013 award as well.

John Kearns announced his intended retirement from the department in 2017 after over 50 years. John continues work on a book refining his previous views on speech acts, developing illocutionary logic based approaches to outstanding problems in the philosophy of language.

Alex King spent the summer and Fall of 2015 as an Australian National University research fellow, became editor of the Aesthetics for Birds blog in 2016,

and was invited to pen a guest piece for Meena Krishnamurthy's blog *Philosopher* about being multi-racial in the US.

James Lawler is working on the second half of a two volume work on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, to be called *The Phenomenology of Human Existence*. James has completed a first draft of the first volume, *The Phenomenology of Nature*. This work is a continuation of his history of modern philosophy, which begins with *Matter and Spirit: The Battle of Metaphysics in Modern Western Philosophy before Kant* (Rochester University Press, 2006). The second volume, that builds on this one, is a study of Kant's early pre-critical philosophy, *The Intelligible World: Metaphysical Revolution in the Genesis of Kant's Theory of Morality* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013). The follow up work on Kant's critical period, which is complete, is in three volumes, one for each of Kant's critical works. The emphasis is on the synthetic unity of Kant's critical thought.

Lewis Powell was selected as the lead editor of the APA blog launched in 2015.

Ken Shockley will be left the department after 13 years to be the first occupant of the recently endowed Holmes Rolston Endowed Chair in Environmental Ethics.

Barry Smith was elected as a fellow to the American College of Medical Informatics (ACMI) late 2014, co-authored a book published by MIT Press titled, *Build-*

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ing *Ontologies with Basic Formal Ontology*, received yet two more grants from the National Institute for General Medical Sciences (NIH), one for over \$300,000 and another for over \$1,300,000 (bringing his total grant acquisition over \$17 million!), was recognized as instrumental in the recent receipt by the UB Consortium \$20 million grant from the NIH, and will have a festschrift honoring his work titled *Theory and Practice of Ontology*, published by Palgrave-McMillan. Amongst living philosophers, only, Martha Nussbaum, John Searle, and Jerry Fodor have a higher H index. (The definition of the index is that a scholar with an index of h has published h papers each of which has been cited in other papers at least h times). In other news, Barry stepped down as editor of *The Monist* after 24 dedicated years (1992-2016).

Neil Williams continues work on a book which will be published by Oxford University Press. In this work, Williams seeks to explain the persistence through time of fundamental entities. Unlike most accounts of persistence, the book aims to provide more than mere persistence criteria, offering instead an account of HOW these things persist. The solution offered relies on a novel theory of causal powers and how they are exercised, employing exercised powers as the metaphysical foundation of existential inertia.

Faculty Reading Groups

Plato's Academy: North Tonawanda Campus (PANTC). Founded by David Hershenov and Jim Delaney, PANTC (pronounced 'pants' not 'pansies') continues to meet once a month to discuss bioethics and the philosophy of medicine, despite the closing of the "elegant and exclusive" JP Bullfeathers. Current attendees are Yuichi Minemura, Catherine Nolan, Jelena Krgovic, David Limbaugh, Harvey Berman, Jake Monaghan, David and Rose Hershenov, Stephen Kershner, Neil Feit, James Delaney, Barry Smith, Geert Craenen, Jay Rourke, Stephen Wear, Peter Koch, John and Lorraine Keller, and Philip Reed. The reading group successfully hosted its third and fourth conferences.

Blameless Buffalo? Organized by the chair of Fredonia's Philosophy Department, Stephen Kershner, Niagara's John Keller, and our own chair, David Hershenov, this group meets monthly to read and discuss philosophical works that deal with questions of freedom, moral responsibility, and determinism. Besides drawing a number of faculty from local colleges and universities, this reading group is open to any UB philosophy faculty and graduate students, even those whose primary focus is not the issue of freedom and determinism. Student attendees include Jelena Krgovic, Rasmus Rosenberg Larsen, David Limbaugh, Neil Otte, Robert Kelly, Sean McNamara, and occasionally Catherine Nolan. Faculty member attendees include John Keller, Stephen Kershner, Neil Feit, David Hershenov, and occasionally Philip Reed.

Faculty Interview: Ryan Muldoon

Assistant Professor

Ryan Muldoon

leaves an impression. Since being hired, Ryan has shown himself a capable, creative, and enthusiastic addition to the department. He is the author or co-author of fourteen academic papers, a book published by Routledge entitled *Beyond Tolerance: Social Contract Theory for a Diverse World*, in which he argues that increasing social diversity can lead to greater justice and prosperity for all, and co-author of the World Bank's 2015 Flagship Report.



1. How did you get interested in philosophy?

My first experience with philosophy was taking a class on Ancient Philosophy in high school. I really enjoyed working through Plato's Republic and some of the earlier Dialogues. I liked the idea of thinking

about the big questions, particularly around what it is to lead a good life. I went to college with the plan of double-majoring in computer science and philosophy, with the idea that I'd end up a computer scientist who read philosophy on the side. I ended up really loving philosophy, but hating everyone in my computer science program. I opted to focus on philosophy, and switch to math as my other major. My sister takes this as evidence that I hate money.

2. How did your particular interest in political philosophy arise?

My initial interest in philosophy was in ethics. In college, I drifted away from ethics and toward logic and formal philosophy of language, because I liked the rigor that became possible with formal systems. My undergraduate thesis project was using non-classical logic to reason about vagueness. Thankfully, my undergraduate mentor gave me a copy of David Lewis' wonderful *Convention*, which introduced me to game theory. This led me back to thinking about moral and political philosophy with the aid of some formal tools. In grad school I combined some ideas from philosophy of science with my interest in diversity, and that led me to my current work.

3. John Rawls is widely regarded as the most important 20th century political philosopher. He has many disciples and defenders, one of whom served on your committee. Was it a little intimidating to take on Rawls in your dissertation, public talks, and forthcoming book?

I was lucky that Samuel Freeman was quite supportive of me developing my own approach. He wanted to make sure that I understood Rawls' arguments, but didn't expect that I'd agree with all of them. In talks and in my published work, I'm aware that I'm fighting a bit of an uphill battle, but I enjoy the debate. Rawls made an invaluable contribution to political philosophy, and has really shaped the field. But I think there is room for other approaches.

4. What was the source of your disagreement(s) with Rawls and how did you come to your alternative conception(s)?

I basically agree with what Rawls is aiming to do. The social contract he envisions sounds like a nice society to live in. My disagreement stems from the fact that I think the justificatory approach that Rawls uses is problematic. In particular, it imagines a neutral perspective from which to reason. I argue that this neutral perspective does not exist – instead we have to contend with a variety of biased perspectives. Further, I argue that Rawls and others focus on justification without paying sufficient attention to what in the philosophy of science is called the context of discovery. In political philosophy in general, I think there is insufficient attention paid to dynamism. Societies change in fairly fundamental ways with some frequency, and we need to make sure that our normative frameworks can respond to this change. Further, much of this change can result from the friction between perspectives. Diversity and change go hand in hand.

These seem like small quibbles with Rawls, but because they reject some basic features of his system of justification, the system that I've developed looks quite different. My approach was initially inspired by reading Sen's "The Equality of What?". I love the first half of the essay, where he shows that disagreements about equality generally aren't about *whether* someone cares about equality, but *along what dimension* they care about equality. Different substantive normative accounts point to different dimensions that we should make most salient in our evaluation of the world. Sen's solution is to offer another way of thinking about equality – the capabilities approach. While there is much of interest in the capabilities approach, I think Sen failed to address the original challenge – sensible people can disagree about which dimensions of our complex moral world are most important. Forcing them all to agree on one fails to appreciate the fundamental nature of this disagreement. My approach takes this as a starting point – rather than aiming to pick the correct dimension, it aims to ac-

commodate a diverse range of views. Because my approach is much more procedural than others, I can only describe what it would mean to get closer to a just system, rather than what our regulative ideal ought to be. This is in part because I don't think that we can articulate a regulative ideal that has any universal justification. On my approach, justice is a trajectory, rather than an end state.

5. Rawls has made many contributions to the field. Are there any of his better known ideas or approaches that you are sympathetic to and would like to see preserved or developed?

So much of contemporary political philosophy is just a response to Rawls that in a way it is difficult to answer the question! Rawls brought social contract theory back from the dead. Hume more or less killed it with "Of the Original Contract," but Rawls not only brought it back, but also re-interpreted the history of political philosophy to make it feel inevitable. This is a major achievement. He is also one of the few major contemporary political philosophers who took economics incredibly seriously. *A Theory of Justice* is filled with footnotes engaging in fairly technical arguments in economics. His initial project was framed as deriving substantive moral claims from the apparatus of decision theory. Though he abandoned this goal in his later work, it continued to shape his approach. He was increasingly sensitive to the challenge of pluralism as his work progressed. I think that this is under-appreciated. I view my work as in part a continuation of that trajectory – I just decided that I had to develop an alternative approach to deal with the problems he had started to identify.

6. I have heard that Rawls was very generous with his time, a good teacher, mentor, and a charitable interlocutor, even to those whose views differed from his own. Did you have such an experience or did he pass away before you could engage with him about his work?

Unfortunately, I never got to meet Rawls. He passed away while I was an undergraduate at Wisconsin.

I've heard the stories, however. He sounded like a wonderful person.

7. What are the most interesting projects in contemporary political theory that you are not currently involved in as a researcher?

There is so much going on that it is hard to keep track of it all! I am particularly excited by more recent work on immigration and citizenship. I think there is a lot of excellent work on disenfranchised populations more generally, in particular some standpoint feminist work is quite interesting. I think there is a great deal to gain from thinking about which of our traditional abstractions and idealizations in social and political philosophy causes us to miss important issues. Another area where this pops up is the moral psychology literature.

8. Does the political philosophy field have any interesting divisions besides traditional right and left wing theories? Are there some issues or methods that divide the Young Turks from the Old Turks?

I think there's a bit less of a young/old division, but there are certainly methodological differences that are becoming more prominent. I tend to use some formal models in my work, whether or not I write up the models in what I publish. I also tend to be a bit more "PPE" in my thinking – I want to think about the relationship between philosophy, economics and politics, and I'm a bit more interested in thinking about both ideal theory and non-ideal theory. The PPE approach is growing pretty steadily, and there are a lot of Young Turks, but I would say that we're still a minority. The (Rawlsian) Public Reason approach remains quite dominant. Another subgroup that skews younger is naturalized approaches to moral/social/political philosophy. My guess is that these boundaries will be a bit more fluid than the normal left/right distinction. There are plenty of PPE-minded people who want to remain in the Public Reason camp, for example.

9. You worked in the philosophy of science in the past which makes me wonder whether you have some ongoing or soon to begin philosophy of science research projects?

I do. I just finished the first paper in a planned series looking at the division of cognitive labor in science, using costs and comparative advantage to offer a clearer explanation of scientific collaboration and competition. I am also (slowly) co-writing a short book on my epistemic landscapes approach to the division of cognitive labor. I've got a couple papers in the works on extensions to the Schelling segregation model. While I'm primarily a political philosopher, I find that my broader research agenda has a lot of overlap with issues in philosophy of science. It's often the case that ideas developed for one field very often solve a problem I have in the other.

10. What are you more distant research projects? That is, if you finish everything that is right now on your plate, what will be your next research project?

I don't think my plate will be clear for quite a while! I'm laying the groundwork for another project that looks at how diversity solves problems for democracy. Usually the argument is that democracy is a tool that we use to manage diversity, but I'm finding a number of interesting areas where liberal democracy relies on a certain level of diversity to achieve its ends. I am also quite interested in doing some methodological work on treating normative moral and political philosophy as a subset of the scientific modeling literature. We're presented with models all the time, but not explicitly, so we don't think about whether the models are robust, whether we understand their consequences, and whether we've chosen appropriate idealizations. This is made worse by the fact that when we think through what appears to be a simple thought experiment, we fail to realize that these models won't just have linear effects – we're dealing with complex adaptive systems, and we can't reason about those sitting back in our armchairs. I also have a real interest in doing work on develop-

ment ethics. My experiences with UNICEF and the World Bank have given me lots of ideas for philosophical work on development, primarily with a focus on agency and self-determination.

11. You expressed some concerns about the Philosophical Gourmet Report. Is the problem that it narrows the discipline by ranking only some fields, or are your qualms methodological, or with how the results are used by students, faculty and administrators?

I do think the PGR harms the discipline. At the most fundamental level, we are taking something that highly dimensional, and collapsing it into a single dimension of value. We all do this all the time with all kinds of things – we have our favorite foods, our favorite cities, and our favorite philosophers – but we don't then go to the next step of enforcing community agreement about our particular method of projecting that high-dimensional space to a single-dimensional ranking. While the PGR is made with what I am sure are the best intentions, it tells the wider philosophy world what it is that is valued. It makes the discipline more conservative in subject matter, more conservative in methodology, and it becomes what's known as a preferential attachment process. Past success leads to future success. If you have a top-ranked department, the fact of your top ranking encourages students to go there, and faculty to take positions there, more than just the underlying quality of the department would dictate. If you are a lower-ranked or unranked department, everything is that much harder. As a simple example – think about searching for a website on Google. The first couple links are going to be clicked on far more because they are the first couple links, and the links several pages down the list are going to be clicked on less, even if it's a tie between the first 20 links. Likewise, the "bestsellers" list at Amazon causes people to buy those items more than if they weren't on the list, even though it's not an indicator of quality. It's one thing to come up with your rank of the best planets – they don't respond to your rankings. Human agents and institutions do respond, so they will do things to move them up on

the rankings according to the ranking system itself. So if the metrics in the ranking are a poor proxy for underlying quality, departments and professors will optimize for the proxies, not what the proxies were supposed to be indicators of.

Besides that, there is all kinds of evidence that our assessments of quality are socially informed. When “everyone knows” that so-and-so is a great philosopher, you’re much more inclined to read his or her papers with an eye toward finding the good qualities of the paper. When you go in thinking the paper is bad, you’ll find all the flaws. If we know how a department ranked before, we’re likely going to find reasons to more or less keep its rank, modulo changes in faculty. We’re great at coming up with justifying reasons.

The PGR would be fine if it were one of many different rankings, all seen in the wider community as co-equal. But it’s not, and so it drives a number of decisions that are unlikely to be in the best interest of the field as a whole. For example, it would probably be a good idea for more diversity in what departments specialize in than there is. Philosophy departments that do that perform worse on the rankings.

12. Given your doubts about the Philosophical Gourmet Report, if your research obtains for UB a ranking in either political philosophy, philosophy of social choice, or rational choice and game theory, am I safe in thinking that the Dean and I (dept. chair) won’t have to worry about you demanding more money, resources, or teaching reductions due to the rankings?

Well, I said that the system was bad, not what the optimal response would be for an individual within such a system.

13. How does a philosopher end up being involved with the World Bank and UNICEF? Did such associations involve applying your theories on diversity, decision making and social norms, or did they change your theories, or a little of both?

I started doing work with UNICEF on my first post-doc, as an external reviewer for a large research report they did on the efficacy of different approaches to ending Female Genital Cutting. I wrote a long report that developed a theoretical account of why the successful programs were successful, comparing them to work in economics on union formation and the game-theoretic structure of weddings. They found this report useful. Not too long after, I got involved with a training program for UNICEF staff. For the past five or six years, my colleagues and I have been training UNICEF staff on a social norms approach to sustainable behavior change. It’s been quite rewarding, and has seen significant changes in UNICEF policy and the design of programs. In part because of this work, and my theoretical work on both diversity and social norms, the World Bank approached me about getting involved with the 2015 World Development Report. I ended up being on the Core Team for writing the Report, working out of the DC headquarters several days a week during the writing process. I found that there was a lot that a philosopher could contribute to the process. My work on social norms and diversity was useful, but it was also just my general background in philosophy that proved important. Economists and philosophers think of different sorts of questions, and have different tools in our toolkits. Having this development experience has definitely influenced my thinking in a number of areas. I was exposed to a lot of cases that aren’t in the philosophy literature. I also became a lot more sensitive to the importance of informal institutions and cultural context. I used to think that aid was just a matter building a well or getting people medicine. I’ve come to realize that these are very small parts of the development picture, and we need to think much more holistically and much more long-term about how to best help people.

14. What are the topics of the grad student seminars that you plan teach in the near future?

It depends on grad student interest. I'm definitely planning on doing something around diversity, but that can take a number of different forms – political justification, social contract theory, accounts of tolerance, etc. Likewise I think it would be fun to have a course that focuses a bit more on social philosophy and informal institutions. I would also enjoy doing a seminar on the ethics of international development – there are very interesting issues of the extent and nature of our obligations to others, paternalism, agency promotion, and the interplay between formal and informal institutions. All that said, it would also be fun to just carefully work through some Rawls or Nozick or Sen (or other contemporary figures), depending on what grad students are looking for. Graduate seminars can be a great excuse to work through some recently-released books.

15. If there is a standard way to teach an upper division undergraduate political philosophy course, will you be teaching it that way? If not, please describe your approach.

The two things that I do a bit differently from more standard upper division courses is that first, I try and tie the topics to some real social or political conflict, so we can more easily see what's at stake. I like it when students gain not just an understanding of a text, but how the arguments in the text can be applied to the world around them. Finally, in small enough classes, I like to find ways for students to present some of the material to their classmates, and use in-class debates in place of midterms. I find that this raises the quality of in-class discussion and final papers. It's much harder to construct a straw-man argument when your debate opponent can respond. Learning how the opposing view would reply, and thinking carefully about how to respond to that, is a key skill in philosophy. It helps us make more considered arguments, but it is hard to do just alone in front of your computer. The value of class time in upper division courses is that you get to hone those

skills with your peers, guided by the professor. I try and do as much as I can to provide students with those opportunities.

16. There is some hope in the department that you can revitalize our law and philosophy class offerings and bring some pre-law students into the department as majors or minors. Have you given some thought yet to what topics you would cover in such courses?

I'll do my best! In the Law, Authority and Morality course that I'm teaching this fall, I will be covering some traditional areas on the sources of law's authority, and the structure of the law. But I will also cover how social norms and legal norms interact, and what happens when the state acts in ways that violate the justification of the law's authority. In particular, I'm looking forward to talking about the laws and methods of policing that led to the protests that began in Ferguson, but have spread around the country. There's a fascinating mix of implicit bias, "broken windows" policing, structurally biased laws, and tax aversion that has created a whole host of challenges that we need to confront. In other law and philosophy courses, I'd hope to do something similar – a mix of more abstract theory, some case law, and more concrete political issues.

17. There is also some hope in the department that you can dramatically increase the department's credit hours when you teach our new course on contemporary moral problems (Phi 105). What are the current controversies in ethics that you will teach in this new course?

In the Contemporary Moral Problems course, my aim is to focus on the different kinds of relationships we find ourselves embedded in within contemporary society. For example, how far should our market relations extend? Does the market corrode other forms of relationships, or enhance them? Are we engaged in any kinds of relationships with people very far away from us? Are we responsible for sweatshops? If so, are we to be lauded for the jobs created, or judged for the poor conditions? Do we owe some-

thing special to fellow citizens? If so, how do we regulate immigration? Do we have obligations ourselves in our role as citizen? In a different set of cases, how does a religiously diverse liberal society balance our rights? Should the state require that wedding caterers cater a gay wedding? Is that a violation of religious rights, or a protection of civil rights? How much should the law require us to respect people's cultural and religious beliefs? Relatedly, what is the appropriate role of affirmative action, if any? What is our obligation to reduce our own race and gender biases? Do we have an interest in regulating more intimate relationships, like bans on prostitution or pornography? How much can the state regulate marriage and divorce? On what grounds? Does the state have the right to prevent people from making bad decisions? Can we act paternalistically in those cases where we know people are especially vulnerable to poor reasoning? Does that inform how we shape the social safety net? The goal of the class will be to get students to critically reflect on the various moral decisions they confront with some regularity, either in their own lives, or in the news.

18. You have taught some interesting courses at Penn that we don't offer at UB such as the "moral foundations of globalization" and "conceptions of equality". If given carte blanche, what courses would you like to introduce into the department's curriculum?

I really like both of those courses, and would be thrilled to teach them at UB. I'd also like to design a course that focuses on development, as an upper-division course. For a lower-division course, I would like to do one modeling social phenomena. It would be a critical reasoning course with an application to social and political philosophy. I'm also interested in eventually developing a critical reasoning course on "How people lie to you" – which would be a tour of all the ways that people lie using formal, informal, and statistical fallacies. The goals of both courses would be to provide students with the tools to be more sophisticated citizens. The first course would offer

the skills to take a messy social situation, simplify it to a manageable model, reason about the model, and see what that can tell us about the original situation. The second course would focus on better understanding how arguments work, and how people try and mislead citizens in speeches and newspaper articles.

19. Your wife is a Ph.D. in physics just hired by the math department to do what sounds like neuroscience. How well do you and your wife understand each other's research? Do you and your wife have any overlapping intellectual interests that you could foresee a scholarly collaboration?

We met in Beijing at a grad student summer program in complex systems put on by the Santa Fe Institute, which speaks to our shared interests. Initially, she didn't like that a philosopher was spoiling the science party. Eventually I convinced her otherwise. That said, I'd like to keep a good thing going, which probably means no scholarly collaborations any time soon.

20. Some debonair and urbane folks may think that having colleagues from the math and philosophy departments over for a meal would be the Dinner Party from Hell. Given your social experience with philosophers and mathematicians, which group is likely to make the greater faux pas, breach of etiquette, or weird conversation at a dinner party that will provide you with funny anecdotes to later tell your non-academic friends and family?

Sarah and I have asked ourselves this question many times. I think philosophers have the worse reputation – in computer science there is a famous synchronization problem named "The Dining Philosophers Problem" which rests on the assumption that philosophers make terrible dining companions. I think the real answer is simpler: all academics are a little weird, and we're more used to the weirdness in our own disciplines, and think the other guys are the crazy ones.

Faculty Interview: Caroline Korsmeyer

Professor

Carolyn Korsmeyer has had a distinguished career at UB. She is the author of numerous academic journal essays and has published four books:

Savoring

Disgust.

The Foul

and the

Fair in

Aesthetics

(Oxford),

Gender and Aesthetics: An Introduction (Routledge),

Making Sense of Taste: Food, and Philosophy (Cornell),

and a co-authored book, *Feminist Scholarship: Kindling in the Groves of Academe* (Illinois). Plus, she has edited or co-edited six others. She has won a number of prestigious prizes in aesthetics including awards from the American Society of Aesthetics and the Italian Society for Aesthetics. She has served as the president of the American Society for Aesthetics, as the chair of the UB department, and even had a stint as an associate dean for the Faculty of Social Sciences. She retires at the end of this academic year unless we can change her mind.



1. How did you get interested in Philosophy? Were you a philosophy major at Smith College? Were your early philosophical interests in aesthetics and feminism or did those interests come later?

I did major in philosophy. I think when I was young I must have been an incipient Platonist, because I had the dim idea that the more abstract one could be, the closer to truth one could come. I no longer believe that; in fact, I maintain the opposite view. But before I changed my outlook, I was already planted in the field. My interests have changed a great deal over time.

2. Why did you choose Brown for your graduate education in philosophy?

It gave me a good fellowship.

3. Were you one of the few women in the program?

Yes. Brown had opened the department to women students only a few years previously.

4. Any lasting impressions of your years in the doctoral department at Brown?

I was pretty involved with anti-war and other political activities, and I actually quit graduate school for a short time, being less than enthralled with my studies.

5. What was the topic of your dissertation and who was on your committee? I hope Chisholm wasn't on your committee and demanding precise definitions of every philosophical term.

My dissertation was on eighteenth-century philosophy, and the committee was a last-minute hodgepodge because the person who was supposed to chair it was off in Italy incommunicado. No email then, remember. So I had to make do with whoever was around and willing, because I was about to lose my job here without a completed PhD. Thankfully, several people, especially John Ladd, pitched in so that I could get my degree in time, and I was very grateful. (If they hadn't done so, you wouldn't be asking me these questions now. SUNY was undergoing retrenchment and looking for reasons to fire people.) Chisholm wasn't on my committee, but I had several seminars with him. He was a very kind man.

6. Have you observed any major trends in the philosophy of aesthetics since you begin to work in the field in the 1970s? Have certain topics or approaches been prominent and cutting edge, only to recede into the background or has the field been fairly constant in its focus?

The field of aesthetics has changed enormously in the last several decades. It is more strongly and explicitly tied to other philosophical areas, such as philosophy of mind and ethics. But mainly it has expanded to include investigation of areas that previously were not on the philosophical horizon at all. I would include emotion theory there, as many people who work in aesthetics have become major contributors to the study of emotions. I would also include the expansion to study of what has become known as the “everyday.” The changes are so extensive, actually, that it is hard to summarize them briefly.

7. You have dealt with what seem to me, an outsider, to be both traditional philosophy of art questions and then some interesting but less mainstream questions on feminist aesthetics, disgust, and food. Am I correct to say your interests have been very eclectic? How would you describe your interests and approaches in comparison to what is considered traditional aesthetic theory?

It is true that most of my recent work is not in a traditionally recognized area of study. That was particularly the case when I first wrote about literal taste and food, though since then the topic has developed a hefty number of people writing in the area.

One of the things that I like about off-center topics is that they lead one to read in other disciplines where the area of interest is more established. Although I am cautious about glib talk about ‘interdisciplinary’ studies, which are extremely difficult and a poor place to start one’s education as a student, it is a lot of fun to read more widely outside one’s area of expertise. Of course, that is also an invitation to make more than the usual number of mistakes, and I have certainly made my share.

8. How did your philosophical interests in taste and food arise? I imagine that there are interesting connections between the sense of aesthetic taste we associate with the making and judging of artworks and taste in the culinary domain. Had they been neglected? What paths did your re-

search take and what major positions did you stake out?

Although modern aesthetics heavily uses ‘taste’ as a metaphor for what became known as aesthetic discernment, almost all philosophers of the time—not only the Enlightenment but also through most of the twentieth century—excluded literal taste from aesthetic function. This has a very long and consistent history, at least in western philosophy. Both Plato and Aristotle, for instance, remarked that one cannot praise food for beauty. In modern times, the distinction arose between ‘aesthetic senses’—vision and hearing—and ‘nonaesthetic senses’—the so-called bodily senses of taste, smell, and touch.

After many years not questioning this established view, it occurred to me to investigate more critically the grounds for excluding gustatory taste from aesthetic sensibility and food and drink from among the cultural products that have aesthetic valence. The result was the book, *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*.

9. Did your work on taste and food lead to your work on disgust or are they only tangentially connected? How did you get interested in disgust and how does it fit into aesthetic theorizing?

They are related, though I was already getting interested in emotion theory when I was writing *Making Sense of Taste*. The closest connection came when I was thinking about distaste and disgust with different eating traditions, and also the phenomenon of acquired taste, by which one comes to enjoy things previously rejected as not only yucky but really foul. Reflecting on things that challenge gastronomic sensibilities led me to speculate that there can be a conversion from disgust to sophisticated taste for food and drink. The article “Delightful, Delicious, Disgusting” was in a sense a pilot study for the book *Savoring Disgust: The Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics*.

Also, my approach to the aesthetic dimensions of food and drink was deliberately non-hedonic. That is, I don’t think that one plumbs the most interesting

similarities between foods and artworks or other cultural products by focusing on whether or not food tastes good. Gourmet food doesn't interest me as much as ceremonial or ritual or traditional foods, because it is those where the important meanings implicit in eating most emerge. Or so I believe, though many would disagree.

10. What were some of the issues that you explored in your work on feminism and aesthetics? Are you planning to return to any of those topics or different ones in feminist aesthetics?

Feminist perspectives in philosophy have had wide-ranging influences, some of them hard to detect unless one tracks changes in areas of study. Here I would mention emotion theory again, for I believe that the general shift of attention to emotions rather than the previously dominant interest in rationality among theorists has a root in feminist critiques of the conceptual frameworks that power philosophy. My own interests have focused on those sorts of conceptual challenges. In fact, they underlie some of my attention to the bodily senses of taste and touch—an outcome of feminist critiques even if not overtly feminist in the form they now take.

11. You have spent a career teaching and researching aesthetics, but can you paint, sculpt, or draw?

None of those, though I take piano lessons. I am not and never will be a good musician. I also write a lot and am somewhat better at that.

12. You were involved for a number of years in the *Nature of Taste Project* organized by NYU and the University of London. What was the mission of the taste project? What events did you participate in under the project's auspices?

The project sponsored workshops that assembled groups of scholars from different institutions who were working on related topics. The idea was to hold meetings where people shared ideas over 2-3 years and to prompt publications. The workshops were

held in London, Paris, and Abu Dhabi, where NYU has a campus. I skipped the meetings in Abu Dhabi because it was too far away not to interrupt my teaching commitments, but I did present at the meetings in London and Paris. I met some interesting people, two of whom have since become contributors to the second edition of my collection, *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, which I expect to come out later this year.

13. You have written not only on Kant, Hume, Wittgenstein, Hutcheson, Carroll, Nehamas, Emerson, Danto and Kolnai, but also on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. How did you end up writing about *Buffy*? Did you bring any of the ideas of the fore-mentioned figures to bear upon *Buffy's* exploits, aesthetic, character, or emotions?

I am generally interested in how philosophical ideas get transmitted in more informal, indirect ways than are permitted in the usual article or treatise. That's why some time ago I developed the Department's course in Philosophy and Literature. And I was a *Buffy* fan (still am), so when the opportunity arose to contribute an article, I just dashed one off. Same with *The Matrix* a year or so earlier. I can't recall mentioning any of those philosophers in either piece.

14. Did the star of the show, Sarah Michelle Geller, or the show's creator, Josh Whedon, ever contact you about your essay and its insights?

Alas, no. And there I was, ready to join the cast ...

15. Perhaps if Josh Whedon had known that you won a prize for writing a chapter of Mark Twain's "A Murder, Mystery and a Marriage," he would have asked you to write an episode of *Buffy* or its spin off, *Angel*. What kind of story did you write to win the Mark Twain writing competition?

Mark Twain himself had proposed a contest to be run in a newspaper, but it was never held in his lifetime. The challenge was to complete a story that he himself had begun called "A Murder, A Mystery, and a Marriage." When the Buffalo and Erie County Library

discovered that they had Twain's papers proposing that idea, as well as the unpublished novella, they decided to run the contest with the *Atlantic Monthly*. So my winning entry was a chapter that finished Twain's novella and explained all three terms of the title: a murder, a mystery, and a marriage. Unfortunately, the *Atlantic* backed out of their agreement to publish the winner, so it is now only on a CD in some archive and at my own website. But it was enormous fun to write and a thrill to win.

16. You are currently working on issues of touch and authenticity. I recall you mentioning that you did a little excavating when Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin House was being restored. Was your volunteering a product of your interest in authenticity or did that interest come later? What issues are you exploring in your work on authenticity?

To answer the general question first: I am at work exploring the idea that *things*—whether works of art or ordinary objects—that remain from the past offer something to us that is irreplaceable and that is lost when those things are merely replicated or recorded, by whatever means. I argue that genuineness is a value property with many dimensions, including cognitive (which is pretty obvious), ethical, and aesthetic. Since the latter is most controversial, I spend most of my time on that. There are numerous examples I use to illustrate this point.

The Darwin Martin House is interesting for a number of reasons because only part of it is original, yet the whole thing is being meticulously reconstructed, and as much as possible that reconstruction uses the same manufacturing techniques as were used a hundred years ago. Given that, does it matter very much that things like windows and tiles are scrupulous replicas, or that they are originals (or in my preferred vocabulary, Real Things). Naturally, I argue that it does matter and that the experiences warranted by the two options differ.

My first encounter with Wright's art glass windows occurred when I finagled my way onto Jack Quinan's

archaeological dig. He was the previous curator of the Martin House and was rummaging beneath the area where the conservatory once had stood. This, of course, was prior to reconstruction, and the area had earlier been bulldozed for apartment buildings, so he didn't expect to find much remaining. I was lucky, because I turned up a piece of one of the conservatory windows—a tiny fragment with amber glass beads still held in place by the thin bands of metal in so-called leaded glass. Jack said it would help them with the reproduction of the windows by serving as an example of the color in the originals, because the conservatory had been completely destroyed in 1962. But in addition to the fact that the fragment was evidence of what the windows once were like, I was taken by the fact that *I was holding the real thing in my own hands*.

17. Did your work on emotions arise out of interests in aesthetic attitudes? What major positions did you defend in your emotions research?

No, I don't think so. That is an independent interest, though in obvious ways it is related. Emotions are very complex phenomena, and different theoretical approaches are appropriate for different sorts of emotions. Therefore, I don't endorse any single kind of theory but eclectically pick and choose, depending on the emotion in question and the occasion of its arousal.

18. Did any insights from your work on emotions render you emotionally better prepared to cope with irritating journal referees, annoying colleagues, inflexible administrators, and rude students?

No. I remain, respectively, *irritated*, *annoyed*, *indignant*, and *affronted*.

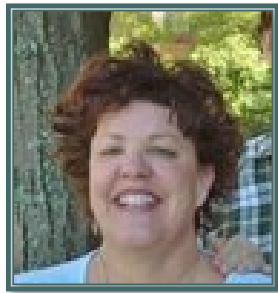
19. If word of your retirement gets out, the department likely will lose its rankings in the *Philosophy Gourmet Report* in both the philosophy of art and feminist philosophy. That is two of the eight fields in which we are ranked. We might suffer a drop in the quality of our grad applicants.

So to entice you to stay, I'm prepared to ask the Dean for a spousal hire in history for David. What do you say?

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Administration News

Our administrative staff has undergone a complete transformation since the last letter. Graduate administrator **Liz Felmet** began a phased retirement in 2015, working part time for two years in the Social Sciences Interdisciplinary Studies Program (IDS). We were fortunate to have a graduate administrator of her caliber and personality for five years. SUNY even recognized her with a Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Classified Service in 2010. Whatever was going on at work or home, Liz seemed unfazed by it all and remained her delightful and talented self. She was a great friend, advisor, and colleague to so many in the department. Her virtues made her the envy of other departments.



After a long search led by Theresa Monacelli and Neil Williams, the department offered the Graduate Administrator job to **Wendy Zitzka**, the most impressive of the candidates, and our first choice. Before joining us, Wendy was a psychology department staff person since 2001, and so already fairly familiar with practices in the College of Arts and Sciences. She also knows what it is like to be a UB student, as she is working part time towards a Bachelor's degree in communications.



With that ray of good news, however, came additional departures. Undergraduate Administrator **Patty Hahn**

took a job with the thruway authority, and while she regretted leaving us, it wasn't prudent to pass up a more lucrative position with greater possibilities for advancement than available at UB.

Theresa Monacelli, too, departed though not for another position. Theresa retired in 2016 after serving the university for over twenty, with seven in the Philosophy Department. Though she had acquired enough leave time to have been entitled to stay home from the beginning of summer to her official departure retirement date at summer's end, she passed on that opportunity to catch up on the backlog of work, illustrating again as she so often did, her indefatigable work ethic. Theresa's energy, cheerfulness, and commitment to serve made her an invaluable member of the department, especially this past year when so much of the administrative burden fell on her capable shoulders. Theresa's creativity and concern with detail when it comes to the department's parties and conferences will especially be missed. She over-



saw memorable welcome parties in historically significant locales like Delaware Park, the Roosevelt Museum and boat rides on the Erie Canal through the canal locks. The same creativity was shown with her planning our flagship Hourani lectures. For example, the

Michael Smith lectures ended with a tour and dinner at the Darwin Martin House. Smith was stepping into the Princeton chair position and while David Hershenov didn't fear Smith hiring away any faculty, he attests he was a little worried Smith might take Theresa to Princeton! Many other visiting speakers also expressed their appreciation of Theresa. Most had never experienced that level of concern with details and such efforts to make their trip memorable. It's a sense of urgency and attention to detail we've come to expect, no matter what the task Theresa undertakes.

It is certainly an end of an era and we all owe Liz, Patty, and Theresa many thanks for making our jobs or studies much better than they otherwise would have been over the years. You have earned our admiration and thanks, and we wish you each what you deserve, the best.

Department News

Philosophy Tea Time

Starting 2015 as the brainchild of our own [Alex King](#), the department has held a weekly 'tea time' during the semester, where graduate students and faculty come together in a relaxed environment to, well, relax. Alex was inspired by the success of a similar event organized by the philosophy department at Brown. Each week Alex and her 'tea lackey', graduate student [John Beverley](#), provide tasty finger foods, baked goods, and an assortment of tea options, as department members sit around and chat, and each week faculty and graduate students joke with each other, discuss current events or past experiences, and on occasion, talk philosophy.

Philosophical Society

Graduate students [Rob Kelly](#) and [David Limbaugh](#) have been instrumental in revitalizing the undergraduate philosophy club, dubbed the Philosophical Society. The club meets monthly where graduate student and faculty speakers discuss philosophical topics of interest in a relaxed environment, with refreshments provided by the department (with special thanks again going to Theresa for her help with the refreshments). While the Philosophical Society started off in 2015 with only a handful of regular attendees, by the spring of 2016, meetings frequently packed Park 141. Faculty speakers include Alex King, while graduate student speakers include Rob and David, Jake Monaghan, John Beverley, and Uriah Burke. The society also included an undergraduate speaker Hadia Qazi. Uriah's 2016 talk on the morality of neonatal circumcision was singled out by UB school paper The Spectrum as showcasing club

events. Needless to say, the club has grown in popularity and much-deserved thanks are in order for all those involved. Keep making philosophy cool!

Family Updates

[Brian Donohue](#) (fourth-year Ph.D.) and his wife Hannah welcomed their second child Finnian James



into the world on April 5, 2015.

[David Limbaugh](#) and [Danielle Shaffer](#) were engaged over the summer of 2016, and have set a date in October to be wed. Look for invitations in the mail!



Student Updates

New Students of 2015

Uriah Burke (BA California State University)
Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science

John Coleman (BS/BSc Elizabeth Seton College)
Ancient Philosophy, Skeptical Epistemology, Metaphysics

Dobin Choi (BA Seoul National State University Bakersfield)
Aesthetics, Ethics, Political Philosophy

Botan Dolun (BSc University of Florida; MA Bogazici University)
Philosophy of Action, Moral Psychology, Metaethics

Francesco Franda (Joint-BA University of Bologna; University of Burgundy)
Ontology, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Language

Jacqueline Kumar (BA/MA Brock University)
Ethics, Moral Conduct

Graduates of 2014-2015

Ph.D. Conferrals

Shane Babcock
Towards an Essentialist Account of Modality

Robert Earle
Deep Intentional Environmental Value: Toward a Relational Theory

Stephanie Rivera-Berruz
The Quest for Recognition: The Case of Latin American Philosophy

Adam Taylor
Four-Dimensionalism and Well-Being

M.A. Conferrals

Alex Cox

Anthony Fay

Alan Rabideau

Shane Hemmer

Rasmus Larsen

Graduates of 2015-2016

Ph.D. Conferrals

Dobin Choi
Sentimentalist Virtue Theories of Mengzi and Hume

Justin Donhauser
Philosophy of Theoretical Ecology for Environmental Policy

Jelena Krgovic
*Existential Psychoanalysis and the Nature of Mental Disorder:
Between the Medical Model and Anti-Psychiatry*

Peter Koch
A Theory of Patient Welfare

Matt Lavine
The Analytic/Synthetic and other Distinctions: A Theory of Analyticity

Catherine Nolan
The Metaphysics and Ethics of Vital Organ Donation

Jessica Otto
What is the Appropriate Role of White Philosophers Who Study Race: Derrick Bell, Racial Capitalism, and Why I Live to Harass White Folks

Meghan Raehl
Tool Use and Mind: Extended Selfing as Implied by the Extended Mind

M.A. Conferrals**Travis Allen****Ali Sharaf****Will Doub****Mark Jensen****Stephen McAndrew****Jake Monaghan****Shane Sicienski****Fumiaki Toyoshima****Reuben Wolf****Student Publications**

John Beverley's qualifying paper, titled "The Ties that Undermine" was published in Bioethics.

Brendan Cline had a paper entitled "Against Deliberative Indispensability as an Independent Guide to What There Is" accepted to the prestigious Philosophical Studies. **Brendan** also had a paper accepted by the Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy titled "Moral Explanations: Thick and Thin".

Brian Donohue's article "Beauty and Motivation in Aristotle" was published by *Quaestiones Disputatae*, while his article "The Limits of Ontological Realism" was accepted by *The Journal of Mind and Behavior*. Both publications were in 2016. Brian also co-authored a paper titled "Controlled and Uncontrolled English for Editing Ontologies" which was published in the proceedings for the Semantic Technology for Intelligence, Defense, and Security in 2015.

Clint Dowland was published in the elite *Philosophical Studies*, with "Embodied Mind Sparsism".

Robert Kelly co-authored "Remembering Past Lives", with Claire White and Shaun Nichols, which was published as a chapter of *Advances in Religion, Cognitive Science, and Experimental Philosophy*.

Peter Koch had his article "Analysis from a Fourth Perspective: Professionalism." published in the *American Journal of Bioethics*.

Rasmus Larsen published "The Posited Self: The Non-Theistic Foundation in Kierkegaard's Writings" in the 2015 *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*.

David Limbaugh had a paper accepted to *Ethics, Medicine, and Public Health* entitled, "Animals, Advance Directives, and Prudence".

Matt Lavine's paper "Prior's Thank-Goodness Argument Reconsidered" was accepted for publication by the prestigious journal *Synthese*.

Student Reading Groups

The **Lawless Buffalo? Reading Group** meets year-round to discuss political philosophy, with a focus on (left and right) libertarianism and anarchism. Their goal is to consider the success or failure of various justifications of state authority, the nature of property rights (particularly whether they are coercive), ideal and non-ideal political theory, and organization in a stateless society. The group organized a working dinner with **Jason Brennan** focused on a draft of his book *Against Democracy*. Group members Jake Monaghan, Jon Houston, Sean McNamara, Paul Poenicke, Yonatan Schreiber, and John Beverley were especially thanked in the preface when the book was published in 2016. **David Schmitz** also came at the behest of the group, this time to address the entire department at a 2016 colloquium event, and afterwards meeting with Jake, Paul, Sean, Yonatan, and Danielle Shaffer for an evening of politics, dinner, and drinks.

The **Kant Reading Group** led by Andrew Pfeuffer explores historical and contemporary Kant scholarship with a critical eye. The group recently worked through the *Third Critique* and the *Analytic of the Beautiful* while investigating connections to Gadamer, Leibniz, and contemporary teleological theories. Membership includes Andrew, Justin Murray, and Sean McNamara.

The Vienna Circle: Cheektowaga Chapter graduate reading group led by David Limbaugh meets monthly to discuss issues of personal identity, persistence, causation, and dispositions. The group organized a working dinner in 2016 with **Jennifer McKittrick** where a number of her papers on dispositions were discussed. Attendees included David, Francesco Franda, John Beverly, Fumiaki Toyoshima, Shane Hemmer, Uriah Burke, Neil Williams, John Keller, and Rob Kelly. McKittrick met the following day with members of Plato's Academy, Cheektowaga Campus, to discuss papers on gender, character, and potentiality.

The **Proofless(?) Buffalo Reading Group** led by John Beverley meets year-round to discuss various topics in philosophical logic. Recent discussions, spurred by a logic colloquium talk by Graham Priest from CUNY, have centered on non-classical logics. The focus of the group is to consider the import, if any, of characterizing philosophical disputes with different logics, and explore the influence privileged logics have had in framing disputes. Readings have focused primarily on Priest's Introduction to Non-Classical Logics. Rotating membership includes Neil Otte, Paul Poenicke, Shane Hemmer, Alexander Cox, Fumiaki Toyoshima, Yonatan Schrieber, and Randy Henricy.

Student Interview: Brendan Cline

1. How did you become interested philosophy? You majored in psychology and English. Other graduate students who had such dual major end up doing philosophy that is a mix of Freud, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and postmodernism. You have yet to give a Friday Regents talk on any of those subjects or their combination.

When I was in high school I had a very talented English teacher in my junior year, and I found reading American transcendentalists (like Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman) really exciting. So I decided I would become a high school English teacher like him. My first semester at college I signed up for English and

philosophy, and I quickly realized that I wasn't very interested in the literary aspects of English. But I was totally enthralled by Plato and Descartes, and especially the mind-body problem. So I decided I would be the one to solve it. (I'm still working...) At first I thought it was important to have opinions about Freud's work, but I eventually realized that beyond motivating the idea of unconscious cognition, Freud is not really integral to contemporary empirical psychology.

So, I wound up focusing my minors in rhetoric and behavioral



neuroscience, with the hope that these could inform my approach to philosophy. (I am a secret Richard Rorty fan, however, so I suppose some kind of post-modernism lurks somewhere beneath the surface.)

2. My relatives used to ask, often with an incredulous or exasperated tone, are you still a philosophy major? I would sometimes respond "Are you still a dentist?" or "Are you still a lawyer?" and feign a look of surprise or disappointment. How accepting of your educational pursuits has been your family?

My family has actually been very supportive. My mother is a professional musician – she plays the flute in several orchestras and chamber groups and teaches lessons – so she appreciates the value of the arts and humanities. My father is an extremely curious person and has a Ph.D. in physical chemistry, and I think he appreciates that philosophy is the field that stimulated my curiosity in the way that chemistry did for him. So I've been pretty lucky in that regard.

3. Did you arrive at UB interested in meta-ethics or did your interests migrate to that topic?

I did have interests in metaethics, but I also wanted to explore other topics before specializing. At first I was attracted to issues in cognitive science and phi-

losophy of mind, especially reductionism and mental representation. But in my second year I took a course on moral psychology with James Beebe, and that settled it for me – the prospect of drawing on moral psychology to craft skeptical arguments was just too tempting. Arguing about moral realism with Neil Otte (a fellow graduate student) also reminded me why I found metaethics interesting in the first place.

4. You argue against moral facts or moral realism. Were you a teenage anti-realist or did you more recently lose your faith in moral realism?

At first I was a vociferous realist. In fact, I received a grant in the summer after my sophomore year of college to work on a (naïve) project in which I argued that cultural relativism was partly responsible for many of our current social problems. It just seemed obvious to me, for example, that my unearned privilege was unjust, and that it is morally unacceptable that some humans are enslaved even today. But as I learned more about the various branches of human knowledge, I realized that (i) I had no clear way of fitting *value* into the picture of the world that I was developing, but (ii) it was relatively easy to explain *valuing*. And I realized that I could continue caring about others regardless of whether this was endorsed by objective facts external to myself. I've never seen a satisfactory answer to these worries, so I've worked on expressing my concerns to other philosophers.

5. Phil Kitcher is well-versed in biological accounts of ethics. At his Kurtz lecture dinner, he initially looked skeptical when you mentioned that you were working on something along the lines of an evolutionary debunking of morality and he immediately mentioned reasons to dismiss Street and Joyce's approaches. But then when you explained your account, he seemed surprised and rather impressed that you were doing something else. What did he assume you were doing and what did you say to him to change his tune?

To be honest, I was a bit surprised by his interpretation of Street and Joyce. Kitcher said that evolution-

ary debunking arguments rely on claims of the form: "it is impossible for natural selection to X" (where X is something like: shape us to track the moral truth). I agree that it would be unwise to make such claims, but I don't think Street or Joyce talk about the limits of natural selection. Instead, they argue (roughly) that given what we do know about how natural selection works, we should not be confident that our moral judgments are responses to "mind-independent" objective values (e.g., because we would make those judgments whether or not there were such values). My approach is a little different: I think that we can link our evaluative tendencies phylogenetically to the tendencies of simpler and simpler forms of life. And if we start at the beginning, and agree that things like atoms and stars don't have intrinsic value or normative reasons, we can move forward through time and get to ourselves today without positing intrinsic value or normative reasons. This poses a challenge to normative realists, namely to explain how value and reasons fit into the story.

6. What is the thesis of your doctoral thesis? How do you go about defending your thesis in the various chapters?

My thesis is that value is an illusion, but we aren't therefore required to stop valuing things. I start by diagnosing weaknesses in Richard Joyce's *moral* skepticism, showing how *global* normative skepticism is more robust. I then present the argument against normative realism sketched above. The next step is to argue that subjectivist and non-cognitivist accounts of value are inadequate in various ways. Therefore, we are in error: we take there to be "mind-independent" normative truths, but there are no such truths. But if that's right, then there is no *normative* requirement that we reject our evaluative commitments. Instead, realizing that there are no normative truths to discover, we can avoid the (unhelpful) distraction of looking for them, and instead adopt a pragmatic attitude that encourages us to look for ways to put philosophy to work in aiding causes we care about, such as promoting human rights and

preserving biodiversity. Of course this is a choice, not a discovery - so the game is not to prove that my version of pragmatism is true, but instead to make that choice look attractive.

7. What contemporary anti-realist meta-ethicists are you most sympathetic to?

I suppose I'd situate myself in the vicinity of Sharon Street and Richard Joyce. What I like about Street's work is that she offers a unified treatment of value. I am sympathetic to the growing sense that morality is not so different from other species of normativity, and that the two either stand or fall together. However Street embraces subjectivism about value, which I find implausible. Joyce is an error theorist about morality, and I admire his willingness to embrace this conclusion and then cope with its consequences. It seems to me like many authors are too willing to bend reality to their hopes: either that *there's just got to be* "mind-independent" moral facts, or that we don't even *think* that there are "mind-independent" moral facts (and so are error-free).

8. Which historically prominent strands of moral anti-realism do you find to be less attractive options?

I think error theory is the only plausible version of moral anti-realism. I never thought that the various non-cognitivismisms were very promising - they are primarily semantic views that just don't seem to capture the semantics of moral thought and discourse. And subjectivismisms are also not very plausible either in my opinion - from the first-person point of view, it appears (to me at least) that value is independent of my judgments about it. So the subjectivists' claim that our judgments somehow make moral claims true fails to do justice to our (or at least my) experience of value.

9. Does meta-ethics matter practically? It is obviously a fascinating and important philosophical issue that is deeply entangled in issues in meta-physics, philosophy of mind, action theory, and the philosophy of language. But will a change in meta-

ethical views alter the way people behave and think outside of the seminar room? If your dissertation convinced people to switch their meta-ethical views, would applied and normative ethics not go on much as they did before?

That's a good question, and I'm of at least two minds about it. On the one hand, I think it can matter a lot. Some people find the thought of an error theory utterly depressing, and seem to think that they would stop caring about others if they came to believe that there were no moral facts. That makes me nervous about being too vocal about my views - perhaps they're best kept private. At the same I think that we cannot help but value the world - I think that after a game of backgammon most people will just go on as before. This suggests that the common thought that metaethics is somehow prior to normative ethics is perhaps misguided.

10. Even if the particular moral positions that people hold don't change with say a loss of their belief in meta-ethical moral realism, would different forms of anti-realism lead to different strategies for moral discourse? For instance, would an expressivist be more inclined to use different forensic tactics than a cognitivist?

I think that is right in some sense. Expressivists typically claim that people are *already* expressivists. So I don't think they believe it will make a difference. On the other hand, as I suggested above, I think that error theory can make a pragmatic approach toward moral discourse more palatable, and that's what I hope to do in my work with my version of error theory.

11. Do you think if people become convinced of anti-realism, they might be less willing to enter into and engage in extended moral debates if they didn't think we could be tracking moral truths? Or would the need for consensus, compromise and coordination keep them in dialogue as much, if not more, as they were before?

It's difficult to say – many people claim that morality is a matter of opinion and then proceed to seemingly treat their own moral beliefs as if they were objectively true. So that might be evidence that they would go on as they do now. But they may just be misinterpreting their metaethical attitudes... It's worth noting that almost every anti-realist *philosopher* has advocated for preserving our moral discourse roughly as it is. This inclines me to think that people never initially adopt a particular approach to morality *because* they had antecedently worked out a metaethical position. Instead, most of us care about ethics, and this caring persists even after our theoretical temperaments lead us in different metaethical directions.

12. While it doesn't follow logically from anti-realism that people ought to be more tolerant, is there any evidence that it is a psychological consequence that people become more tolerant when they abandon moral realism?

Not that I know of. Studies that have been done suggest that if you expose people to proclamations of moral anti-realism, their charitable behavior is essentially the same as control subjects, whereas exposing them to the exhortations of a moral realist inflates their charitable giving. So maybe realism makes you nicer. But maybe if you exposed them to talk about the one true morality, people would be more intolerant toward those they have trouble identifying with. Personally, it has been much easier for me to overlook points of disagreement with others and try to work toward shared goals. (I should mention for our readers that realists don't have any trouble embracing tolerance as a virtue. If it is true that tolerance is good, then the realist is all set.)

13. You have been sending out papers for publication and have had more success than most graduate students. Are you submitting chapters from your dissertation, spin offs, or papers unrelated to your thesis? Were earlier versions of the talks given as Regents lectures, aka the Friday lunchtime talks? If so, did you remember to give us

an acknowledgement? We in the audience should at least get some credit for bringing to your attention how you could be misunderstood.

So far I haven't submitted anything that I plan to use as a chapter in my dissertation – both papers actually grew out of term papers. But I think writing them has helped me appreciate some of the thorny issues in the field. I've presented both to the department before sending them out for publication, and I've made sure to acknowledge the helpful feedback from UB philosophers!

14. Tell the readers about your published paper "Nativism and the Evolutionary Debunking of Morality" in the Review of Philosophy and Psychology. What position do you defend?

I defend the view that our tendency to make moral judgments is innate, and was the product of natural selection. The bulk of the paper consists in defending Joyce's account of moral nativism against a series of criticisms that Eduard Machery and Ron Mallon have made. So it is largely an empirical project – looking at patterns of punishment in modern hunter-gatherers, developmental studies of infants, game-theoretic models of the evolution of cooperation. But after defending Joyce's account of moral nativism, I use my earlier discussion to point out several weaknesses in his approach to using nativism against moral realism. (Don't worry – I've got the solution.)

15. How did you celebrate your first publication? Some restaurant owners frame their first dollar and hang it on the wall? Did you print out and frame the journal email acceptance?

I went out for vegan wings at one of my favorite restaurants. (I do sometimes miss the original Buffalo wings, but Merge makes it easy to live without them.) I didn't frame the acceptance email, but that sounds like a good gift idea for my grandmother, now that you mention it.

16. You have a paper on “Moral Explanations: Thick and Thin” conditionally accepted in the *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* at the time that I am writing this question, perhaps it will be fully accepted at the time your answer is being read. What are you arguing there?

Some philosophers – the “Cornell realists” – argue that irreducible moral facts play a role in some of our best explanations of various phenomena, thereby earning a place in our ontology. Their putative explanations can be divided into two groups. There are those that employ “thick concepts” (such as *lewd*, *rude*, *nasty*), which somehow seem to describe and evaluate things at the same time. (A rude person isn’t just bad, but bad in a certain way.) And then there are those that employ “thin concepts” (such as *good*, *bad*, *wrong*), which are in some sense more purely evaluative. (As Korsgaard says: “Pure in their normativity, they are like those little gold stars you can stick on anything”.) The problem is this: recent work on the semantics of thick terms and concepts suggests that they are not inherently evaluative in meaning. Instead, they are like the word “GMO,” which has a technical descriptive meaning, but can be used to *pragmatically* convey evaluations if it’s used by certain people in certain contexts. This disqualifies explanations using thick concepts from offering support to Cornell realism. (Trust me.) That is not good for Cornell realists, because their best explanations are the thicker ones. Moral explanations that employ thin concepts, I argue, are too flimsy to support their view. So they need to find another view, or give a competing account of the semantics of thick concepts. Phew!

17. What other papers have you submitted or are planning to submit to journals?

I haven’t submitted anything else yet, but I’m finishing up a draft of my ideas on value and big history. I’m hoping to get that off to publishers soon – it would be no fun to get scooped.

18. Consider the wild counterfactual that is true only in a very distant world: your moral anti-realism is false. What form of moral realism would you be most likely to accept? Would it be the moral Platonism offered by your upcoming debate opponent, Jake Monaghan?

It would. I think that behind the error theory, the most plausible metaethical view is some kind of non-naturalism, along the lines that Jake endorses. That’s the view to beat, in my opinion.

19. Without tipping off Jake too much about your strategy in the upcoming debate, what will be your main line of attack on his moral Platonism?

The basic plan is to start at the beginning and go from there. Surveying a few key points throughout the history of the universe gives us the resources to understand why we make evaluative judgments without needing to posit objective values. So where does value come in, and how does it mesh with everything else we know about ourselves and our world? That’s the challenge and, *pace* Jake, I don’t know of anyone with a good story about that.

20. There will be hundreds of undergraduates attending your upcoming debate with Jake Monaghan. If they were to place bets on the debate, should they bet that you win by a knockout (a *reductio*) or by points (the balance of reasons favors your view)?

Points. Nothing I have to say is incompatible with the truth of Jake’s view. It’s just that his view is theoretically expensive, but weakly supported. (Most) non-naturalists posit a fundamental rift in our ontology, between descriptive facts and prescriptive facts. But the main evidence they offer is that we experience the world as calling for responses from us, or as being better or worse in some way. I can account for that in terms of traits that enabled organisms to continue to exist and leave descendants behind. But I don’t need to posit a fundamental rift. So what other evidence is there for non-naturalism? I’m not aware of any.

Student Interview: Clint Dowland

1. How did you get interested in philosophy? Did you major as an undergraduate? What philosophical issues initially appealed to you? Was personal identity one of your earliest interests? Why did it so capture your fancy?

I entered college as a business management major, but changed my major to philosophy before the end of my freshman year. It took one day of economics at the beginning of my second semester to know I would rather spend my time in college thinking about other things. I was already taking my second philosophy course and, after dropping economics from my schedule, added another. Before the semester ended, philosophy was my new major.



It may surprise those who know me now to learn this, but my initial interests in philosophy were mainly within philosophy of religion. Soon after my freshman year I became an atheist, and so my interests changed a bit, but I still wanted to understand the world around me and had already come to enjoy philosophy in general. At times I considered going to law school after college, which warranted no change because I was already in the best major for that, but eventually decided to continue working in philosophy after graduating.

During my fourth year of college, I encountered contemporary, analytic metaphysics for the first time. It was a wonderful experience, and from then on my main focus has been metaphysics. With talk of temporal parts, possible worlds, consciousness, and the nature of surfaces, I was hooked. Personal identity

was definitely among my metaphysical interests at the time, and I was especially fascinated by philosophical discussions of split-brain patients. Now, split-brain patients are something I address in my dissertation and discuss with my own students.

2. Any resistance from the family when you informed them that you were planning to study in philosophy? Did you get the usual questions about how will you support yourself?

No, I don't recall any resistance to it, but perhaps I simply ignored and forgot such resistance. The explanation that philosophers make money by being philosophy professors seemed to suffice when it came to any financial concerns. The questions were more about what exactly philosophy is, which I sometimes had trouble explaining back in my undergraduate days.

3. Your very first published paper was in the elite journal Philosophical Studies. Many of my colleagues would sell their soul or, at least, their mother to place a paper in that venue. Were you confident when you submitted the paper or just thought no harm in taking a long shot?

I was confident in the work I had done in the paper, but had no idea what to expect since this was my first paper accepted for publication. This was my second time submitting a version of this paper to a journal, having sent an earlier version to another journal. It didn't take long for that to be rejected, but the referee report contained several useful criticisms. Luckily, most of the major complaints were about a portion of the paper that was not crucial to the rest of the discussion. I removed that part and focused on improving what remained.

4. How did you celebrate after receiving the news of your Phil Studies acceptance?

I initially celebrated with a huge sigh of relief. There may have been drinks later that week.

5. You took on some prominent philosophers in your paper like Eric Olson and Peter van Inwagen. What is wrong with their view that we are human animals, members of the species homo- sapiens? That view will sound commonsensical to many readers.

One of the biggest problems with the view that each human person is numerically identical with a human organism is that it implies the wrong number of people in certain cases. Perhaps the most popular example of this is dicephalic twinning. A pair of dicephalic twins might be superficially described as two heads on one body. The most well-known example of dicephalic twinning is the case of the Hensel twins, Abigail and Brittany. While there seems clearly to be two people in the case of the Hensel twins, some have argued that there are not two human organisms in their case, but instead that their shared body is a single organism. It would seem to be the presence of two minds which leads us to say there are two people in that case, but two minds do not entail two organisms, and so animalism implies there could be but one person in such a case despite there being two minds as different as yours and mine.

It may also help to consider how animalists approach death: since each of us is an organism, each of us dies when an organism dies. According to some versions of animalism, this occurs when the brainstem loses the capacity to regulate vital functions, and this is based on the notion that the brainstem is required for these vital functions to continue on in an integrated fashion. But there are many potential counterexamples to the notion that the brainstem is crucial for this. Circulation and respiration can continue in brain dead bodies with the aid of a ventilator. Such bodies can grow and even gestate a fetus. Furthermore, human embryos would seem to be good candidates for being human organisms, despite existing before the development of the brainstem. Yet another example is patients with locked-in syndrome: these people are mostly paralyzed but still conscious, and their brains no longer regulate vital processes.

For these reasons, some animalists prefer a cardiopulmonary criterion of death for human organisms. But suppose Joe's head is destroyed and the remaining body is patched up and connected to a ventilator, allowing circulation and respiration to continue. While I assume most of us would say Joe has died, it seems the animalist who endorses the cardiopulmonary approach must say he still lives, and has become a headless organism. So, that's odd enough, but it gets weirder: if that headless body is Joe when Joe's head is destroyed, then it would also be Joe if Joe's head could be transplanted to a new body instead. However, even many animalists tend to say that one would go with one's head in such a transplant. Of course, animalists who endorse the brainstem criterion can accommodate that intuition by saying that the brainstem's being located in the head is the reason why we go where our heads go, but as mentioned before, that version of animalism faces trouble when it comes to embryos, locked-in patients, and perhaps other cases.

6. You argue in your paper for the position that we persons are small, roughly brain-size parts of animals. McMahan and Parfit earlier argued for this position but your view differs from theirs. What did these two famous philosophers get wrong?

There are at least two important problems that neither McMahan nor Parfit has successfully avoided (yet). One concerns the remains of a person who has died. For simplicity, suppose it is one's whole brain which is entirely responsible for consciousness. In that case, McMahan and Parfit would say you are your brain. But then how do they account for that brain once the capacity for consciousness has been lost? Since they would say that person has died, they would not point to that brain preserved in a jar of formaldehyde and say there is a person there. Some animalists object, however, that such views as McMahan's imply just that. McMahan and Campbell address just that problem in a paper they co-authored. Their approach is to say the person is the 'functional brain' and that what is left after the person dies is a 'mere brain.' The problem with this is

that there is no explanation of why the mere brain pops into existence once the person's capacity for consciousness has been lost. Consider the persistence conditions of a mere brain. Since the presence of a mere brain (if there were such things) would require only that its parts be arranged a certain way, it is hard to see why the mere brain does not exist while those parts in the same arrangement are interacting to give rise to consciousness, such as before the capacity to do so was lost. It will be hard for McMahan's approach to explain why the mere brain does not already exist while the person is still there, such that the two share all their parts. And if that were the case, then both the mere brain and functional brain would be thinking people with the capacity for consciousness, thinking the same thoughts at the same time. By combining the embodied mind account with an approach to composition that entails there are no mere brains, I avoid this trouble and some others. On this account, while there may be particles arranged brain-wise after the person ceases to exist, those particles do not compose any brain-sized thing at that point.

The other major problem is that neither Parfit nor McMahan successfully avoid Olson's thinking-animal problem. If your account implies that you are not the thinking animal in your chair (while you are sitting in that chair), then your account implies either that there is no thinking animal in your chair or that there are two thinking things in your chair (thinking the same thoughts with the same brain). The latter implies more thinkers than there actually are, so it seems the non-animalist is stuck with the implication that there is no thinking animal in her chair. This means either there is no animal in her chair, or there is an animal that cannot think. Olson suggests neither of these is acceptable, but each of McMahan and Parfit take the latter approach, saying that animals exist but cannot think. The reason for this is supposed to be that the animal has parts not caught up in contributing to thought, while its mind is composed of all and only those parts of the organism which are contributing to thought (in the right way). But is there any reason to suppose that it is impossible for

there to exist an organism such that all of its parts are contributing to thought? If not, then McMahan and Parfit must face the possibility of an organism that at some times has all its parts contributing to thought, but perhaps has some parts at other times that do not. So, the approach taken by McMahan and Parfit does not really imply no organism can think, and allows for the possibility of an organism that comes to spatially coincide with a mind. So, granting the existence of organisms leaves no good way to avoid the possibility of organisms that can think or potential problems of coincidence. While the alternative – an eliminativist stance toward organisms – may be a bit extreme, I take it to be the only way for the non-animalist to avoid problems. Animalists would of course suggest that this is a reason to endorse animalism, but (a) animalism has other unwelcome implications, and (b) animalists themselves tend to take an eliminativist stance toward many of the objects of 'folk ontology,' including arms, heads, tables, and rocks. My account simply adds organisms to the list, while leaving persons and other thinkers off that list.

7. If your view of personal identity is correct, you have never observed or touched your girlfriend. Does she know that? Do you have a plan to keep her from becoming jealous of her animal body?

This is indeed an objection raised to views like the embodied mind account. It has the strange implication that most people have never seen another person, since we are something like brains or cerebra. I do not take this to be the sort of implication that would make the view unacceptable, but it is, admittedly, very strange. But perhaps there is hope: according to some philosophers, the mind extends beyond the brain, into other areas of the body (and perhaps even beyond the body). For the embodied mind account, you are your mind. Thus, anything that implies the mind is bigger than the brain would also imply (for the embodied mind account) that we are bigger than brains. Perhaps proponents of the embodied mind account can thus avoid some of these odd implications, at least to an extent.

8. Who would write worse romantic poetry: the animalist who advocates a sparse ontology or the advocate of a sparsist embodied mind theory? Neither believes in most folk anatomical entities like faces, eyes, hands, necks, cheeks, lips, legs, chests, arms, shoulders, hips, and hair. The animalist denies his beloved has a brain while the embodied mind theorist denies her lover has a body.

Talk of particles arranged facewise, handwise, and heartwise may not make for good poetry. But just as sparsists avoid this odd way of talking in everyday conversation, they would likely avoid it in poetry as well.

9. I would think your defense of the embodied mind view has implications for ethics, in particular bioethics given that it posits for us later origins and perhaps earlier endings than those of the human animal. Have you given any thought to the ethical upshot of your view of personal identity?

It is something I have considered and on which I hope to work more at a later time. Like any view which has implications for when we cease to exist, then embodied mind account has implications for our practices of retrieving organs from dead bodies for donation. Assuming it is not permissible to remove vital organs from one of us who is still alive, different approaches to death have different implications for when it is first permissible to retrieve organs.

10. Have you been sitting on your laurels after your elite publication or have you been writing other papers?

That paper is an important chapter of my dissertation, which is the current focus of my work. I have continued working on my dissertation, and hope that doing so may lead to another publication.

11. What philosophical research will you pursue after resolving the personal identity questions that interest you?

I am greatly interested in many other metaphysical issues, such as philosophy of time, three- vs. four-dimensionalism, modality, dispositions, various matters that get categorized as philosophy of mind, and many others. And, as mentioned in an earlier answer, I may do a bit of work on the ethical implications of the embodied mind account.

12. Have you assigned your Philosophical Studies article to any of your undergraduate classes? Are you going to?

That paper may be a bit too advanced for the courses I have taught so far. It deals with intersection of two difficult metaphysical issues: composition and personal identity, and I would want students to read at least a few other things related to each topic before tackling my paper. However, I hope to someday teach upper division courses on personal identity and other areas of metaphysics, in which case I may very well assign my paper.

Student Interview: Matt LaVine

1. When I look at your CV and see two degrees in Math and two in philosophy, I think that this guy is a lover of the a priori. Am I right about your intellectual passions? Or are you bringing a Rosenberg-style "mad dog reductionism" to philosophy and math?

You're absolutely right—I love the a priori. I'm really just a big nerd who wants to think all of the time, but gets bored thinking about the same thing pretty easily. If your discipline is empirical, then you can't engage in it always and everywhere. If you're just a philosopher of language or algebraist, then you're on the same topic all of the time. Focusing on the a priori, generally, optimizes these two desires I have. This is especially the case given that I have a



conception of the a priori, descendant from Bolzano, on which it includes philosophy and mathematics, but also religion and ethics. And while some might call it reductive, my views on the a priori are intended to be moderate—trying to avoid both the Scylla of the a priori being magical and the Charybdis of it being trivial. I think the way to do this is some sort of constructionist view, but I can't figure out the details. As a side-note, the department might like to know that all of my thoughts here developed from colloquium talks early in my career at UB. My interests in Bolzano and constructionism started with wonderful talks in Park 141 by Sandra Lapointe and Sally Haslanger, respectively.

2. Which came first, your interest in philosophy or your interest in math? Are the interests independent of each other? Has either field given rise to questions that the other field has provided answers?

It depends on what you're willing to call 'philosophizing'. I grew up in a rigidly-Catholic household. There were times where religion was at the very heart of my worldview and times where I thought religion was the most evil force in existence. At some point, I wanted to figure out what it was about religion that made me react to it so dramatically. Some of this thinking might have been proto-philosophizing—not that I could have put it that way, since I had no idea what philosophy was until my second semester of college. So, fully conscious interest in math came first. One of my older brothers is an engineer and started to teach me rather sophisticated mathematical concepts at an early age. By the time I got to college, I had decided I was there to become a high school math teacher. My second semester included a philosophy of religion course and a course on Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology, though. Thank you, General Education requirements! And, yes, the two certainly influence one another. Mathematical work on infinity has influenced my views in the philosophy of religion and work in the philosophy of

language has impacted how I treat formalisms in mathematics, among many others examples.

3. What made you pursue an MA in math in the middle of your pursuit in a Ph.D. in philosophy?

I actually did a good portion of the MA in mathematics before I came to UB. That was mostly opportunistic, though. I'd been planning on starting at Buffalo in August of 2009, but had been fighting cancer since December 2008. In late July 2009 I spent more than a week in the hospital after having 50 or so cancerous lymph nodes removed. I was simply not yet able to live on my own in Buffalo when the semester came around—so I stayed at home in Potsdam. My partner, Krista, then suggested that I should see if I could use some of my contacts in the Potsdam math department to get a spot to work on an MA. As an undergrad, I had had a Jon von Neumann grant from the NSF which has an associated graduate grant. So, I did a year of graduate work in math while waiting to get healthy enough to move to Buffalo. And it was actually work in Buffalo that made me want to finish the MA. We have wonderful formal philosophers at UB that made it very easy to keep the mathematical parts of my mind alive.

4. My relatives used to ask me what I was going to do with a philosophy degree. I would sometimes reply that I would start a cult and get people to give me all of their material goods in exchange for some spiritual guidance. But if I had an MA in math, I would have volunteered that information since it would seem more useful to lay people. Has your math degree helped you respond to relatives skeptical of the prospects of your philosophy degree?

Yes and no. My family has kind of an odd relationship to formal education. The generations above mine were all some combination of poor, blue-collar, immigrant, and/or military. Many of them had almost no formal learning to speak of—a good number not even with a high school education. As a result, some

of them were so happy that I was getting a chance to get a degree that philosophy and math were equally amazing. Others, though, were so skeptical of book learning, generally, that philosophy and math were equally silly endeavors. On the other hand, my generation has benefitted greatly from the hard work of some above us in the family tree and have had greater educational opportunities. So, this generation has had enough exposure to the academy to think that any BA/MA is similar enough to any other that my prospects didn't change much with either arts degrees in philosophy or arts degrees in math. Again, some in this generation took this to mean that BA and MA degrees in mathematics and philosophy were equally interesting or equally impractical.

5. Your MA in philosophy was on fictional objects with David Braun. He has a horse in that race, having published on the subject. Did you take a different position from his? If so, how did that go? Did he tell you that your view on fictional objects contained more fiction than non-fiction?

My interest in philosophy of fiction certainly came from David, but my MA thesis was really kind of orthogonal to David's work. David is concerned primarily with issues of *reference* in fiction, whereas I'm concerned with the matter of *truth* in fiction. Oversimplifying things, David is amazed that fiction can be *about* things, whereas I'm amazed that there's *fact* and *fiction* within fiction. And even though we both take philosophy of language approaches to philosophy of fiction, these different concerns lead to using different methods and having different foci. David focuses on *words* from the fiction and I focus on *sentences* in the fictional work. And, no, David was actually very kind in the way he gave devastating objection after devastating objection to my views. He *may* have accused me of more incoherence than fiction, though. That stings a bit.

6. Your dissertation is on analyticity. That is a well-worn issue and some people think there is nothing else to be said. I frequently read someone saying

that "as Quine showed in Two Dogmas...", there is no sharp analytic/synthetic divide. I have always been amazed that such folks understand the Quine article and secondly, that they are convinced by his arguments. Where did you stand on the Quinean claim?

Well, given this amazement, you might be happy to learn that Bourget and Chalmers have recently showed that philosophers misperceive the community's views on the analytic/synthetic distinction more than almost any other issue. They found that 65% of Anglo-European philosophers today accept that there is a distinction between some analytic truths and others, while only 27% deny this. Despite this, these same philosophers predicted that 50% of the discipline would deny and 50% accept the existence of the analytic/synthetic distinction. And despite thinking that Quine was a genius, I tend to think that "Two Dogmas" is one of his poorer papers. I think it suffers from an inconsistent methodology and the circularity argument boils down to "the rather odd complaint that 'analytic' can be explained only via notions with which it is synonymous, and not via notions with which it is not synonymous" (Hans-Johann Glock). Furthermore, by the time it came out, views on the analytic/synthetic distinction had started to be formulated in holist-friendly terms. In my dissertation, I actually start with a short section discussing how Quine is wrong on his own assumptions to deny that there are some analytic truths and some synthetic truths.

7. Does Quine's skepticism of analyticity play a major role in your dissertation, at least as a target? Or are you mostly up to something else. Tell us about your dissertation.

The section from my dissertation that I mentioned in question 6 is actually there to justify why I won't deal with Quine much. I'm much more concerned with contemporary thinkers in my dissertation. Most of what I'm dealing with comes after Paul Boghossian's 1996 paper, "Analyticity Reconsidered", which

showed that multiple different concepts and theories were run together under the one heading of ‘analyticity’ in earlier work. The distinctions Boghossian introduced greatly influenced the work of others that I interact with in my dissertation—like Gillian Russell, Timothy Williamson, Carrie Jenkins, and Severin Schroeder. What separates my views from the rest is that I want to defend (what Boghossian calls) epistemic analyticity—knowledge gained simply from linguistic competence—and metaphysical analyticity—truth arising from meaning conventions—without holding that all analytic truths are necessary or that all analytic truths are a priori.

8. You have an interest in the more abstract issues of analytic philosophy of language and logic and the apolitical Wittgenstein, yet you are intensely committed to various practical concerns. It seems they are separate interests but you believe analytical philosophy has much to offer our public and private moral lives. Why is that?

You may not realize what you got yourself into asking that question. How much time do you have? Well, contrary to Wittgenstein’s understanding of himself and his own discipline, I think logic and ethics, philosophy of language and social/political philosophy are extremely connected disciplines. Establishing this has become the focus of my work as of late. I have two journal articles on these issues and I just gave a paper at the World Congress on Universal Logic trying to show how logic serves ethical ideals like objectivity, cooperation, and tolerance—and, thus, can be brought to fight problems like racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, and classism. I also have a section of my dissertation where I discuss how analyticity, specifically, and philosophy of language, generally, can be useful in answering politically-relevant questions on the definitions, meanings, usages, and purposes of terms ‘person’, ‘marriage’, ‘terrorist’, ‘cruel and unusual’, ‘black’, ‘woman’, etc. I don’t think I’m doing anything new here, though. Views like this were a staple of 1930’s groups like the Vienna Circle and associated circles in Berlin, Poland,

Scandinavia, and England. In fact, my motivation is best put in Susan Stebbing’s words from her 1939, *Thinking to Some Purpose*. Stebbing wrote: “There is an urgent need to-day for the citizens of a democracy to think well. It is not enough to have freedom of the Press and parliamentary institutions. Our difficulties are due partly to our own stupidity, partly to the exploitation of that stupidity, and partly to our own prejudices and personal desires.” Because of this, I also see my project as trying to emulate (albeit a more boring version of) continental thinkers like de Beauvoir, Camus, Foucault, and Sartre, TV-personalities like Rachel Maddow, Jon Stewart, and Larry Wilmore, musicians like Balkan Beat Box, Fishbone, Living Colour, Melissa Etheridge, and Rage Against the Machine, and writers like Octavia Butler, Suzanne Collins, Don DeLillo, and Aaron Sorkin. Okay. I’ll stop now

9. What position did you defend in your first published paper “The Relevance of Analytical Philosophy to Personal, Public and Democratic Life”?

My contribution to the paper was a historical investigation showing that Soames is wrong to think that analytic philosophy is characterized by clarity and rigor in argumentation, *as opposed to* a concern with moral and spiritual guidance. Rather, there is a long history of thinkers who believe that some of the best moral and spiritual guidance is to encourage publicly-open clarity and rigor in argumentation. After this, my co-author and political scientist friend, Matt Chick, talked about some current examples of political thinkers and public intellectuals who continue this trend and give us encouraging models of how to do our work. Matt and I are currently working on a follow-up paper in which we argue that there is a significant connection between Logical Positivist debates over verificationism and Rawls’ conception of public reason. Furthermore, we think this is part of a larger trend of missed connections between Rawls and the earlier analytic tradition—something which has made us likely to misunderstand both Positivism and Rawlsianism. We’ll be presenting the

paper at the Workshop on Politics, Ethics, and Society at Washington University in St Louis, with Marilyn Friedman serving as our respondent.

10. A paper accepted in Synthese would be a feather in the cap of any philosopher, but it is even more impressive when the author of the paper is still in graduate school. The paper was on Prior who is most famous for claiming that only A theories of time can accommodate certain attitudes like “thank goodness that’s over.” But you tie such abstract ideas into practical philosophy. How do you do that?

Well, your comments at two different stages were extremely helpful. So, thank you for your help in getting this feather for my hair (I’m not a hat-wearer). Anyway, what I try to do in the paper is argue that Prior’s thank-goodness argument is about recognizing that we have important linguistic practices from everyday life that put serious constraints on our metaphysical theorizing if we want to leave them coherent. For instance, that “are you here?” ordinarily makes sense to us in a way that “are you now?” doesn’t, puts the onus on the B-theorist to justify her theory on which ‘here’ and ‘now’ should be analogous. Maybe more interestingly, I realized in a conversation during one of Maureen Donnelly’s seminars that saying “thank goodness that’s over” expresses something that would be wrong if it were completely analogous to “thank goodness that’s over there”. If, for instance, my mother died, I could imagine saying “thank goodness that’s over” as I walked away from her funeral. Here, part of what I would be expressing is some sort of relief over the fact that I’ve hit a kind of bottom. Since I have a unique mother, death is final, and I believe past, present, and future are intrinsic properties of events, I cannot possibly experience the death of my mother again. If B-theory is right, something has gone wrong here. This doesn’t mean B-theory is necessarily wrong. Since I also argued in the paper that this debate is in the realm of abductive reasoning, I think it means that B-theory

has more explaining to do in the dialectic than the A-theory does, though.

11. Wasn’t the paper originally given at a conference with Kit Fine and other heavy hitters in the audience? Did Fine or some of the others give you a hard time in the Q and A?

I originally gave the paper at the Arthur Norman Prior Centenary conference at Balliol College, Oxford. It was a blast. Aside from getting to listen to thinkers like Max Cresswell, Anthony Kenny, and Adriane Rini, I had people at my talk like Patrick Blackburn, Jimmy Doyle, Kit Fine, and Prior’s children, Ann and Martin. Fine was the first person to get called on during the Q and A. Question lead to sub-question to sub-question, and before I knew it, my session was out of time. If I remember right, I think I actually convinced him of one thing during the exchange. What it was has completely escaped me, though. I was just happy I didn’t pass out from nerves. In all seriousness, though, Fine’s comments were extremely helpful and lead to a significant revision between what was presented and what will be published

12. Your Synthese paper led to your winning a \$1000 department prize for the best paper by a grad student. Assuming the money doesn’t have to go to student loan repayments, will you spend the grand on something nerdy like the complete works of Arthur Prior, an autographed copy of Wittgenstein’s Tractatus, or rebind your hard cover collection of Russell’s collected works. Or do you have some cooler or “sexier” plans for the money?

It will go toward paying off my credit card debt acquired going to Istanbul for the World Congress on Universal Logic. So, despite also being debt repayment, it’s a lot cooler than student loan repayments. What I got for that debt—a chance to see one of the most historically and culturally rich cities in the world, a forum to give some of my thoughts on logic and ethics which included logicians from six continents, and a setting in which to have a wonderful

breakfast in a European metropolis followed by an amazing lunch in a small Asian fishing village—was well worth it.

13. You have given 17 invited talks. That is impressive. However, I am not sure ordinary language philosophy analysis would endorse your listing the department's Friday lunchtime talks as "invited talks". Is the idea that I used the listserv to "invite" the entire department to volunteer and so that makes it an invited talk?

I certainly agree that calling those "invited talks" is sneaky and a little self-aggrandizing, but I'm not sure ordinary language analysis couldn't be used to endorse it. As you said, there is at least one way to read 'invite' on which it's true that 'Friday lunchtime talks are the result of an invitation'. Furthermore, the principle of charity dictates that you interpret my utterances in the way which makes them most rational and maximizes their truth content.

14. Did you know the name of the Friday lunchtime talks has been changed to the more impressive-sounding Regents Lectures? Would the correct analysis of names and Frege Puzzles allow you to modify your CV to incorporate that more lofty-sounding name change?

I did not know about this name change. And, yes, the right view of proper names would allow me to change to the loftier-sounding option. Not because they're the same name, though, but because they have co-dependent reference determiners. The situation is much the same as a case like 'Cassius X' and 'Muhammad Ali' (cf. Gillian Russell's argument that 'Muhammad is Cassius' is analytic).

15. So you have 17 (give or take a couple) invited talks and 13 other talks. Some of those talks were in Park Hall 141 but most were further away in places like Quebec, London, Istanbul and twice in Oxford. That sounds expensive; did you "marry money" or are you from "Old Money" or were you hitchhiking and sleeping in youth hostels?

Well, as I mentioned in question 4, I don't come from money. And my partner, Krista, comes from a bunch of Nebraska farmers, so she doesn't come from money, either. That said, I wouldn't exactly say we were roughing it any of these places, either. Travelling to and briefly living amongst those in other places is one of our biggest passions. So, we do things to make it easier to do more often. We live in a cheap place. We fly IcelandAir, which just gives you a chance to hang out in Reykjavik too. We rent from places like AirBnB. It also *really* helps having three supportive departments in two supportive colleges. I've gotten money from Philosophy, Mathematics, UUP, and the Dean of Arts and Sciences at SUNY Potsdam, from the Philosophy department and the Dean of Arts and Sciences at UB, and the NEH, NIH, and NSF to travel to these places. So, asking for money *constantly* helps as well.

16. Why did you recently returned to Potsdam where you did your undergrad work?

Potsdam is home for the time being. It's where Krista and I have a house. It's also undesirable enough to other people that we can afford to have a house on $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre—which allows us to grow most of our own food in the summer (yes, we still have summers this far north). It's also a small enough place that everything is walkable, so we don't need to own a car. And I have a lot of good connections at SUNY Potsdam. Two of my co-authors are Potsdam people and I've got friends in English and Politics working on similar issues of oppression, friends in Sociology working on environmental ethics, and two other logician colleagues in the Math department. There are also four of us here scattered across various departments that

did significant graduate work on Wittgenstein! Basically, Potsdam is small-town rural America with all the charm, but without the all-too-often associated problem of being full of small-minded white folks.

17. You have a book chapter coming out on the topic of philosophical anthropology. One doesn't hear that much anymore about that topic. It sounds like a nineteenth or early twentieth century subject. What kind of issues does the field investigate and what narrower topic did you examine in our paper?

The chapter, written with my psychologist friend, Mike Tissaw, is an extension of early twentieth-century work from, who other, than Wittgenstein. Following Hacker's work on Wittgenstein, we take philosophical anthropology to be an investigation into the concepts and forms of explanation used in the study of humans. While mostly intended for psychologists, the basic idea we pushed is that contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science have not gotten away from Descartes as much as they presume. Many working in these fields, despite dropping dualism, still think that 'mind' and 'body' are useful categories in which to theorize about persons. Behaviorists put their views in terms of 'mind' having an empty extension. Identity theorists just say 'mind' and 'body' refer to the same thing. Furthermore, all such theories attempt to explain mental skills and abilities of the person in terms of some proper part of the person. Here, they've taken a Cartesian form and just filled it in with different content—souls simply being replaced by brains. We hold, though, not that it is false to say that souls/brains think or reason or classify, but that it's straight-forwardly nonsense.

18. You won a dissertation scholarship, department Hare citizenship award, Hourani best paper in ethics award. What award are you next pursuing – Romanell award in naturalism, Perry Award for Best Dissertation, or both? And on what will you spend the prize money?

The next World Congress on Universal Logic is in Mexico City...

19. If there was a Nobel Prize in Philosophy, it might be embarrassing to the philosophical community to admit that Carnap might have won it for showing that bachelors were necessarily unmarried men. Then, perhaps to the further discredit of philosophy, Quine would get a later Noble Prize for showing that bachelors weren't necessarily unmarried men, and Putnam would next win it for showing that there were analytic truths. If you were on the Oslo awards committee, who else would be in the running for the Nobel Prize in Philosophy for groundbreaking work on analyticity?

Well, Carnap wouldn't have won the Nobel Prize for showing that bachelors were necessarily unmarried men. He would have won it for being able to explain the status of this claim in a way that nobody had been able to, despite some very intelligent folks attempting to. When this is put in the context of a system which pioneered advances in formal semantics and progressive political causes at the same time, that sounds like a fitting reason for receiving the Nobel Prize to me. As for nominating a current philosopher for a Nobel Prize based on work on analyticity, I'm torn. My views probably come closest to Severin Schroeder's or Rick Creath's, but I think Gillian Russell is doing the most impressive and innovative work on the subject today. She's even made me slightly unsure about my evaluation of "Two Dogmas" on occasion. Most days I just think she's being too nice saying that the arguments she's been able to come up with were what Quine had in mind, though.

20. Is the Pope a bachelor? It sounds odd to say he is even though he is unmarried and male. Was he a bachelor when he was a newborn baby?

I don't know about popes before him, but the current pope is sure making a lot of folks wish he were an eligible bachelor! Gotta love the tolerance and the encyclical on climate change!

Student Interviews: David Limbaugh and Rob Kelly

David Limbaugh and Rob Kelly are two of the most well rounded graduate student philosophers in the department. They are also terrific department citizens. They have revived the undergraduate club and are full of ideas about improving enrollments in our classes. They have participated in department sponsored debates and numerous reading groups. If they are not the speaker or the debater in a philosophy department event, they are amongst the most active members of the audience during the Q and A. David and Rob are both mainstays of the Blameless Buffalo? reading group devoted to the study of free will and responsibility. Rob is also active in the experimental philosophy (X phi) research circles in the department. David runs a metaphysics reading group called the Vienna Circle, Cheektowaga chapter (VCCC) that claims descent from philosophical royalty. He is also active in the WNY bioethics and philosophy of medicine reading group "Plato's Academy, North Tonawanda Campus" (PANTC). Both have just had their first peer reviewed paper published or accepted for publication.

1. You both have been very active in revitalizing the undergraduate philosophy club. What changes did you introduce? What activities are planned for the future?

Rob: It's hard to say what *changes* we have made since I am not familiar with what the philosophy club did before we started it back up. We meet every other week and discuss various philosophical topics, and

discussions are typically led by a philosophy graduate student. However, we have had an undergrad, Hadia Qazi, lead a discussion on philosophical issues surrounding Islam, as well as a UB philosophy professor, Alexandra King, lead a discussion on the 'ought implies can' principle. I imagine the old club did something similar. Maybe style. Yeah, I think we've brought more style. For the future, the plans are simple at the moment. We want the club to feel like a place where undergrads interested in philosophy (majors or not, many of our members are not majors) can come and feel encouraged to explore the ideas that interest them with their peers as well as grad students who can help guide their intellectual development. This was incredibly influential for me as an undergrad. We hope that continues. We'd also like to eventually see the club taken over by the undergrads themselves, and perhaps even to grow and become established enough such that events like undergraduate philosophy conferences are feasible.

2. You are both keenly aware of the dire enrollment problems facing our department and have given the matter some thought. What would you suggest we do in the short run and the long run?

Rob: As I understand it, the problem is two-fold. The department is under pressure to get more majors and minors, but also just to get more people into the seats of philosophy classes (majors/minors or not). There are obvious connections to these two problems, but I think they are distinct and that short run solutions may work for one and not the other. There were some interesting suggestions made at the meeting the graduate students had with the chair, for instance, making short videos for the website of instructors giving a short intro to their class, professors giving a short intro/breakdown of their field of expertise, or professors/grads/alumni



discussing the benefits of philosophy. We've seen some of the latter in real life recently with the two panel discussions on jobs for philosophers outside of philosophy. Other good short run suggestions included spicing up the courses offered (even just renaming them) so that they attract more students. I think that these are good ideas, but I think that they only really have hope for addressing the problem of filling seats in philosophy classes. While highlighting the benefits of philosophy may work more towards increasing majors/minors, offering more attractive classes and making the website and course browsing user-friendly with videos can only go so far. To be sure, we should be implementing anything that works and isn't too costly at this point, but I don't think we should hang our hopes for any long-term changes on jazzing up the website and adding Philosophy of Sex to the course listing. My suspicion is that the enrollment problem (and we are not the only campus with such a problem) philosophy departments are facing runs much deeper. How many college freshman do you get in your classes who (i) know what philosophy is (I mean know what it *really* is, not just read something from the "philosophy" section of the local bookstore), (ii) have taken a philosophy course in high school (taught by a philosopher!), or (iii) have parents who would be super excited if their child disclosed their ambitions to become a philosophy professor? Most likely not very many—indeed, probably none. I think this is the biggest problem we face. Most students enter college with no knowledge of or experience with philosophy, with a biased picture of what it has to offer, and with a (perhaps parent-inspired) plan of getting in and out in four years and launching into the world of money-making (and philosophy doesn't fit this plan, they would argue). What's more, this plan is generally encouraged at the administrative level of many universities (the freshman orientation where I did my undergrad had a "Four Year Plan" theme). This is certainly where tactics like promoting the benefits of philosophy come in handy, which are unfortunately little-known outside the department. However, we are often up against students who are here either on their par-

ents' dime or a government loan, and taking what they see as a huge gamble with that money is a hard sell (or not their choice in the former case). So, to wrap this cynicism up, I think the general long term suggestion is to recognize that this is the problem and figure out ways to address that. I'm not sure how. Building a connection between local high schools and the university that extends beyond putting a table upstairs in the student union for "Accepted Students Day" is a thought. But this is a huge commitment of time and money that the administration is likely not going to chip into.

David: I don't think there is any real short term solution. Gaining more visibility always helps. Getting our classes in students faces by being featured



on the enrollment site and through email would help, probably not change a whole lot. I think what's needed is a cultural change, and that takes time. Students and parents need to change their minds about what's important about higher education and then be convinced that philosophy is a part of that. As it stands I imagine they think that it's all about having that "undergrad experience" and *money*. We have to figure out a way to chip away at that mind set. That takes years.

3. You are currently driving together to Cornell every Monday to attend Derk Pereboom's seminar on free will. He is one of the most famous scholars in the field. What has that experience been like?

Rob: Really great. Pereboom is a wealth of knowledge and I have learned so much from his seminar. It was David's idea and I couldn't be happier that he suggested it and encouraged me to join him. I was very intimidated about it at first, especially when I saw how personal the size of the seminar room was! Sitting three chairs away from Pereboom in a room full of Cornell graduate students sounded a little frightening. But I am glad to say that both David and I

have really held our own and that has been a nice confidence boost for me. I make sure to write “DP approved” in my notes whenever Pereboom acknowledges the quality of my comment. I must add, though, that the Blameless Buffalo? reading group has also been an incredibly helpful source for me as well on this topic (and has, on occasion, been ahead of the Pereboom seminar in its choices of articles!). I also think I speak for both David and I when I say that the car rides to and from Cornell have often been just as helpful as the seminar itself. We get about two and half hours each way to discuss the readings (going) and the seminar discussion (coming), and that has produced really fruitful discussions. I should also thank David for driving his car every week (well, I’ve driven a couple of times) and rushing me back to UB to teach my Monday night ethics class. Only once has he gotten onto the 90 in the wrong direction while coming home. Not too bad.

David: It’s been a great experience. Because of the drive sandwiching the seminar I feel like I’m attending a five-hour freewill intensive seminar. Bob and I discuss for a couple hours, then we hear what Pereboom has to say, and then immediately Bob and I discuss for a couple hours more. We also each teach that day, my class is in the morning and his at night, so it’s just philosophy all day long. Pereboom has proved to be a wealth of knowledge and about both free will and the practice of teaching. His prominence in the freewill literature is well known. What may not be as widely known is that he’s a very talented instructor.

4. David is a libertarian and Rob is a free will skeptic. Tell readers more about your own positions.

Rob: Perhaps the first thing I should say about my position is that I only care about free will insofar as it is related to moral responsibility. In fact, I just think of freedom as the control (or ability, or power) required for moral responsibility. So, I am a free will skeptic in the sense that I do not think we have the kind of control over our actions that is required in

order to be morally responsible. By ‘morally responsible’ I mean ‘apt for praise or blame’, where this is only supposed to be a synonym rather than an analysis. I tend to think of being apt for praise and blame in Pereboom’s ‘basic desert’ sense—i.e. deserving praise or blame merely in virtue of knowingly performing the right or wrong action, and not for consequentialist or contractual reasons. However, Steve Kershnar argues that moral responsibility cannot successfully be analyzed in terms of desert, and that it is a fundamental notion that cannot be explained in terms of any more fundamental concepts. I’m sympathetic to this, but I think Pereboom’s notion of moral responsibility is helpful in distinguishing the, well, more robust sense of moral responsibility from a weaker version that just ends up being punishment justified by consequentialism. So, someone might suggest that there is *obviously* a sense in which people can be apt for, or proper targets of, praise or blame (e.g. aren’t we justified in locking up murderers, in blaming a stranger for stealing our car, and so on?). Perhaps, in *some* sense. But if what makes them apt targets turns out to be something like the production of good consequences, then I contend that there is still a question of whether they are *really* morally responsible; for this weaker version can hold no matter who we are dealing with (e.g. toddlers, psychopaths, the mentally disabled, etc.). It’s this more robust sense of moral responsibility (which, disagreements over analysis aside, both Pereboom and Kershnar have in mind) that I think requires a level of control that we don’t have. Therefore, this is the sense in which I am a skeptic about moral responsibility and free will. Perhaps we have some level of control that is worth calling free will. But if it doesn’t get us moral responsibility (and I may deny, then, that it is worth calling free will), then I am just not that interested in it. The reason I doubt that we have the control required for moral responsibility is two-fold. First, I don’t think that compatibilists can give a satisfying answer to the manipulation argument. In brief, if compatibilism is true, then we could also have the control required for moral responsibility if we were under the control of a manipulator. I think that

this is false and that the compatibilist (at least the compatibilist who agrees with me) ultimately fails to successfully accommodate this. Second, while I am much more sympathetic to the libertarian approaches, I ultimately think that they cannot offer a satisfying answer to the problem of luck. Although, David has been trying to seduce me into libertarianism with his metaphysics of powers. I remain unconvinced.

David: I can never quite figure out what people mean by *libertarian*. So, I'm not sure if I am one or not. If it just means an incompatibilist that believes he is free, then I am something like that. My position is really simple. I have more confidence that I perform some free actions, than I have in the premises of any argument that denies my freedom. My belief that I am free is very relevant here. I consider it one of those beliefs that's central to how I understand my life. It approaches my belief that I exist in importance and influence. Now, my belief in my freedom is certainly defeasible, and perhaps in time I'll find myself denying it. For now, though, it is clear to me that I'm free. Relevantly, I don't know that I'd give it up even if I found that the world were determined.

5. You each likely believe that the other is making a lot of mistakes in his respective view of free will and responsibility. What is your friend's biggest blind spot or folly when it comes to free will issues?

Rob: I think David and I actually agree about more things than we disagree about in this literature. This is not surprising since incompatibilists and free will skeptics tend to share common ground on certain issues. We both think compatibilism fails, and for many of the same reasons. We both think that certain objections to specific libertarian accounts (incompatibilists that think we have free will) are successful (or, in David's case, at least seriously worrisome). But I guess the things that I think David is most mistaken about are his starting point and his sympathy with 'spontaneous action'. First, David takes it as a starting point in thinking about free will that he is free. This is in line with Peter van Inwagen's and, PVI's most notable student, John Keller's thinking on how to

approach the issue as well, so he is in good company. But sometimes good company is wrong. I don't see why we should get this for free (no pun intended). It seems like there are good candidate explanations for why we might think we are free. And as Syracuse grad student Yishai Cohen put it, when we start thinking about the arguments and what we have to say to preserve our freedom, we should at least begin to become skeptical that our initial feeling that we are free is so trustworthy. Second, David tends to be rather sympathetic to libertarian notions of 'spontaneous action'. On the non-causal libertarian view, a free action is uncaused. This is partly motivated by avoiding objections to event-causal libertarian views that can't account for the agent 'settling' whether they performed *action A* rather than *action B*. For the non-causalist, basic actions (e.g. deciding or intending) are events that have agents as their subjects, and the action is the agent's because the agent is the subject who does the deciding or intending. But, being uncaused, such actions are spontaneous—the agent 'just decides'. I don't have a worked out objection to this (yet), but it just doesn't sit well with me. I guess I want a contrastive explanation—in virtue of what did the agent decide? But David rarely makes any mistakes in his arguments, so perhaps I am just being stubborn.

David: Bob and I have one central disagreement. It is where to begin. I begin with a strong basic belief in my own freedom. He begins with a project aimed at to decide whether or not he is free. I think Bob is wrong in his starting point, but otherwise I think we agree on a lot.

6. If you can imagine giving up your respective views on free will, would you think it more likely that you accept the other's position or would you abandon your incompatibilism for compatibilism?

Rob: I can't get on board with compatibilism about any robust sense of free will or moral responsibility. I tend to think that compatibilism might be ok for weaker versions of freedom and responsibility. Most everyone in the literature is a compatibilist about

some version of responsibility; nobody thinks murderers should not be held accountable. But a deeper sense of responsibility that, for instance, entails that the person *deserves* blame or punishment simply in virtue of knowingly performing a wrong action (rather than for, say, consequentialist reasons) requires a degree of control that I don't think compatibilists can provide. I also tend to think of freedom as involving this more robust sense of control, too, rather than just requiring that an action flow through me in the right way. So, I think I am much more inclined to become a libertarian. Although I think I could more easily be persuaded to accept a "lesser" freedom than a "lesser" responsibility.

David: I think compatibilism is a challenging view to hold. It just seems like changing the subject from freedom to something else. However, if I found that determinism were true, I don't think it would be enough to demonstrate that I'm not free. I suppose I could get on board with compatibilism, but I'd be some sort of mysterian compatibilist who throws their hands up and just admits that they don't know how to reconcile what seems to be a devastating puzzle.

7. You both participated in the Blameless Buffalo? conference last year keynoted by John Fischer. What positions did you defend? I believe Rob has subsequently corresponded with Fischer. What has the correspondence been about? David has been put in charge of the Blameless Buffalo? conference poster since he has experience with making free will posters, having invented the now famous forked roads metaphor and image ☺. What will this year's conference poster look like?

Rob: I defended an incompatibilist view of 'desert-entailing moral responsibility' (DMR). (That is, moral responsibility that entails desert of blame or punishment, not the other way around. I admit that the phrase is not a good one.) Specifically, I tried to defend and offer further support to Lindsay Kelland's argument that compatibilists can only offer an evaluative (or 'attributability') notion of moral responsibility

rather than a desert-entailing (or 'accountability') notion. Important to the argument is that only DMR/accountability can ground blame and punishment, and that these require, in Ted Honderich's terms, 'freedom as origination'. Compatibilism seems to rule this out. The argument is weird, as Fischer promptly noted in the Q&A, because it tries to make use of Gary Watson's two senses of responsibility and Watson is a devout compatibilist. Oh well, it was a good experience and I learned a lot. It's true that, after destroying me in the Q&A, Fischer and I kept in touch through the summer. Mostly the discussions were about manipulation arguments against compatibilism and problems with the control principle invoked by some incompatibilists ('if S is responsible for Y, and X caused Y, then S is responsible for X'). Fischer agreed with me that Steve Kershner's impossibilist view also seems to rest on such a principle. Steve disagrees. We also discussed a draft of his paper "How Do Manipulation Arguments Work?" and how experimental philosophy might help his response to Al Mele's 'zygote argument'. I recently sent him a draft of a paper I wrote as well that poses a dilemma for (P. F.) Strawsonian conceptions of moral responsibility. I am patiently awaiting a response...

David: I'm in charge of a poster?

8. What theses will you be defending at this year's Blameless Buffalo? conference? I believe you were both awarded prizes for the two best graduate student submissions and will not have to pay for your travel to Buffalo or lodging while there. That's quite an honor given how many graduate students work in the field and it is also very generous of the Blameless Buffalo? conference organizers.

Rob: David and I were pleased to hear that we won the awards. We are grateful to have been honored by as prestigious an organization as the Blameless Buffalo? reading group. David was a bit heartbroken when I told him that only mine was legitimate, but I think he will soon recover. I plan to present my dilemma for Strawsonian views of moral responsibility

ity mentioned above. It won't be as good if Fischer doesn't get back to me, but I'll make it work. Here is the gist. If Strawson is right, then moral responsibility is grounded in our practices of *holding* each other morally responsible. Specifically, it's grounded in our reactive attitudes like resentment, indignation, and gratitude. To be morally responsible on this view is to be an *appropriate* target of such reactive attitudes—nothing external to this practice (including metaphysical theses about determinism or control) is needed. Here is the dilemma, stemming from a worry about the notion of appropriate. Either there is some (reactive attitude-independent) fact that makes the reactive attitudes appropriate or fitting, or there is not. If so, then moral responsibility is grounded in that fact, not in reactive attitudes. If not, then we end up with consequences too counterintuitive to accept. Either way, Strawson's theory comes out false. I should mention that I have received helpful feedback on this argument from David, Jake Monaghan, and especially Steve Kershner.

David: I won an award! What an honor. I am very grateful. I'm a little confused because I thought Bob was being kicked out of the program because of his... mustache. My paper this year will be about God and agency. In short, I argue that God could perform evil action but never would. I pull this off by understanding 'could' as a function of what primitive modal properties God possess. While 'would' is a matter of the truth values at relevant possible worlds. This distinction allows would-statements and could-statements to be pulled apart. The result is an easy way to affirm God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence. A similar solution also works in understanding Christ's ability to sin even though he never would.

9. Rob, you have been working closely with SUNY Fredonia philosopher and fellow Blameless Buffalo? member Steve Kershner on free will. What has been the nature of those exchanges? Do you share the same skeptical views about free will and responsibility? If not, how do you differ?

The nature of the exchanges has varied widely. We've discussed manipulation, ultimate control, the (Galen) Strawson-Kershner impossibilist approach, the nature of blame, internalism about moral responsibility, negligence, love without freedom, attributionist approaches (Gary Watson, Angela Smith, Matt Talbert, and likely a number of other things I can't call to mind. I think that somewhere around 75% of the conversations consist in our predictions and commentary on upcoming and past UFC fights. The conversations usually go in all sorts of directions but they're always helpful. Sometimes I think Steve attributes more knowledge to me than I actually have; but if I hang in there for long enough and ask enough questions, I tend to do alright. I was also grateful that Steve asked me to review his chapters for the book he is working on. Generously, I only asked for 15% of his royalties.

10. David, you once planned to make money and pay off his student loans by creating a book, play, or documentary about Steve Kershner for he has such eccentric and outlandish views. What would that project involve? Has the project been delayed by ongoing philosophical debates with Kershner about Molinism and other doings of God? What are your differences with Kershner on those issues?

The book on Kershner is still in progress. The working title is "[REDACTED]." This should make sense to anyone who is familiar with his more controversial views. The project has not been delayed. I expect the play to be finished first, followed by mini-series, and then finally three novels.

There is no doubt that Kershner and I disagree on a lot. I think at this point we are still at that stage where we are figuring out the nature of the other person's views. So, while it's clear that I think Molinism is consistent (even if it's not true) and he believes it's inconsistent, it's not clear to me why he thinks it's inconsistent. As for other issues in philosophy of religion. I think he has some really interesting insights on the atonement and the challenges a Christian faces when trying to reconcile their view with

contemporary views of punishments and incarceration.

11. David, you have been involved in the bioethics consulting program at the Veteran's Administration hospital and recently published an article on advanced directives. Does that paper have anything to do with your bioethical work at the VA hospital?

It has nothing to do with my work at the VA. I actually had that idea for that paper before I got involved in ethics consulting. It's really more of a metaphysics/epistemology paper than applied ethics. That being said, I think applied ethicists need to take a close look at their metaphysical/epistemological claims before making some of moves they do in ethics.

12. Rob, you have done a lot of work in experimental philosophy (x phi). Tell readers about your various X phi projects, in particular your recent publication. Are there any x phi studies on free will that have intrigued you? Have you been involved in or planning any X phi projects on free will?

I actually got into free will and x-phi at the same time, which was around three years ago while I was an undergrad at Cal State Northridge. I was taking a class on the Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR, which is similar to x-phi in a number of ways) with a professor named Claire White and she introduced me to some experimental philosophy work. I thought it was incredibly interesting and fun to read, and a completely different approach to philosophy than I had seen before. I was really drawn to it: the empirical approach, the focus on intuitions and thought experiments. I thought it was great. The first papers I read were a series of studies on intuitions about free will and moral responsibility that were done over the course of a decade or so. It was essentially a conversation between two 'camps' of experimental philosophers: Josh Knobe and Shaun Nichols on the 'folk incompatibilist' side, and Eddy Nahmias and various colleagues (e.g. Thomas Nadelhoffer, Justin Coates, Dylan Murray, Jason Turner) on the 'folk compatibil-

ist' side. They discussed competing psychological accounts of intuitions about freedom and moral responsibility and the implications for the philosophical debate, and this really got me interested in both the importance of x-phi to traditional philosophy as well as the topic of free will and moral responsibility generally. More recently, I have been intrigued by some x-phi studies on manipulation arguments by Jonathan Phillips, Alex Shaw, Liane Young, Josh Knobe, Dylan Murray, Tonia Lombrozo, and others. Among other things, an important question here is what it is about manipulation cases that pull our intuitions in different ways. Do the manipulator's intentions matter? Whether the agent's action matches these intentions? Where the focus of the thought experiment is (manipulator vs. manipulated)? Very interesting stuff. For the chapter that I collaborated on, the focus was not on free will or moral responsibility, nor was it even really x-phi as this is normally understood, but rather was an empirical investigation into the role of memory in past life beliefs. I was lucky enough to be invited onto the project by my research advisor Claire White who was working with Shaun Nichols on why people use memory as evidence of personal identity. In particular, the focus was on past life beliefs because this seemed to isolate a case of extreme change, namely, personal identity across different lives, and a case in which much of the ethnographic work suggested that memory was a huge factor in convincing people that they had lived before (and in convincing researchers and others in the reality of reincarnation). So, in short, we asked people who believed they had lived a past life on the basis of having 'past life memories' what it was about those memories that convinced them. As we predicted, based on some of Shaun's previous work, it was not the semantic content of the memories (i.e. detailed information about past events, dates, people, etc.) that most convinced them, but rather the feeling that they owned the memory—that it belonged to them and no one else. This contrasted with most extant past life research, which seemed to suggest that past life memories convinced people of being one and the same person as someone

who had lived previously because it relayed information about that past life that they subsequently confirmed. You remember being a farmer from such-and-such town, having a family of four, and dying in the pond out behind your barn. Then, you find out about some farmer who matches this story and you are convinced. We found that, for our subjects, the content of the memory just wasn't doing the work. This is also philosophically interesting because it seemed to empirically bear out Thomas Reid's notion that a belief in one's own personal identity is delivered to us immediately in our episodic memory. There is much more of interest in the chapter (e.g. the conception of self-invoked in past life beliefs) but I will just recommend you buy the book to find out the rest. David and I have discussed a couple different x-phi projects. The one related to free will involved the notion of spontaneous action mentioned above, and whether a concept like this is shared by the folk. This is still very much in the brainstorming stage.

13. Rob, are there any X Phi studies that could enlighten a theist like David? What five studies, articles or books would you recommend David read to shed the shackles of his superstitions?

Hmmm. I would be disappointed in David if he let a little empirical evidence sway him from his theism, especially since he loves to mockingly tell me, "Well, I know [fill in the blank with whatever we are discussing] is true/false, I read a study that told me so." Notwithstanding his cynicism towards the role that x-phi and its empirical allies can play, I will give it a shot. Helen de Cruz, co-editor of the volume in which the chapter I worked on appeared, has done some work on the relationship between the psychology underlying religious thinking and the philosophy of religion that it produces. I would recommend her "The Enduring Appeal of Natural Theological Arguments" and her "How Do Philosophers Evaluate Natural Theological Arguments? An Experimental Philosophical Investigation" (which is a chapter in that very volume mentioned above). She will also be keynoting the Buffalo Annual Experimental Philosophy Conference this fall, so David can come see her in

action! I also find the developmental psychological work in CSR to be an interesting illustration of the naturalness of religious thinking. A good place to start here is Deborah Kelemen's various papers on teleological thinking in young children (e.g. "Intuitions about Origins: Purpose and Intelligent Design in Children's Reasoning about Nature"). Next, I would suggest Jesse Bering's work on afterlife beliefs (e.g. "Intuitive Conceptions of Dead Agents' Minds: The Natural Foundations of Afterlife Beliefs as Phenomenological Boundary"). I think Pascal Boyer's book *Religion Explained* provides a nice argument for religion as a parasite of the mind. Finally, (I am counting de Cruz's papers as one) I would recommend to David any current newspaper or online news source. There he can discover all the evil that is going on in this best of all possible worlds.

14. David, you just won the best graduate student prize at the national Evangelical Philosophy Society Conference. What was the paper about?

It was the paper I mentioned above about God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence. I was really surprised when I won the award. I was even more surprised when they gave me a check and a bag of books. It was awesome. Everyone was so kind at that conference. There were more non-Christians and atheists there than I expected too. The discussions were often times very challenging, but always fruitful and edifying.

15. David, did you ask the entire evangelical group to pray that Rob abandon his crude secular humanism and accept Jesus as his lord and savior? What five books should Rob read to free himself from his arrogant, atheistic, narrow, naturalistic dogmas?

Wow, that's a hard question. I find Bob really open to issues of Christianity and religion. He's definitely one of the most open minded and kind philosophical atheists that I've ever met. Off the cuff here's a list: (1) Bible, (2) Les Misérables (Victor Hugo), (3) The Resurrection of the Son of God (N.T. Wright), (4)

Mere Christianity, and (5) Until We Have Faces (C.S. Lewis).

Student Awards

Peter Hare Department Citizenship Award

The annual Peter Hare Department Citizenship award is given to a student who both participates in departmental events, committees and associations, and who stands out as a helpful and industrious student.

John Beverley won this award in both 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, at the end of his second and third years as a Ph.D. student here at UB. Starting his second year, John served as president of the Graduate Philosophy Association for two years, gave three Friday lunchtime talks, and two undergraduate philosophy club talks. John also served as an off-the-books assistant to his peers during Professor Kearns' well-attended Modal Logic course, going as far as holding weekly Q/As in Park Hall to cover course material. Additionally, John has worked to increase communication between faculty and graduate students by acting as a liaison between the two groups, and working with Alex King to promote and maintain weekly department Tea Time events.

Hare Award for Outstanding TA/RA

Harjeet Parmar won this award for 2015-2016. Harjeet worked diligently with Professor Braun as TA for both Introduction to Philosophy and Philosophy of Mind, holding lengthy office hours and review sessions, and demonstrating a seemingly unflagging desire to ensure students comprehend course material.

Brian Donohue and **Catherine Nolan** tied for the 2014-2015 Outstanding TA/RA award, which is given to exceptional teaching assistants. Both recipients demonstrated dedication to students and faculty throughout the year.

Hare Award for Best Overall Essay

Clint Dowland won this award for 2015-2016 for his paper "Embodied Mind Sparsism".

Rasmus Larsen was awarded the best overall essay prize in 2014-2015 for his paper "The Posited Self: The Non-Theistic Foundation in Kierkegaard's Writings".

Hourani Award for Outstanding Essay in Ethics

Brendan Cline won this award in 2015-2016 for his paper "Against Deliberative Indispensability as an Independent Guide to What There Is".

Matt Lavine won the 2014-2015 Hourani Award for the best ethics paper for his paper "Prior's Thank-Goodness Argument Reconsidered".

Perry Award for Best Dissertation

Catherine Nolan won the 2015 best dissertation award for her doctoral thesis entitled "The Metaphysics and Ethics of Vital Organ Donation".

Steinberg Essay Prize Winners

The Steinberg Prizes are given each year to the best original works on a philosophical theme by UB undergraduates. Original essays, poems, stories and artwork can qualify.

The 2016 Steinberg award was given to first place winner, **Alec Sculley**, whose paper was titled "Burke & Kant: Sublimity in Nature".

Tied for second place was **Michael Fiorica**, whose paper was titled "Keeping a Tiger in One's Backyard: Theories of Causality, Abnormally Dangerous Conditions, and Strict Liability in Tort Law", and **Thomas Rush** with his paper "Instrumentalist Approaches to Epistemology".

The first place winner in 2015 was **Mohammed Shibly**.

Second place winner was **Michael Dowd**.

CAS Outstanding Senior Award

The College of Arts and Sciences recognizes exactly one student from each department as outstanding senior for achievements during their senior year. Recipients are awarded a cash prize and a medal commemorating the accomplishment.

Outstanding senior for the 2015-2016 year was philosophy undergraduate **Isaac Berger**.

Outstanding senior for the 2014-2015 year was philosophy undergraduate **Karin Hsieh**.

CAS Dissertation Award

Brendan Cline was awarded the College of Arts and Sciences dissertation award. Brendan's dissertation thesis, titled "Embracing a World without Value", is chaired by James Beebe.

Romanell Award for Naturalism

Brendan Cline also won the Romanell award in 2015 for his work in naturalism.

Danish Dissertation Fellowships

Rasmus Larsen was awarded two Danish dissertation fellowships, one from the Oticon Fonden and the other from the Knud Højgaards Fond, worth a total \$8,000.

Other Noteworthy Student Achievements

Rob Kelly was accepted to (and attended) a two week long 2016 summer school in Latvia focused on Neil Levy's new book "Consciousness and Free Will". Competition for acceptance included graduate students and recent PhDs interested in free will. The event was led by Derek Pereboom from Cornell, and included Leigh Vicens from Augustana College and Patrick Todd from Edinburgh as participating instructors.

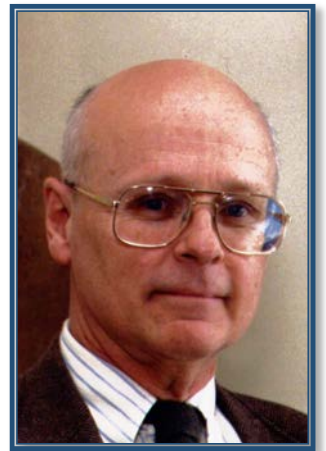
Jake Monaghan presented at the prestigious ROME conference in 2015, where he was interviewed by Colorado Philosophy Department chair David Boonin,

concerning his work in bioethics. The department posted the interview on its widely read "What's Wrong" blog. Later in the year the blog also posted a paper of Jake's titled, "What Does the Claim that Veganism is Unhealthy Entail about the Ethics of Veganism?" Jake was also the recipient of an

The People Who Make It Possible

The Peter Hare Award

Peter H. Hare, Ph.D., was a Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at UB. Through his writings and teachings, Hare left an indelible impact upon the history of American philosophy, having helped to draw the works of Charles Peirce, George H. Mead, William James, Alfred North Whitehead and John Dewey into central positions in international philosophy.



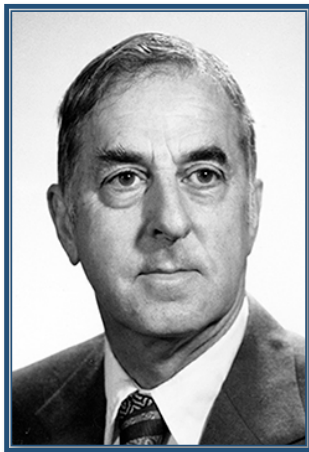
Hare was born in 1935 in New York City, the son of the late Jane Perry and Michael Meredith Hare and began his life-long relationship with philosophy while an undergraduate at Yale University. His master's degree thesis on Whitehead remains an exemplar of multi-disciplinary integration. He earned a doctorate in philosophy at Columbia University where he specialized in Mead's metaphysics.

He joined the UB philosophy department in 1965, was appointed full professor in 1971 and served as chair from 1971-75 and from 1985-94. He worked at UB with a heterogeneous group of Marxists, logicians, linguists and Americanists, which inspired him to bring together disparate strands of 20th-century thought into a unified vision of a modern philosophy department.

In 1999 Hare gave two gifts totaling \$1 million to support activities of the department, including a cash gift of \$500,000 to establish the Charles S. Peirce endowed professorship and a \$500,000 bequest to support the Peter and Daphne Hare Fund to help the department meet its ongoing needs. He died suddenly Jan. 3, 2008, at his home in Guilford, Conn. He was 72.

The Hourani Lectures

George Hourani was born in 1913 in a suburb of Manchester, England to parents who had emigrated from Southern Lebanon. He won a fellowship to study classics at Oxford from 1932-1936. A trip to the Near East in 1934 influenced his decision to continue his graduate studies in Princeton's Department of Oriental Studies in 1937. Hourani received his Ph.D. in 1939.



A teaching position as lecturer at the Government Arab College in Jerusalem followed, and he began teaching Classics, logic, and history of philosophy. He was then offered a job as an assistant professor in newly founded Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan in 1950. It was during Hourani's years at Michigan that he began to concentrate on Islamic philosophy. He is responsible for definitive Arabic editions and translations of Ibn Rushid, better known to philosophers as Averroes—an Islamic philosopher renowned for his commentaries on Aristotle. Hourani also translated and wrote the notes for *Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* by Averroes.

In January 1967, Hourani delivered a lecture at the Department of Philosophy at SUNY Buffalo and was soon afterwards asked to join the department. He was the chair of the UB Philosophy department from

1976-1979. He developed a popular seminar in Greek ethics and taught medieval philosophy.

In 1979 he was a visiting professor of philosophy at UCLA. In 1980 he was promoted to the rank of distinguished Professor of Islamic Theology and Philosophy. A festschrift in his honor, *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, was published in 1984 by SUNY Press.

Recurring heart problems led to Hourani's death in 1984. The philosophy department is very indebted to his generous endowment, which has allowed us to bring in many talented philosophers as Hourani lecturers—David Velleman, Philip Pettit, John Martin Fischer, Jeff McMahan, Anthony Appiah, Martha Nussbaum, Onora O'Neil and Shelly Kagan—virtually a *Who's Who* in moral philosophy today.

The Steinberg Award

Professor **Carol Steinberg Gould** was a philosophy undergraduate student at UB. The Steinberg Award was instituted by Gould's parents in her honor and as a way to thank the department for the good education their daughter received at UB.



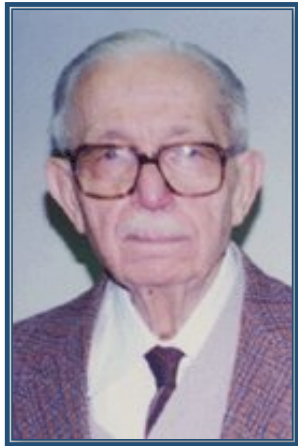
The Romanell Award

Edna Romanell has made two testamentary gifts with a combined value of nearly \$1.5 million to the University at Buffalo. With these gifts—made through revocable trust expectancies—Mrs. Romanell has continued the legacy begun by her late husband, **Patrick Romanell**, a philosopher and author of several books on critical naturalism.

The first bequest of \$600,000 provides continuing support for the Romanell Lecture on Medical Ethics and Philosophy, a series she and her husband established in 1997 with a gift of \$50,000. Her second bequest of nearly \$900,000 established the Edna and Patrick Romanell Professorship, in the Department of Philosophy, College of Arts and Sciences.

A former medical social worker, Mrs. Romanell says that she and her husband shared the same thoughts on giving. "If we can afford it, let someone else benefit, too," she says. "You only live so long, and our philosophy was always to let somebody else profit, as well."

Peter Hare, former chairman of the philosophy department, and Tim Madigan, Ph.D. 1999 and M.A. 1998, then a philosophy graduate student, were friends of Romanell, whom Madigan calls "one of the first philosophers to work in medical ethics." In 1997, Hare invited Romanell to UB to give a lecture on medical ethics. Madigan, now editorial director at the University of Rochester Press, says Romanell later established a lecture series at UB because "he preferred lectureships as a way to get fresh, original ideas across."



Patrick Romanell died of cancer in February 2002, but his generosity continues to benefit the university. Edna Romanell's gifts are part of *The Campaign for UB: Generation to Generation*, which is closing in on its \$250 million goal.

The Perry Award

Thomas D. Perry was born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1924. A graduate of the University at Buffalo's Law School, Dr. Perry served as a legal counselor to Congress and later, Bell Aerospace Corporation. He attended Columbia University, earning a Ph.D. in Philosophy in 1966. Thereafter he taught Philosophy at the University at Buffalo, where he was active in Department activities, including assisting in the development of the University's Philosophy and Law joint degree program.

Dr. Perry was particularly interested in moral reasoning and legal philosophy. He published many articles

in distinguished journals such as *Ethics*, *The Journal of Philosophy*, and *Analysis*, as well as a book on philosophy, *Moral Autonomy and Reasonableness*. In 1981, he was honored by the Aristotelian Society in Britain, (counterpart to the American Philosophical Association). In his eulogy of Dr. Perry, friend and colleague Dr. Jorge Gracia referred to this as "...an honor that is only rarely accorded a living philosopher." Dr. Perry had two works published posthumously in 1985, *Professional Philosophy: What It Is and Why It Matters*, and the article, "Two Domains of Rights." He died in 1982, at the young age of 58.

The Whitman Scholarship

Mary Canfield Whitman was a lecturer and assistant professor of philosophy at UB. She was born in East Orange, N.J., graduated from Wellesley College and did graduate work at Columbia University. She also taught at Vassar College; Hood College, Frederick, Md.; and Packer Collegiate Institute, Brooklyn, before coming to UB. She was a member of the Schola Cantorum and the International Institute of Folk Dancers.

She died at the age of 41, on June 3 of 1956, at her home in Buffalo. The Whitman Scholarship for Philosophy majors, awarded annually based on academic excellence, was instituted in her honor.

Alumni Updates

Notes from our Alumni

Justin Donhauser, recently minted UB Philosophy PhD, was granted a renewable post-doc from the Rotman Institute at Western Ontario University. Along with Gillian Barker and Eric Desjardins, Justin will continue work on their Geo-Functions Project, an interdisciplinary community-engaged research project, bringing together scientists, philosophers, and a wide



range of other academic and practical experts to explore the geo-functions perspective and its lessons and applications.

Bill Duncan, an ontology student of Barry Smith's and recent philosophy Ph.D, is currently working at Roswell Park Cancer Center as a data analyst. His duties include developing ontologies for the purpose of linking together data from the various research departments within the Cancer Center.



Andrea Escobar graduated from the UB Philosophy department in 2010 and from the University at Buffalo School of Law that same year. She was recently hired into a tenured track position at Erie Community College, where she works with her husband Fabio Escobar.



Fabio Escobar is himself a UB Philosophy PhD graduate from 2006. Fabio is presently an Accreditation Liaison Officer for Erie Community College, having taught there for eight years as an instructor, and served as Humanities Chair for seven.



Mark Jensen received an MA in philosophy from UB, is working on a Ph.D. with Barry Smith in the Department of Bioinformatics, and was recognized by the UN for



his use of ontologies to create structured representations of knowledge and information across and within specific disciplines.

Sharon McPeters (BA philosophy, 2003) has just published her third print on demand novel. The novel's title is *A Reasoning Heart*. After two years in California, the author is back in Kenmore, New York, living a quiet life with her husband, David Benders. Before retiring, David worked for over 40 years at WBFO radio when it was on the UB campus. *A Reasoning Heart* presents a person's thoughts in her own words. Sharon McPeters' writing career is documented in the Marquis Who's Who titles. Back in the day, Sharon McPeters was a TA in English before health problems intervened. She was a pretty bad teacher, in fact, partly because she has no patience. early on, she decided to stick to fiction writing, with a few poems every now and then. She has been writing ever since her graduation from the UB writing program in 1983. She has two grandchildren and plans on publishing her already-written book of childrens' stories soon.

Recent graduate **Catherine**

Nolan accepted a job as assistant professor at the University of Dallas in 2015. Even though Catherine has started her career elsewhere, she remains an active poster on the graduate student listserv, offering advice to students entering the job market.



Peter Koch was so impressive while interviewing for a tenure track position at Baylor University Medical School, the department created a two-year post-doc which he accepted. The post-doc will allow Peter to conduct research without teaching duties. Having

published six articles before completing his PhD, one can only expect big things from Peter with all this new free research time!



Just departed post-doc **Selja Seppala** assumed a Postdoctoral Associate position in Informatics, Biomedical Informatics, and Applied Ontology at the Department of Health Outcomes and Policy in the College of

Medicine at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Selja will be a Visiting Research Scholar working with UB Philosophy Ph.D, **Amanda Hicks** who is an Assistant Professor at the University of Florida Gainesville. Selja and Amanda will be working on ontology development, evaluation, and implementation in biomedical informatics.



areas of research include History of Philosophy, Ethics, Political Philosophy, Metaphysics and Feminist Philosophy.

Professor Langton began the lecture series, which explored how philosophy can help identify and combat prejudice, with a lecture titled "How to make authority with words". The second lecture explored "How to make a norm with words", while the third examined "How to make counter-speech with words". As motivation

for the lectures, Professor Langton attests she has been: "... inspired by the power of philosophy to help us question prejudice. This goes back a long way.



Think of Socrates and his irritating questions. Think of Descartes, whose meditations tried to escape 'the habit of holding onto old opinions'. Think of pioneer feminist Mary Astell, who saw prejudice about women as a long-standing error: and 'Error, be it as ancient as it may, [cannot] ever plead prescription against truth'. Prejudice is still alive and well, and philosophy can still help."

Nearly every faculty member and graduate student was in attendance for each lecture, leading to an illuminating Q/A, where Langton masterfully held court. In addition to the lectures, Professor Langton was kind enough to attend a working brunch with several graduate students and faculty before giving her final talk.

Recent Events

2016 Hourani Lecture Series: Rae Langton

Rae Helen Langton is an Australian and British professor of philosophy in the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge, and taught previously at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Langton's

PANTC Third and Fourth Annual Conferences

The bioethics reading group PANTC (Plato's Academy, North Tonawanda Campus) held its third and fourth annual conferences. UB Philosophy department faculty and graduate students presented papers, as well as faculty from Niagara University, SUNY Fredonia, and Canisius College.

Jerome Wakfield

Christopher Boorse keyed the conference 2015 conference. **David Boonin** and **Elselijn Kingma** keyed the 2016 conference.



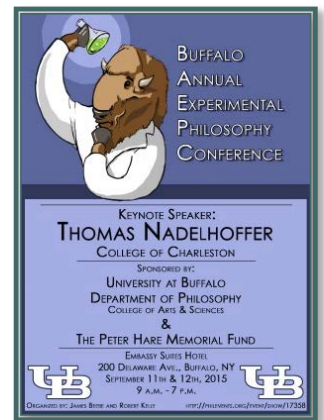
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Keynote speaker for the 2016 conference was **Steve Kershnar** and the event featured **John Keller** as plenary speaker I and **David Hershenov** as plenary speaker II. Our own **David Limbaugh** and **Rob Kelly** tied for best graduate essay prize, and **Yishai Cohen** won best international submission.

Annual X-Phi Conferences

James Beebe, assisted by student **Rob Kelly**, and others, organized the **Buffalo Annual X-Phi Conferences**. The 2015 keynote was **Thomas Nadelhoffer** (College of Charleston), and is currently preparing the 2016 conference with keynote **Helen De Cruz** (Oxford Brookes University). The 2015 conference featured a round table discussion led by **Joshua Knobe**, **Wesley Buckwalter**, and James.



Blameless Buffalo? Conferences

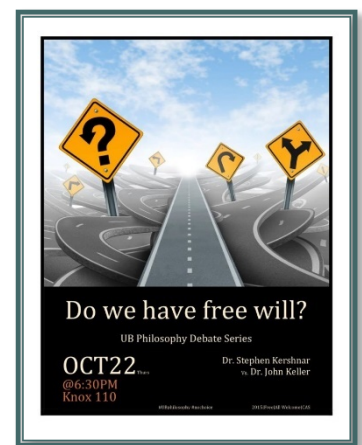
The Blameless Buffalo? Reading group held conferences in both 2015 and 2016. Keynote speaker for the 2015 conference was **John Fischer**.



Philosophy Debate Series

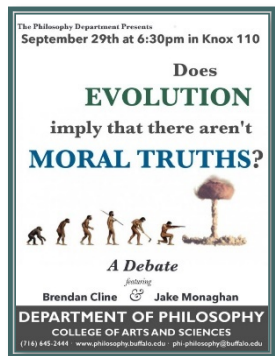
Do We Have Free Will?

John Keller of Niagara University and Stephen Kershnar of SUNY Fredonia matched arguments October 22 in Knox Hall, as they disputed whether we have free will. The event was well-attended, and spurred interesting questions from both philosophers and non-philosophers in attendance.



Does Evolution Imply There Aren't Moral Truths?

Graduate students Jake Monaghan and Brendan Cline delivered masterful debate performances while entertaining a packed auditorium of approximately 200 attendees. The debate was held in Knox Hall on September 29, 2015.



2016 Jobs Outside of Philosophy Panels

Two panel discussions were held in 2016 emphasizing potential jobs outside academic philosophy for philosophy graduates.

The first was held April 14th. **Randy Dipert** indicated how students might leverage the analytic skills learned while studying philosophy when seeking jobs requiring a technical background. **Barry Smith** touted the ontology banner, emphasizing the growing need for individuals with philosophical backgrounds working where data management meets various fields of scientific inquiry. **Steve Weir** shed light on working at the VA, while indicating the need for philosophers, both ethics oriented and otherwise, working alongside physicians in an advisory role.

The second was held May 12th. **Ken Shockley** explained what sort of jobs there are in state and national governments, international organization, law, think tanks, NGOs etc., for those with knowledge of environmental studies. **Ryan Muldoon** gave students a sense of what sort of analytical, economical, mathematical, computational skill sets they should be developing and what opportunities there are in the private sector, government bureaucracies, and international organizations.

Donations

If you would like to donate to the Department of Philosophy, please visit our website and look for the "Support the Department" link:

<http://philosophy.buffalo.edu>

Or, for more information on how you can give back to UB, please contact the College of Arts and Sciences Office of Development by emailing casdev@buffalo.edu or calling (716) 645-0850.

Your contributions help to maintain our outstanding programs and are much appreciated



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