Philosophy at Berkeley

News and events from the Department of Philosophy 2008

Berkeley Philosopher Wins Rhodes Scholarship

by Lindsay Crawford

When Asya Passinsky approached Samuel Scheffler in Fall 2007 to seek permission to audit his Global Justice graduate seminar, Scheffler seemed "pretty skeptical," according to Passinsky. Having just graduated in Spring 2007 with a bachelor's degree in two fields unrelated to philosophy and taken only two philosophy courses, Passinsky was aware of the ambitiousness of her request. But Scheffler allowed her to sit in on his graduate seminar and take his Ethical Theories course. And after auditing three upper-division philosophy courses through U.C. Berkeley Extension and auditing a graduate seminar that semester, Passinsky found out that she had been awarded the prestigious Rhodes scholarship to work toward a two-year degree in philosophy at Oxford University.

A double major in Political Economy of Industrial Societies and Slavic Languages and Literature, Passinsky took her first philosophy course in the fall of her senior year — Philosophy of Mind with John Searle. "I have interests in everything," said Passinsky. "I have always had a problem of being pulled in every direction."

The following semester, she took Searle's Philosophy of Society and audited his graduate seminar on Consciousness and Collective Intentionality, and was selected to work as Searle's assistant. "Though she had little background in philosophy, Asya proved able to master the material very rapidly, and she did excellent work for me as a research assistant," said Searle.

The summer after graduating from Berkeley, Passinsky spent time on the east coast visiting some of the most prestigious philosophy graduate programs in the country. During her visits, she approached philosophers and graduate students for advice on how to pursue philosophy at the graduate level without having majored in philosophy.

Upon the recommendation of one professor, Passinsky looked into scholarships that would enable her to study philosophy at Oxford. She applied for the Marshall and Rhodes scholarships, hoping to pursue Oxford's Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) degree or the B.Phil in Philosophy.

In her statement of purpose for the Rhodes scholarship, Passinksy describes the gradual shift in her interests in political science and economics toward the broader, philosophical issues these fields raise. "I came to realize that the questions I was most interested in were philosophical in nature rather than empirical," says Passinksy. "I wanted to challenge some of the fundamental assumptions of the field, rather than work within the established theoretical framework."

After she received the Rhodes scholarship, Passinksy applied for the B.Phil instead of the PPE, against the recommendations of administrators of the Rhodes Trust, who warned her that the B.Phil was one of the most competitive degrees at Oxford and that non-philosophy majors were rarely accepted. Passinsky spoke with B.Phil alumni and professors in the Berkeley philosophy department about the B.Phil and was urged to apply. "I got so much support and encouragement from the philosophy faculty here," said Passinsky.

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Philosophy Department Welcomes New Colleague

We are very pleased to announce that Lara Buchak is joining the Philosophy Department in the summer of 2008. Lara did her graduate work in philosophy at Princeton, where she specialized in decision theory. Her dissertation, "Risk and Rationality," argues for a more permissive theory of rationality than the standard theory, allowing decision makers a broader range of acceptable attitudes towards risky gambles. Lara has additional research interests in formal epistemology and has participated in the annual Formal Epistemology Workshop; she also enjoys logic and has an A.B. in mathematics (from Harvard University). In addition to her interests in more formal areas of philosophy, Lara has research and teaching interests in epistemology broadly construed and in the philosophy of religion. Her hobbies include playing the piano, playing basketball, and playing cards. She reports that she is thrilled to be joining the Berkeley faculty; we are certainly delighted to be adding her to our ranks.

Rhodes Scholarship continued from page 1

In Spring 2008, Passinsky audited Philosophy of Language, Later Wittgenstein, Philosophical Logic, Formal Theories of Truth, and a graduate seminar on language. Last year, she was also a member of Berkeley's Social Ontology Group, and presented a paper that became one of her writing samples for the Rhodes scholarship.

In addition to philosophy, Passinsky has worked in journalism as a staff writer for the Berkeley student newspaper and a freelancer for the San Francisco Examiner, and as an intern at an English-language newspaper in Russia. She has also written on issues related to international food policy and poverty for the U.S. Mission to the U.N. Agencies for Food and Agriculture in Rome. In her free time, she writes and translates Russian poetry, and has written a play. Additionally, Passinsky is a competitive figure skater who has won two gold medals at the Intercollegiate National Figure Skating Championships.

After receiving the B.Phil, Passinsky plans on either continuing on to the D.Phil at Oxford, or applying to graduate school in philosophy in the U.S. She is not sure what she will focus on, but her primary interests currently lie in ethics and philosophical logic.

She eventually wants to receive her Ph.D. in philosophy in order to teach and do research in her field. In her B.Phil application, Passinsky explains that one of her ultimate goals is to reach outside of the sometimes insular environment of academia and raise issues in the public sphere. "Besides being an academic, I want to be a public intellectual in the sense that I want to address a larger audience than that of fellow specialists," says Passinsky.

Sherrilyn Roush Wins Major NSF Award

The National Science Foundation has awarded Associate Professor Sherrilyn Roush a grant of $223,000 over the coming two and a half years for her project "Fallibility and Revision in Science and Society." The project starts from the observation that though our epistemic fallibility is widely acknowledged, its implications are ill-understood. This lack of clarity is even sometimes exploited, for example by Creationists who conclude that because our scientific theories might be wrong, they are no more plausible than any other views. More respectably, some philosophers have developed a pessimistic induction from observations of the errors of past science to a blanket doubt about our own theories. In a more practical case, psychologists and jurists have been alarmed at the apparently global skeptical implications of the systematic errors to which witnesses and jurors have been discovered to be susceptible. The account Roush is developing of what rationality in the most general sense requires of us when we learn about our fallibility explains why this inference from the fact that we make mistakes to the equal plausibility of all views is fallacious, and explains how we ought to revise instead. It thereby also provides a generalization of the familiar probabilistic accounts of rationality. "The grant gives me an exciting opportunity to put together my work on abstract rationality constraints with not only familiar debates in epistemology and philosophy of science, but also with some concrete concerns that have arisen in discussions of public policy," she said. "It's inspiring that the NSF is funding this kind of research."

Placement of Philosophy Ph.D.s 2008

The following Berkeley graduate students will be moving on to academic jobs in the Fall of 2008; the Department congratulates them, and wishes them every success in their new positions. (Thesis titles are in parentheses.)

Andreas Anagnostopoulos
(Aristotle on Change and Potentiality)
Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter, Humboldt University, Berlin

Agnes Callard
(An Incomparabilist Account of Akrasia)
Assistant Professor (tenure track), University of Chicago

Kenny Easwaran
(The Foundations of Conditional Probability)
Assistant Professor (tenure track), University of Southern California

Michael Titelbaum
(Quitting Certainties: A Doxastic Modeling Framework)
Assistant Professor (tenure track), University of Wisconsin, Madison

Joel Yurdin
(Aristotle: From Sense to Science)
Assistant Professor (tenure track), Haverford College

Departmental Awards

Congratulations to the following winners of Departmental and University awards during the academic year 2007-2008:

Departmental Citation
(for distinguished undergraduate work in philosophy)
Maya Kronfeld

Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award
Justin Bledin
James Stazicker

Fink Prize (for outstanding graduate student essay)
John Schwenkler

A Message From The Chair

R. Jay Wallace

A few months ago I received an email message, out of the blue, from a Berkeley alumnus and undergraduate philosophy major, Mike Cassady; he wrote:

> *As part of updating my living trust, I would like to leave a small sum to the UC philosophy department…*
>
> *I was an undergraduate student at Berkeley in the early '70's—a philosophy major—and I have great memories of courses with Dr. Dreyfus, Dr. Searle, Dr. Mates, and others, as well as of the hours I studied in Howison Library seated at the big oak tables in those very hefty chairs. I particularly recall the view, the high windowed exposure on three sides looking into the flickering shade of the tree branches… Although I shall only have a meager sum to give, I shall sleep better knowing I've put my money where I spent a few of the most important (exhausting) years of my life.*

Mike's note is a thoughtful reminder of the prominent role that the Howison Library plays in the life of the philosophical community at Berkeley. It is one of the loveliest spaces on campus, with a tall, vaulted ceiling, wood paneling and shelves, and a massive hearth surmounted by a painting of the founding member of the Department, George Holmes Howison himself. The Library houses an excellent working collection of books and periodicals that is open to all members of our community, and it is a sedate refuge for the hard work of philosophical reflection and writing. The Library also serves as the location of our talks, conferences, and colloquia; in this guise, it is the scene of the discussions and exchanges that most significantly help to constitute us as an intellectual community. There are few more striking places for philosophical activity of these kinds—though the beautiful filtered light that Mike writes about in his note can sometimes make it hard to concentrate on the challenging philosophical issues at hand!

I'm happy to report that we have begun a series of steps to make the Howison Library an even more attractive location for study and intellectual debate. The walls have been painted and repaired, fresh curtains are going up over the towering windows, and we recently took delivery of new furniture for the main level of the library. Generous contributions to our annual fund will help us to pay for these improvements to our most important public space; we are very grateful for your interest and support.

Improvements to the Howison Library are just one of many exciting developments in the Department over the past year. You can read about a number of other recent activities and accomplishments in this Newsletter, which we hope will provide a small window onto the flourishing state of philosophy at our university. Our ability to sustain the distinction of our programs in

the years to come will depend critically on increased support from our many alumni and friends. Major fund-raising priorities include endowed chairs for our faculty and endowed fellowship funds to support our graduate students. Contributions in these areas are vital if we are to continue to attract to Berkeley the most innovative and inspiring scholars and teachers in our field, and to offer our outstanding undergraduates an education worthy of the best public university in the world.

One possibility that some of you might wish to consider is to follow Mike Cassady's example by including the Philosophy Department in your estate planning. Even a modest bequest can make a significant difference, helping to ensure the continued excellence of philosophy at Berkeley. Please contact me at rjw@berkeley.edu or (510) 642-2730 if you would like to discuss the possibility of making a contribution to our activities and programs. Your support is absolutely essential to our work and welcome at any time.

I would encourage you to stop by when you are next in town to inspect the improvements to the Howison Library and to reacquaint yourself with the Philosophy Department. In the meantime, please keep in touch with news about your own activities, which we will report on from time to time in future editions of our Newsletter; just send us an email at: philosophynews@berkeley.edu.

LOVE SCIENCE

by Sherrilyn Roush

The late Berkeley philosopher Paul Feyerabend took perhaps the most permissive attitude possible towards "fringe" or "marginal" science. This flowed from a more general view about how science works best in promoting both knowledge and happiness. He argued that in order to maximize the empirical testability of our theories—a goal even a falsificationist like Karl Popper should love—we must compare them not just to observations, but to other incompatible, even apparently falsified, theories. Methodologically, this is clearly sound, since which observations we make and how we construe them are affected by the ideas we use and the concepts we consider. We often have to consider contrasting ideas in order to find the observations that show the weaknesses of those ideas we already have. Further, Feyerabend saw that if testability alone is the goal of science, then there is no principled way to limit the ideas and theories that ought at any time to be given an audience. The oldest, the kookiest, the most disreputable ideas have a necessary role to play. Like John Stuart Mill he thought that one of the benefits of a truly free marketplace of ideas was that it would allow advocacy of unpopular views as well as respected ones, so that the ugly ducklings could keep the respected ideas honest, and stay alive for the day when they might show the insight they can bring.

"It seems to me to follow from the fact that our resources are limited...that laypeople have not just a right but a responsibility to record their impressions of anomalous phenomena such as a large primate species in the Upper Northwest, or a UFO, or paranormal psychological events."

One could think of the pursuit of truth along these lines as an investigation of an elephant by several people with blindfolds on, each of whom has access only to his own portion of the animal. One would think it was a tree trunk, another a fire hose, a third maybe a whip, another an outsized yoga ball. None of these claims would be right, but if one of these people were too eager and insistent in drawing conclusions and didn't listen to the very different and seemingly crazy ideas of the others, he might never think of observing beyond his region of the elephant. He would also, Feyerabend thought, lead a cramped and unfulfilled life.

An obvious objection to this outlook is that we don't have the resources to water a thousand flowers. The more vigorous such an enlightened pursuit of all avenues to the truth was, the more it would slow down acquisition of the kinds of particular and precise truths that got us to the moon and give us new prescription drugs. Finding the mechanism of a particular chemical reaction, for example, is an expensive endeavor, and requires making assumptions for the time being instead of having disputes about every possible question. Resources are limited, and in the long run we're all dead. If every idea gets attention, no idea will get enough for us to probe the world in depth in the short run. Pursuit of the whole truth (and ironically of maximum theory-testing) competes with the approach and benefits we have come to expect from mainstream

"Bigfoot" casts: where's the DNA? Photo by Deborah Stalford.

science. If it's a choice between curing cancer and Big Foot Studies, who can be blamed for dismissing the latter?

However, I don't think these are our choices. It seems to me to follow from the fact that our resources are limited, and thus that mainstream science must enforce a focus on those possibilities our evidence says are most probable, that laypeople have not just a right but a responsibility to record their impressions of anomalous phenomena such as a large primate species in the Upper Northwest, or a UFO, or paranormal psychological events. Though from everything scientists have learned so far it may be unlikely, yet it is certainly possible that there are phenomena behind these impressions that mainstream science has not yet discovered. If any of these things do exist, then scientists are set up to miss them. Non-scientists should explore these anomalous things if we care about our species gaining a whole knowledge of the world, precisely because the scientists can't.

But though limited resources means that laypeople have a responsibility to keep records of their impressions, the very same fact also means that individual laypeople at a particular time have no right to expect mainstream scientists to take their claims seriously. The scientists, generally speaking, mustn't. If we want cures for cancers, and serious development of population biology, then scientists with hard-won expertise must focus on the probable possibilities they know how to work with. If we want to know about primates, then scientists do best to study the many primate species we already know exist. Jane Goodall, a pioneering primatologist, says she is a romantic and hopes, and even somehow believes, that a Sasquatch species exists. But she doesn't spend her professional time hiking in the Pacific Northwest to find it. Thus, in my view, both scientists and their lay and marginal counterparts could use an adjustment of attitude. Scientists shouldn't scoff with quite so much contempt at lay people who profess to have evidence of odd occurrences and things. But then, they wouldn't need to if lay people understood that they have no right to expect their claims to jump to prominence at any given time. The tendency of government funding agencies to ignore studies of, for example, paranormal psychological phenomena does not come merely from prejudice.

A nice compromise, but what is the point of the lay observations if there is no good reason to expect them to be taken seriously? The story

of the discovery of meteorites illustrates one purpose. From ancient writers to early modern peasants, there was a steady trickle of testimony about rocks falling from the sky. Often rocks were even presented as specimens. Ancient writers—who supposedly preferred speculation to observation—and lay people—who were supposedly impressionable—were exactly what Enlightenment thinkers warned us about, so modern scientists paid little attention. Meteors were known to astronomers, though unexplained, but the idea of their connection to these falling rocks was a long time coming. A meteor, being bright and high, can be seen for miles around, a meteorite, being dark and low, is seen only where it falls. A meteor had some chance of being witnessed by at least one scientist or credible amateur, a meteorite very low chance of being witnessed by anyone with standing.

The connection was made when a scientist saw how it was possible for a meteor and a falling rock to fit together as stages of one event, an extraterrestrial rock burning as it pushed through the relatively thick atmosphere, and plopping cold to the ground when it reached the thinner air. He tested this idea by looking at all the humble records he could find in libraries and museums, where there were records of lay people reporting the events and sometimes bringing the rocks, to see if the dates matched the dates of the meteors. Though the match was not perfect, its extent combined with the lack of coordination between the scientific and lay sources could not really be believed to be a coincidence.

Lay testimony and lay-presented objects are not strong evidence, for systematic reasons. Although a proffered caste of a Big Foot footprint is a physical specimen, it is only the result of a process about which it itself gives us no information. The chain of evidence from phenomenon to scientist is broken. By contrast, the scientific community has, effectively, an extensive mutual surveillance and control system covering the production of evidence. There are many witnesses to the carrying out of an experiment, there are referees to publications; discovery of fraud is career-ending, and fear of discovery is heightened by the surveillance. A layperson does not have a professional scientific career to lose so the incentive structure is open-ended. The inherent weakness of lay evidence is another reason, alongside limitation of resources, why no one should expect a given piece of it to be hailed as a breakthrough by establishment science. But the case of meteorites illustrates another fact about evidence, namely, that weak evidence in large quantities can be strong if the conditions are right. If a pattern in the evidence is comprehensive or repeated, and an explanation can be imagined, and the sources have significant independence, if the pattern has features a lay person couldn't have known he should fabricate, then a vast amount of weak evidence can justify more serious and rigorous consideration by scientists. Once in a while, a credible, adventurous scientist will take the bait.

The case of meteorites has been held up by some lay investigators of odd phenomena as a vindication of their demand that scientists wake up and take them seriously. The laypeople who were ridiculed as impressionable and crazy were right! But no single report of rocks falling from the sky was ever significant evidence on its own. Each only gained significance, eventually, as part of a large body of such testimony, and as it fit with developing mainstream investigations of known phenomena. Generally speaking, recognition of the significance of testimony from untrained laypersons can be expected, if at all, only collectively and in the long run. Such investigation is a genuine contribution to the mission of science, but one for which a person cannot expect any tangible reward in his lifetime. As such, it is a labor of love. We might call it love science.

Disclaimer: This work on marginal science has not been funded by the National Science Foundation.

Paolo Mancosu Wins Guggenheim Fellowship

Paolo Mancosu, who has been teaching in the Philosophy Department since 1995, was awarded a prestigious Guggenheim fellowship for 2008-2009.

The Guggenheim Foundation specifies that "Guggenheim Fellows are appointed on the basis of impressive achievement in the past and exceptional promise for future achievement." One-hundred and ninety fellowships were granted in all fields of knowledge out of more than 2,600 applicants. "I am especially pleased because philosophers have not done too well in the competition in recent years" said Mancosu.

In addition, Paolo was also offered a fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton for the Spring term 2009, which he has accepted. He will be on leave during 2008-2009 working on several different projects. The main project will consist in bringing to completion a book to be published by Oxford University Press entitled *The Adventure of Reason*. The book brings together some of his essays in the history and the philosophy of logic and mathematics during the period 1900-1940. "What is distinctive about my approach to these topics is the mix of historical, technical, and philosophical issues" said Mancosu.

In addition to finishing his book, Paolo plans to pursue further work in the area of the philosophy of mathematical practice (explanation, visualization, style, etc.) and in philosophy of logic (logical consequence, theories of truth). During his year of leave, Paolo will visit research institutions and give talks in several countries including, among others, France, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Portugal, and Brazil.

Paolo has been engaged in several publication projects. His most recent book, *The Philosophy of Mathematical Practice*, was published by Oxford University Press in June 2008. He has also edited a special issue of *Synthese* entitled "Interpolations: Essays in honor of William Craig." The special issue, which will appear by the end of 2008, celebrates the work and career of William Craig, professor emeritus in philosophy. (See the article on the "Interpolations" conference on p. 10 of this Newsletter.)

For the past three years Paolo has been the Chair of the Group in Logic and the Methodology of Science. "It has been a very rewarding experience," said Mancosu. "But now I feel ready for a year fully devoted to research."

Commencement News

The Philosophy Department commencement ceremonies in the Faculty Glade are among the high points of the academic year in our community. We were very pleased to welcome in recent years commencement speakers with a strong connection to our Department. David Blinder, who spoke to our graduating class in 2008, is now Associate Vice Chancellor for University Relations here at UC Berkeley, where he will play a leading role in the important capital campaign that is just getting underway. David is an alumnus of the graduate program in our own department, having completed the Ph.D. degree in philosophy in 1981 with a dissertation on "Phenomenology and Skepticism. A Critical Study of Husserl's Transcendental Idealism". The theme of his remarks was "Second Life".

Our commencement speaker in 2007 was Winston Chiong, who majored in Philosophy as an undergraduate at Berkeley. He is now a resident physician in the Department of Neurology at the University of California, San Francisco. Winston received his medical degree from UC San Francisco and his doctorate in philosophy from New York University; he also completed an internship in internal medicine in the Department of Medicine at Stanford University. What follows are some excerpts from his address to the class of 2007.

"Philosophy is not the kind of subject that we can do much with, and while studying philosophy has certain ancillary benefits they don't seem to count as reasons to do it. So what have those of you who don't intend to be philosophy professors been doing here? Well, we're told that in Greek, philosophy means "the love of wisdom." A lot of people focus on the second half of the compound, regarding wisdom; but personally, I find it difficult to maintain that philosophers have any special claim on wisdom. I know some exceptionally wise doctors who know a lot about what to value and how to live, but who are completely innocent of philosophy. What instead seems distinctive to me about those of us who study philosophy is the first half of the compound: a certain kind of intellectual love.

In the same way that it's hard to describe being in love to someone who's never been in love, the study of philosophy occasions feelings of pleasure, fascination, frustration, humility and community that are almost impossible to describe to someone who's never shared them. I hope that in your time here studying philosophy you have all experienced the bewildering puzzlement of finding every premise in an argument totally plausible but the conclusion unacceptable. The wonder and strangeness of looking at ordinary things in terms of a different metaphysical outlook, even if you can't keep it up for very long. The deep pleasure of an intellectual discussion in which people

Photo by Michael Rieppel

don't just defend their set positions like in some cable TV debate, but instead really feel that they are thinking through a deep problem together. The sinking, queasy feeling of being persuaded that some everyday practice of yours is actually ethically indefensible. And the satisfaction of reading through an obscure, difficult philosophical passage over and over again, not even sure how to begin to make sense of it, and then having the entire picture fall into place.

I hope you know what I'm talking about here; if so, then being asked "What's the point of studying philosophy?" may sound to you a little bit like being asked "What's the point of romantic love?" But those of us who feel this way are in a decided minority. The notion of intellectual labor for the sake of intellectual love runs counter to deep strains in the broader culture. Most obvious is the anti-intellectualism of a public sphere that bars any thought that can't be expressed in a 10-second soundbite. But even in circles where intellectual labor is valued, there is something about the intellectual love distinctive in philosophy that may be alien and threatening.

"In the same way that it's hard to describe being in love to someone who's never been in love, the study of philosophy occasions feelings of pleasure, fascination, frustration, humility and community that are almost impossible to describe to someone who's never shared them."

One thing that may be unique about the present age, in comparison with earlier times, is that it is one in which intellectual labor expects and demands to be compensated richly. Do you have any idea how much lawyers and psychiatrists charge for an hour of thinking? Or the extent to which companies in Silicon Valley and Hollywood will go in order to protect their intellectual property? We are told that in the modern economy, ideas are the currency of the realm; and that those who extract and refine these ideas must be paid. Seen this way, thinking for the love of thinking sounds like breaking rocks for the love of breaking rocks.

So if I'm right, the conversational awkwardness that we've all learned to live with when telling people at parties that we majored in philosophy may reflect a way in which the study of philosophy is at odds with the culture around us. Many people are simply unaccustomed to thinking of ideas as beautiful, rather than merely as useful or profitable; and so

the notion of intellectual labor (and really hard labor at that) for the sake of intellectual love must strike them as mystifying and naïve. But here again, everything we do for the sake of romantic love might look the same way to someone who's never been in love.

As I said at the outset, I'm most interested in addressing those of you who are not planning to be academic philosophers. After everything I've said here, you will still have to make your way in a broader culture that may not share in the kind of intellectual love that I've been discussing here. And we shouldn't be smug Platonists about it either; the big, messy world outside of Moses Hall is a real world, in which you'll soon be paying real student loans and starting real families—I mean, before you know it. Are there ways in which having cultivated a love of ideas for their own sake can help you get around in a world that is not populated solely by ideas?

The tradition we've studied in goes back to Socrates, who was by all accounts, a really strange person. One of the strangest things about him was his idea that one of the greatest benefits that we can receive from others is to be criticized by them, and that one of the greatest harms is to be allowed to continue on in error. Of course, he didn't succeed in persuading the Athenian public to see it his way.

As a society, we haven't come much further from the Athenians in this respect—in our political culture, for instance, criticizing the government of the United States is pretty much equated with hating the United States. Anyway, it's probably not surprising that the Socratic view of criticism hasn't prevailed in Athens or in America, because even when it's well-intentioned, criticism can really hurt. This might be especially true for undergraduates in philosophy—when you've been graded, it's not so much on your grasp of some material, but instead on your reasoning. It's impossible not to take that sort of criticism personally.

Here again, what has worked for me is cultivating an interest in where the argument goes, in its own right, and not just what you can get out of it or what it says about you. For me I have to admit it's been a gradual and painful process, but eventually I've come to welcome and even solicit criticism. That's not to say that it doesn't still hurt to receive criticism, but in time I think I have come around to the Socratic view that good, well-intentioned criticism is just crucial if you want to continue growing as a person. Here again, there's the problem of figuring out what sources of criticism you can trust and which ones you can't. But I really hope that the practice you've received here in giving and getting honest intellectual criticism will take you a long way."

Undergraduates Expand Philosophy Forum

by Eugene Chislenko

The Berkeley Undergraduate Philosophy Forum, established four years ago, has quickly grown into a community of dedicated students. Originally a series of occasional discussion groups, the Forum has taken on a much broader range of activities this year. Its weekly two-hour meetings involve undergraduate presentations of their own work, discussions of classic texts, and screenings of philosophically themed films (most recently, "Being John Malkovich.")

The Forum was led in the 2007-2008 academic year by Chelsea Anne Harrington '09, who studies metaethics and normativity; Rebecca V. Millsop '09, who is interested in philosophical logic and philosophy of mathematics; and Jennifer White '08, who is interested in moral and political philosophy.

The aim of the group is to provide ways to keep the conversation going beyond course discussion sections. "We want to foster a lively and active community of philosophy undergraduates," White says. Harrington agrees: "We learn a lot in our classes. But it's amazing what happens when you take the graduate student out of the room."

The creative approach has paid off, with growing student attendance and a variety of special events. At one recent meeting, the Forum invited Professors Hannah Ginsborg, Niko Kolodny, John MacFarlane, and Hans Sluga to an open discussion, at which students asked questions on a wide range of topics and challenged the faculty to come up with a unanimous answer. "They did pretty well," Millsop says, "though they couldn't quite agree about the analytic/Continental divide." Professor Ginsborg recalls, "It was really very interesting. The students asked great questions. I would do it again anytime."

Forum leaders Harrington, Millsop, and White talk to Prof. Hannah Ginsborg at the Department's Spring 2008 reception for undergraduate majors. Photo by Lindsay Crawford.

Earlier in the spring semester, Harrington and White organized a session called "Ask a Neuroscientist," at which Bradley Voytek, an advanced graduate student in Berkeley's Neuroscience Department, talked to undergraduates about consciousness and the philosophical implications of recent brain discoveries. And for students interested in pursuing philosophy beyond the undergraduate level, the Forum held a meeting in which four graduate students discussed life in a Ph.D. program and offered advice about how to apply.

Meetings are open to all undergraduates, regardless of field of study. Emailed announcements are posted on the Forum's Facebook page, "Berkeley Philosophy Forum." The Forum can be reached at calphilosophy@gmail.com.

BERKELEY HOSTS

Collective Intentionality VI: Social Change

by Lindsay Crawford

This past July, the Berkeley Social Ontology Group hosted "Collective Intentionality VI: Social Change." The annual international conference is dedicated to sharing research and opening discussion on a variety of issues surrounding the general field of collective intentionality.

This year's conference, which attracted over 100 participants from across the globe, focused primarily on social change. Papers presented at the conference dealt with the foundations of collective intentionality and the applications of various theories of collective intentionality. Many presentations examined applications of theories of collective intentionality, exploring issues such as race, gender, the intersections of power and group agency, and the relationships between social reality and information technology.

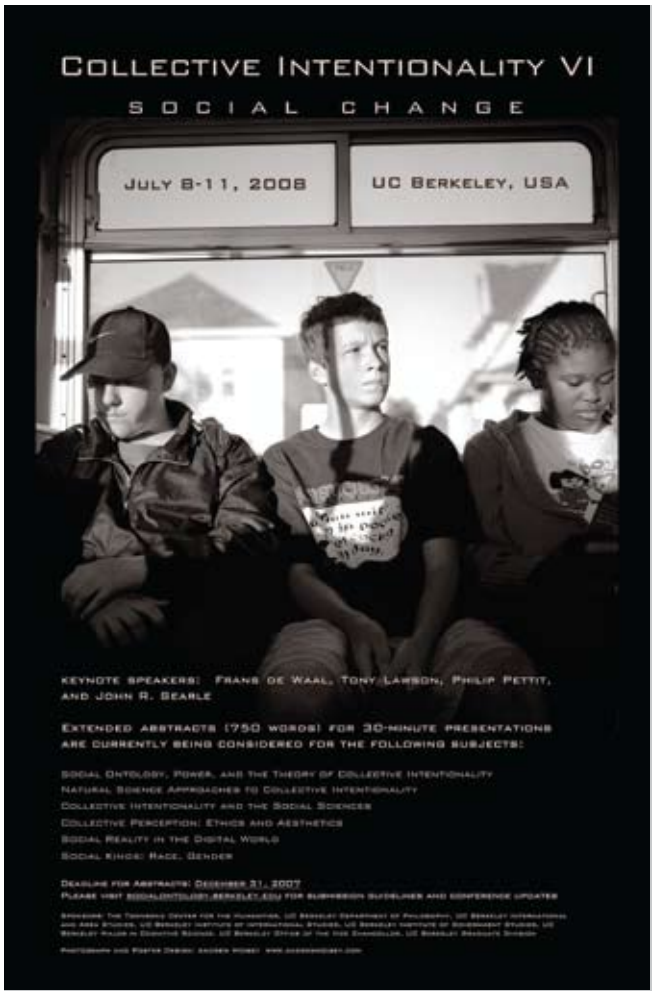


Photo by Jennifer Hudin

Jennifer Hudin, lecturer in cognitive science at Berkeley and co-organizer of this year's conference, remarked that the three-day conference proved to be incredibly fruitful for all who took part. "In the collective opinion of the participants, the conference achieved all of its goals and was an immense success," said Hudin.

Berkeley's Professor John Searle, considered a pioneering figure in the subject of collective intentionality, opened the conference with one of the keynote addresses. Other Berkeley philosophers who presented papers included recent graduates Maya Kronfeld '08 and Asya Passinksy '07; graduate student Melissa Fusco; visiting scholar Josef Moural; Beatrice Kobow, a post-doctoral fellow; and Hudin.

The keynote speakers to the conference included distinguished researchers from an array of disciplines, such as Frans de Waal, professor of primate behavior at Emory University; Tony Lawson, professor of economics at Cambridge University; and Philip Pettit, professor of philosophy at Princeton.

Collective Intentionality conferences have previously been held in Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, and Finland. "Collective intentionality" is typically understood as an area of research that examines particular mental phenomena of collective intention (such as collective agreement and belief,) as well as group action and collective responsibility.

Events

We are very fortunate to have several endowed lectureships in philosophical subjects in the Department and the Graduate Division, which annually bring some of the most distinguished and interesting philosophers to speak at Berkeley. Please join us, if you can, at the following upcoming events. (For more information, and a complete listing of Departmental colloquia and events, visit the Department's website at http://philosophy.berkeley.edu)

Townsend Visitor
October 6-10, 2008
Ned Block
New York University

Howison Lecturer
March 11, 2009
John Perry
Stanford University

George Myro Memorial Lecturer
April 2, 2009
Robert Stalnaker
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

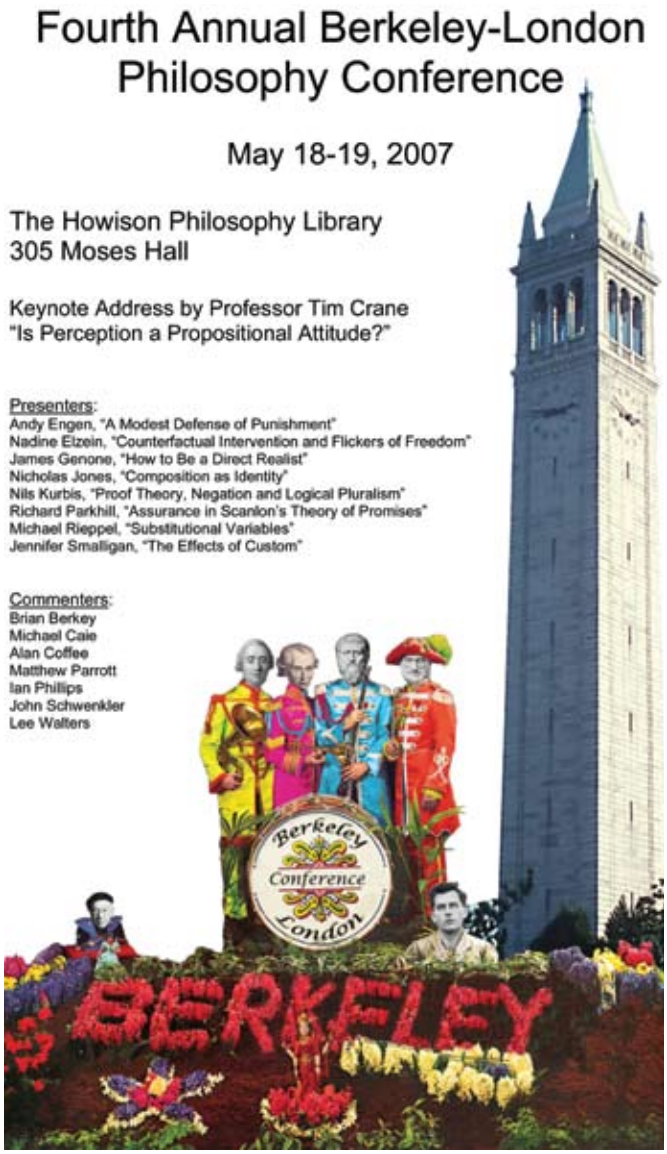
Tanner Lectures on Human Values
April 21-23, 2009
Jeremy Waldron
New York University

THE BERKELEY-LONDON
Conference in Philosophy

by Michael Rieppel

In May 2007, the department played host to the fourth annual Berkeley-London Conference, an event that has quickly become a mainstay of graduate life here at the department.

Each year, four philosophy graduate students from Berkeley and four from the University of London are selected to present work at the conference, with another four from each institution selected to comment on the papers of their peers at the other university. The papers presented are consistently of high quality and span the philosophical spectrum, ranging from ethics and political philosophy to topics in metaphysics, epistemology, language, and everything in between, thereby attracting the participation of both faculty members and other graduate students.



Last year's talks included "A Modest Defense of Punishment" (Andy Engen, Berkeley), "Composition as Identity" (Nils Kurbis, University College London), a keynote address by Professor Tim Crane (University College London) entitled "Is Perception a Propositional Attitude?" and many others.

An upshot of the event is always a weekend filled with intense philosophical discussion on all manner of topics between people working in every different sub-field within philosophy. "I'm always impressed by the papers presented," said Matt Parrott, a Berkeley graduate student who helped organize the 2007 event and commented on one of the papers in 2008. "The collegial atmosphere that's generated is amazing."

Since the location of the conference alternates year to year between Berkeley and London, the event provides students with the opportunity not only to engage in fruitful philosophical exchanges, but also to visit another department and a different city. The visiting participants are usually put up in the homes of students from the inviting institution, meaning that the interaction extends well beyond the conference proper, into restaurants and pubs long after the last presentation ends.

"The people in London were great," said Stanley Chen, a Berkeley graduate student who commented on a paper on the epistemology of testimony in London this year, adding that "their beer isn't bad either."

Berkeley is set to host the next event in this exciting series in the spring of 2009.

New Graduate Students 2008

The Philosophy Department welcomes the following new students to our graduate community; they will be starting in the graduate program in the Fall of 2008.

Annabel Chang, *Yale University*

Peter Epstein, *Harvard University*

Maxwell Gee, *Brown University*

Kelly Glover, *University of Toronto*

Alison Niedbalski, *Indiana University-South Bend*

Umrao Sethi, *Columbia University*

Arthur Tilley, *University of Colorado; Logic and Methodology Program*

INTERPOLATIONS: A Conference in Honor of William Craig

by Lindsay Crawford

In May 2007, the Philosophy Department hosted "Interpolations," a conference celebrating the work of the influential Berkeley emeritus professor of philosophy William Craig.

The interpolation theorem, first proved by Craig in 1957 for first-order logic, has become "part of the standard logic curriculum," according to the conference organizers.

The event included papers on the impact of Craig's interpolation theorem, delivered by internationally distinguished figures in philosophy, mathematics, and computer science. Talks varied in subject matter from the early history and applications of Craig's theorem to the impact of Craig's theorem on computer system design and analysis.

Some of the talks delivered at the conference will appear in a forthcoming special issue of *Synthese*, entitled "Interpolations. Essays in Honor of William Craig." Berkeley professor Paolo Mancosu, one of the conference organizers, is editor of the issue.

Speakers included Solomon Feferman, professor of philosophy and mathematics at Stanford; Michael Friedman, professor of philosophy at Stanford; Jouko Väänänen, professor of finite model theory, abstract model theory, and set theory at the University of Amsterdam and University of Helsinki; Dana Scott, Emeritus professor of computer science, philosophy, and mathematical logic at Carnegie Mellon; Cesare Tinelli, professor of computer science at the University of Iowa; and professor of philosophy Johan van Benthem at Stanford University and the University of Amsterdam.

Bill Craig with conference organizers at "Interpolations"

The event was organized by Berkeley philosophy professors Branden Fitelson, John MacFarlane, Paolo Mancosu, and Sherri Roush, who share interests in logic, philosophy of mathematics, and philosophy of science.

Craig received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Harvard University in 1951. His dissertation, entitled "A Theorem about First Order Functional Calculus with Identity and Two Applications," was supervised by W.V.O. Quine, one of the premier philosophers of the 20th century. He joined the Philosophy Department at Berkeley in 1961, after visiting in the Berkeley Mathematics Department in 1960-61; he taught in our department for 28 years, retiring in 1989.

Faculty Notes

Bert Dreyfus's Pacific APA Presidential Address two years ago, entitled "Overcoming the Myth of the Mental: How Philosophers Can Profit from the Phenomenology of Everyday Expertise," recently led to a session with John McDowell at a meeting of the Eastern APA. *The Myth of the Mental?*, a book of papers commenting on the debate between Bert and McDowell, is due to be published by Routledge next year. Bert also continues to have astonishing success podcasting his lectures over iTunes. This spring, he was the subject of a segment on ABC's *World News Sunday*, featuring pictures of Bert lecturing alongside footage of the now-famous Baxter Woods listening to Bert's lectures as he drove his 18-wheeler across middle America. His latest adventure in cyberspace was to set up and lead a virtual discussion section in Second Life, to which an eager group of podcast listeners from all over the world showed up. Although Bert himself has been too busy with classes in the real world to attend the virtual discussion regularly, he understands that a core online group continues to meet on a weekly basis.

Branden Fitelson has been thinking a lot lately about the relationship between logic and epistemology (mainly, in the non-deductive case). Last year, he taught a graduate seminar and an advanced undergraduate course on issues in this vicinity. He's recently published a paper in which he examines Goodman's "Grue" argument from this perspective. That paper is a representative sample of the sort of thing Branden will be talking about in more depth in his book on *Confirmation Theory*, which is (finally) nearly ready for prime time.

Hannah Ginsborg spent the summer of 2007 in Berlin, partly at the Humboldt University and partly at the Max Planck Institute for the history of science, and she will be returning to Berlin for the summer of 2008. She has been working on topics in Kant, on rule-following, and on the ontology of concepts. In the past year she has presented work on these issues at conferences in London, Tübingen, Kentucky, Chicago, and Berkeley, and in department colloquia and seminars at Harvard, NYU, Georgia State, and UC San Diego.

Niko Kolodny gave talks at Syracuse, USC, UC Santa Barbara, and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He wrote on rationality and interpersonal relationships, and collaborated with John MacFarlane on a paper called "Ought: Between Objective and Subjective," which straddles philosophy of language and ethics. Together with two Berkeley PhDs, Jason Bridges and Wai-hung Wong, he began organizing a *Festschrift* for Barry Stroud. It will contain papers by several distinguished philosophers, including Berkeley's Hannah Ginsborg and John Campbell, which will discuss Barry's explorations of the topic that gives the collection its title: *The Possibility of Philosophical Understanding*.

John MacFarlane has continued developing his framework for accommodating "assessment sensitivity" within truth-conditional semantics. Last year he sat in on Niko Kolodny's seminar on reasons and rationality, and that led to a fruitful collaboration on two papers.

Wine Team Brings Trophy Home To Philosophy Department

by Erin Beeghly

The philosophy department's competitive wine tasting team won its first-ever victory on April 9, 2008. After three days of events in Napa Valley, the team bested Oxford University's Harris Manchester College at the final blind-tasting event, which was hosted by Oliveto Restaurant in Oakland and generously sponsored by Graham and Yvonne Pye. This was the competition's fourth year, and we hope that it will continue to be an annual event.

The wine team offers a chance for Berkeley graduate students, mostly in the philosophy department, to learn about wine and to practice tasting together. This year's members include Ian Schnee, Fabrizio Cariani, James Genone, Erin Beeghly and Ben Boudreaux from the philosophy department, and Ted Martin and Annie McClanahan from the English department.

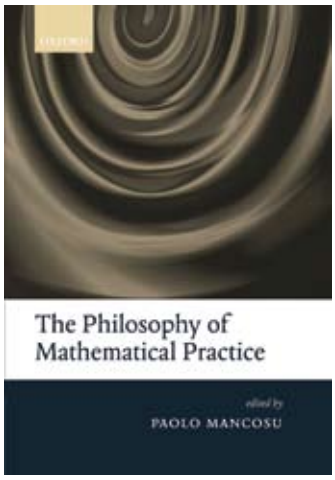
In Spring 2005, graduate student Ian Schnee started the philosophy department wine team at the request of Dr. Matthew Steenberg. Schnee had been a standout member of Harris Manchester's wine team from 2001-2002. After coming to Berkeley, he was encouraged to found a team with which Oxford could compete. Since then, Harris Manchester has visited Berkeley every year in spring semester, yielding two ties and now a victory for each team.

The competition has three parts and occurs over the course of several days. Its first two parts involve tasting red and white wines from France, Chile, and California. Team members, knowing the identity of the wines, take notes. The wines are then re-poured in a random order with the identity of the wines obscured, and the team must correctly re-identify them. The third part of the competition works a bit differently. The team tastes half a dozen wines and must identify the variety, maker, and year of the wine from a list of potential candidates.

During the competition, the teams visit numerous wineries in the Napa region. Standout wineries this year included Mumm, Joseph Phelps, Opus One, Rombauer, Far Niente, and Bennett Lane.

Photo by Ethan Nowak

One paper rejects the commonplace distinction between objective and subjective senses of "ought," arguing that the motivations for this distinction are better satisfied by a univocal assessment-sensitive semantics. The other paper solves a paradox involving conditional "ought" statements by combining the assessment-sensitive semantics for "ought" with a semantics for indicative conditionals. (Modus ponens is not validated by this semantics, but we argue that this is not a Very Bad Thing.) MacFarlane is just beginning a semester of leave, during which he hopes to complete a draft of a book, tentatively entitled *Assessment Sensitivity: Relative Truth and Its Applications.*



Paolo Mancosu's *The Philosophy of Mathematical Practice* was published by Oxford University Press in 2008.

Alva Noë has been in residence at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin during the academic year 2007-2008. He has finished a new book that will be out in February 2009 called *Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain and Other Lessons From The New Biology of Consciousness* (Farrar Strass Giroux). He has also started a new book on depiction, intentionality, and art.

Sherri Roush's work currently focuses on justified belief and its relation to the way we cope with the possibility of our being in error. The key feature of justified belief, she argues, is a kind of self-monitoring and self-correction of our beliefs that does not necessarily involve self-awareness. She defines this self-regulation of our confidence in probabilistic terms that generalize the familiar Bayesian constraints on rationality, and applies this account to issues in philosophy of science, epistemology, and some public policy issues. Recent papers include "Justification and the Growth of Error," "Closure on Skepticism," and "Optimism about the Pessimistic Induction." Papers in progress include "You can believe you're stupid if you try," "The Re-calibrating Bayesian," and (with Robert MacCoun) "What's a Juror to Do?"

John Searle published one book in the past year, *Freedom and Neurobiology* (Columbia University Press). He was made an Honorary Professor at two Chinese universities, where he also lectured: Tsingua University in Beijing and the University of Shanghai.

Jay Wallace continued to serve as Chair of the Philosophy Department during the 2007-2008 academic year. When he isn't writing memos to the Dean, he works on problems at the intersection of moral psychology, practical reason, and the theory of normativity. Recent papers include "The Argument from Resentment" and "Dispassionate Opprobrium." He was Winchester Lecturer at the University of Oxford in the summer of 2007; he has also recently given talks and presentations in Berlin, Bloomington, London, Oslo, Providence, Riverside, Santa Barbara, Saskatoon, and York.

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News and events from the Department of Philosophy 2008

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