

The Dialectic

Classics & Philosophy Newsletter
Volume 6, Issue 2

Philosophy & Humanities, UTA
Spring, 2004

Dear Philosophers and Classicists,

It's finally here. So put down your textbooks, turn off that sci-fi sitcom, prop your feet up and get ready to read—'cause do we have a newsletter for you! Check out what folks in the Department have been up to during the past semester.

Don't miss out! It's all in the following hard-hitting pages.

Lizzy "L Dawg" Ruska
President
Philosophy Club at UTA

p.s. Thanks go to Mindy Hutchinson, Ivan Lee, and Thomas O'Mara for their time helping on the newsletter.

UTA Philosopher Works on Book

Charles Nussbaum knows about music. He played the bassoon professionally for 17 years for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

He says that, early in his career, he didn't see any relation between music and philosophy. "When I first started out in philosophy, music was one thing and philosophy was another. I've always been interested in music, having pursued it pretty seriously at one time; but, for a very long period of my philosophy career, I thought there was no interesting—interesting to me—connection to philosophy."

In 1997, Professor Nussbaum changed his mind. "I was thinking along certain philosophical lines; and as I was thinking along those lines, a certain configuration of issues began to take shape," he said. "The basic idea is that musical experience is related to the experience human beings have of moving in space."

Thus, he found a way to combine his interests in philosophy and music. Thanks to a UTA Faculty Development Leave that Professor Nussbaum was awarded for Fall 2003, he has now written some 103,000 words (300+ pages) of his book, *The Musical Representation: Meaning, Ontology, and Emotion*. The book attempts to approach our musical understanding and experience from the perspective of the philosophy of mind. "Everybody knows that music carries significant meanings for us, but no

one is very clear on how it might do this," he said.



Professor Nussbaum ponders musical experience

"Linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson have argued that when we want to get our minds around an abstraction we relate that abstraction to more concrete everyday experience," Professor Nussbaum continued. "When someone says, 'I am on cloud nine' to express great elation, this clarifies something that is conceptually quite vague and imprecise—happiness—by relating it to the bodily experience of floating comfortably in a high place with an expansive view." Nussbaum noted that abstract, diffuse, or ill-defined musical concepts could perhaps be similarly related to something more concrete. "If musical experience is spatial in its phenomenology, then that might be one example where we can draw certain implications about musical meaning from that spatiality."

Professor Nussbaum has been working on his book since 1999, and he has also published two dense journal articles during that time period. He now has a first draft of the book. He plans to submit his work to a publisher, after

a few more revisions. "When I started work there was never a moment where the final shape of the whole book was clear to me. As I worked on it, it changed shape almost on its own every now and then." There is also a fair amount of scientific detail and scientific theory concerning cognitive psychology and evolutionary biology which is relevant to the project, he said. He intends the book to appeal to an audience of professional philosophers and others who have an interest in musical issues.

His first book gave him added respect for other philosophical authors. "It makes me realize just how much hard work—at least for me—is required to produce philosophical prose," he said. "I now have a heightened appreciation for the sheer difficulty of doing a certain kind of dense philosophical work. It has made my astonishment with regard to very prolific writers of philosophy even greater."

Philosophy Scholarship Fund-Raising Drive Takes Off

Department Chair Denny Bradshaw has announced a fund-raising initiative in order to endow a philosophy-student scholarship named in honor of previous Department of Philosophy Chairman, Thomas W. King.

The donations into the Thomas King Philosophy Scholarship Fund currently stand at \$2,676.88. "The people over in the Office of Development have told us that, typically, it takes \$10,000 to endow a fund to the point at which it will start to generate annual scholarship dollars," Professor Bradshaw said. "So, we need to raise another \$7,400 in order for the fund to reach the endowment level."

"I have calculated that if each of our philosophy alumni sent in just \$100 we'd be able to reach our goal and endow the scholarship," Professor Bradshaw added

Professor King came to UTA in the fall of 1971, after having received his Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of New Mexico. He served as Chair of the Department of Philosophy from its creation in 1975 until his death in January of 1990. (Prior to 1975, the UTA philosophy faculty members were housed in the Department of History.)

Under Professor King's leadership, the number of philosophy faculty doubled in size from four to eight. He also supervised a number of key curricular changes during this time, including the development of such popular courses as biomedical ethics and the "Critical Thinking" course (PHIL 1301).

Professor King taught courses in ethics, existentialism, critical thinking, and 18th and 19th Century Philosophy. He served as President of the New Mexico-West Texas Philosophical Society during 1974-75 and served as President

of the North Texas Philosophical Association during 1981-82.

*Those wishing to contribute to the Thomas King Philosophy Scholarship fund may mail their check to **Philosophy Scholarship Fund, Department of Philosophy and Humanities, Box 19527, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX 76019.***

Phi Sigma Tau Faculty Colloquium Speaker Again Draws Crowd!

On Thursday, 2 October 2003, Professor Keith Burgess-Jackson presented a lecture entitled "Our Millian Constitution: The Supreme Court's Repudiation of Immorality as a Ground of Criminal Punishment." The lecture was part of the *Phi Sigma Tau* Faculty Colloquium Series for the 2003-2004 academic year. It was also the first philosophy lecture of the Fall 2003 semester.

What a way to kick things off! Philosophy, political science, criminal justice, and psychology majors, as well as faculty from various departments at UTA, filled the Concho Room in the University Center.



UTA philosophers Thomas O'Mara, Jim Bratone, and Jennifer Pope chat before the lecture

Of the questions posed by the lecture, most central were "What are the moral limits of the criminal law?" and "What sorts of criminal conduct may the state rightly prohibit and punish?" There are several views regarding the sorts of conduct that the state may punish. Many of these views turn on whether the conduct causes harm or offense to oneself or others. Historically, John Stuart Mill endorsed only the harm principle. Joel Feinberg, a contemporary liberal, endorses the principles of both harm and offense. Until the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling in the case of *Lawrence v. Texas*, federal law also considered the morality of the conduct in question to be relevant to its legality.

The position that the morality of the conduct is relevant is usually called legal paternalism or legal moralism. This is the notion that was effectively being addressed in the case

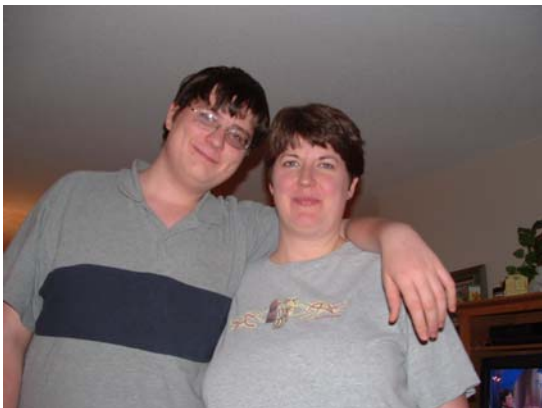
of *Lawrence v. Texas*. The outcome of that case, in favor of Lawrence, reversed the high court's 1986 decision in the similar anti-sodomy case in Georgia, *Bowers v. Hardwick*.

Philosophy Alumna Makes Good!

Marge Dunehew graduated with a B.A. in philosophy from UTA in December of 2002. Last fall she entered the Ph.D. program in philosophy at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Recently, we asked her to tell us of her experiences so far in graduate school and in the northeast. This is what she reported.

"In August last year I moved from Arlington to Amherst to attend the University of Massachusetts. This was the result of a long graduate school search; and, into the second semester here, I believe that it was the right decision. Last semester I studied with Eileen O'Neill, taking from her a class called *Women Philosophers of the 17th Century*.

"As is probably the case with most people, I didn't know that there were any women philosophers in the 17th Century. But there were several: Marie de Gournay, Elisabeth of Bohemia, and Damaris Masham, to name just a few. The class sparked an interest in early modern philosophy generally, but especially in the contributions by women. This semester, I have a class on John Locke with Vere Chappell, and I have had the opportunity to continue to pursue the above-mentioned interest by writing about Masham—who was a friend and correspondent of Locke.



Marge with her son Zach!

"Another of my long-time interests has been in logic. Last semester I had a course on modal logic with Gary Hardegree. This was especially challenging for me, since (because of my interrupted undergraduate career) I hadn't studied logic in a long time. I eventually caught on, and this semester I am continuing my logic studies with Gary by sitting in on his course on intermediate logic.

"During the current semester, I am also taking courses on ontological commitment and on the philosophy of religion. In the former

course, we are reading a lot of 1950's era Quine and responses to him. My first presentation of the semester was in philosophy of religion. I discussed an article on the eternality of God, to wit, how an entity with a life of "atemporal duration" might interact with beings whose life endures in time.

"The U. Mass. philosophy department is in the process of hiring two junior people to begin next fall; so, I have been attending a lot of on-campus job talks. It's been great to see the hiring process from this perspective.

"Not all my time is spent studying; I have also done a little traveling. I went to Niagara Falls in January and to Cape Cod last weekend. There's no temptation to swim with the fishes when one visits the Cape in February! Still, the shoreline was beautiful with sand and small rocks worn smooth by the waves."

Jenefer Robinson Lectures on the Emotions

Professor Jenefer Robinson of the University of Cincinnati was the Fall 2003 Philosophy Lecture Series lecturer, speaking before some 30 people on the topic, "Emotions: Biological Fact or Social Construction?" Her November 7th lecture in 101 College Hall began with the question, "Should we understand emotions as feelings or as judgments?"

Her views on emotion cast doubt on the currently fashionable "judgment" theories, and draw on psychological theories that stress the physiological aspects of emotion. She has applied this model of emotion to problems in aesthetics—such as the expression of emotion in art and the emotional experience of art by readers and audiences. Professor Robinson explains that emotions essentially involve the evaluation of the personal significance of something going on in the external or internal environment in terms of one's own wants, wishes, values, interests, and goals. She explains how emotional appraisals result in autonomic nerve system changes and motor activity, including movements of facial musculature that function as signals to others.

Professor Robinson included details about emotion as a process. She explained that emotional responses are caused by every simple non-cognition affective appraisals. Many emotions in folk psychology are defined in terms of complex cognitions.

Feeling grateful...nostalgic...generous?

Please send your donations in support of our programs and activities to the address at <http://www.uta.edu/philosophy/contact.php>. Also be sure to send your alumni news to bhughes@uta.edu.