

The Dialectic

Classics & Philosophy Newsletter
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Dear Philosophers and Classicists,

It is time once again to indulge ourselves in the decadent yet subtle nuances of amateur journalism that is *The Dialectic*. We not-so-humbly present the much anticipated Spring 2006 issue for your perusing pleasure. The bumper crop of new philosophers in training has yielded fresh new faces and fresh new ideas aplenty. Enjoy with our compliments, complain to someone else, and have a great new year.

Thomas O'Mara
President
Philosophy Club at UTA

p.s. Thanks, as always, to Mitch Hodge for his contributions to this issue of the newsletter.

There He Goes, Again!

Ken Williford Explores Consciousness

Erstwhile UTA philosophy major Ken Williford completed his Ph.D. at the University of Iowa in 2003 and is now an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Saint Cloud State University in Minnesota. Professor Williford spent two months in Paris last summer as a post-doctoral fellow at CREA (Centre de Recherche en Epistémologie Appliquée). In addition to giving three lectures on his work—published “in-house” at CREA as *Rapports et Documents, Rapport No 0505, Juillet 2005*, “Three Presentations on Consciousness and Self-Representation”—he was continuing his research on consciousness, self-consciousness, and reflexivity. In particular, works on modeling aspects of consciousness via nonwellfounded set theory.



Ken Williford sets academic world on fire

Prior to the trip to Paris, he was already keeping busy: In March, he attended a conference (built around the anthology mentioned below) at the University of Arizona entitled, “Self-Representational Approaches to Consciousness,” where he commented on a paper by Keith Lehrer. In May, he presented the “keynote” address at the “Graduate Philosophy Conference” at the University of Iowa.

Professor Williford returned to CREA for a few days this past December to comment on a paper by Dan Zahavi at a conference entitled, “Pre-Reflexive Subjective Experience and Action.” He also served on the thesis committee (called a *jury* in France) of Alexandre Billon, a student of Jean Petitot, Director of CREA.

Professor Williford has (together with Uriah Kriegel, Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Associate Director of the Center for Consciousness Studies at the University of Arizona) an edited volume due out in May, 2006, entitled, *Self-Representational Approaches to Consciousness* (Bradford/M.I.T. Press). Wow! Way to go Ken!!!



Philosophy Clubber Stephen Thomson generously agrees to hang kewl fliers around his dorm!

Classics and Philosophy Picnic Proves to be huge draw

At the apex of autumnal weather, we were treated to a cornucopia of burgers and dogs both hot and four-legged (never both at

once) and in the company of the greatest minds in Classical Studies and Philosophy. That's right, at the end of a picnic-less biennium, the traditional Classics and Philosophy Picnic made a guest appearance on our social calendars once again on the evening of October 7th.

The people flowed in and then the refreshments flowed into them, as dusk rolled in over the embers of the barbecue pit. The festivities consumed vast swaths of pavilion at River Legacy Park in Arlington, where, to the astonishment of some, elusive wildflowers still managed to bloom. Although a bit windy and a little gray, the weather that evening was perfect for those in the captive audience wishing to regale each other with stories of mirth, woe, and Latin (or consciousness studies, depending on your half of the pavilion).

To be sure, a memorable time was had by all. Our thanks go to Mr. David Hoot for organizing a real whizz-bang of a shindig—complete with pumpkin-carving utensils—and to all those who so graciously contributed. We look forward to seeing you all at the next monumental event.

Second Annual Pizza Extravaganza Keeps on Giving

The second annual fall divertissement known as the *Pizza Lunch Extravaganza* was a truly inspired success, drawing hordes of Philosophy and Classics majors and minors to 305 Carlisle Hall shortly before noon on 14 September 2005. Patiently, the wily students stalked their prey: twenty piping hot pies from Mr. Jim's Pizza. Those downhearted students who arrived after the chairs filled up spilled out into the hallway to swap stories of classes, summer adventures, and other tall tales.



Stephanie Vaughn, Meredith Schroeder, and Miriam Byrd enjoy a slice

The ubiquitous Thomas O'Mara attended, as well as newly appointed Philosophy Club officer Ravenna Romack. Phi Sigma Tau President Jason Peeler made an appearance, as did Mitch Hodge, Bill Baldwin, and Eric

Daniels of the Philosophy Reading Group. Of course, several members of the faculty managed to navigate the sea of voracious collegians to get their slice of the pie. Professors Charles Nussbaum, Harry Reeder, and Denny Bradshaw all managed to snag a piece or two, as did recent hire Miriam Byrd. Charlie Chiasson and David Hoot, complete with an entourage of budding classicists, arrived just in time so secure their share of the fare.

Thanks to all those who showed up to make this the most successful Pizza Lunch Extravaganza the Philosophy Department has ever paid for. See you next Fall!!!

Imagine the Possibilities! Philosophy Lecture Series Lecturer, Roberta Ballarin, Reveals All

Are you constantly confusing your *modus ponens* with your *modus tollens*? Does the very mention of modal logic make you yearn for a possible world where there is no modal logic? Do you sometimes feel like you woke up in another possible world? If so, then the lecture delivered by Professor Roberta Ballarin from SMU should have helped ease your angst.



Professor Ballarin emphasizes a point

As part of the UTA Philosophy Lecture Series last fall, Professor Ballarin untangled the confusing world of possible world semantics, as found in the works of Saul Kripke, before a gathering of eager faculty and intimidated students. Her paper, entitled "Validity and Necessity," engaged the debate concerning whether Kripke's model-theoretic semantics

literally commits one to an ontology of possible worlds. Professor Ballarin, with great skill and erudition, led the audience through the main arguments in this debate. In the end, she concluded that Kripke is not metaphysically committed to an ontology of possible worlds, but rather uses them only as devices in the most convenient formalism; Kripke was thus not assigning metaphysical reality to his possible worlds, but was rather using them in a strictly formal and theoretical sense.

Audience members were awe struck by the grace with which Professor Ballarin delivered her lecture. She successfully made these complex issues understandable to novices in logic and challenged those with expertise to rethink their own views on possible-worlds semantics. From all of us who find formal logic intimidating, we would like to thank her for creating a world in which this is no longer the case!



Definitely dapper philosophy major Josh Usry was spotted recently in Carlisle Hall

It was phenomen(ologic)al!

Professor Harry Reeder provided the fall semester's installment of the *Phi Sigma Tau Faculty Colloquium* with his paper in the phenomenology of language entitled, "Language and the Law of Oriented Constitution." This well attended lecture provided faculty and students with a mesmerizing view into the current research conducted by Professor Reeder on the problematics encountered in "the law of oriented

constitution," as presented in Edmund Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*.

Professor Reeder carefully and meticulously disambiguated these problems with close and careful analyses of the semantic texture of essences in the living, temporal, and socially-based uses of language. The relation between linguistic and non-linguistic elements or structures of experience is the limit to the arbitrariness of words and grammar and semantic innovation.

At the close of the lecture, one student was heard to compliment Professor Reeder by stating, "It was phenomenal!" Dr. Reeder quickly corrected him: "No, it was phenomenological!" In that spirit, we wish to thank Professor Reeder for his support in making this latest installment of the Colloquium series a phenomenological success!

Pantheism?!?

Phi Sigma Tau Student Colloquium

Philosophy major Kyle Vernon presented a paper entitled, "Pantheism: What They Never Told You" on 21 October 2005, as part of the *Phi Sigma Tau Student Colloquium* series. His presentation represented work done over the summer on his McNair Scholars Program project, which also constituted his Senior Thesis.



Scholar Kyle Vernon tells us everything no one else would!

Mr. Vernon's research was an attempt to explore a pantheistic position alternative to the standard monotheistic and polytheistic conceptions of deity.

Feeling grateful...nostalgic...generous?

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