

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2020, No. 53

FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK
– AT HOME BUT NOT
ALONE

The snow falling this morning of May 9th is a strangely comforting reminder of Commencements Past on Eastman Quad. Rain, sleet, or snow, we never cancelled for inclement weather. Nothing less than weather *vile* would stay the conferral of degrees in open air. So it was written and was in deed, and it was good. And in the postpartum repose of my own commencement in this Rochester Rite of Spring, students scattered wide, the snow returned five inches deep the fifth of June of 1989. Summer was a distant hope as we reminisced around the fire, colleagues insisting that *real* Rochester winters were a thing of the past.

I am reminded of this, across thirty years and one of seasons altered, strangely comforted by this snow today – now sleet in ragged sheets – even as our students are prematurely scattered or stranded on a campus banned. My desire is finally satisfied, to know what could constitute weather so *vile* as to stay our tasseled march. A viral gust, I had not guessed, but here we are at home, as we gather to commence.

And never in all these years of sleet, and snow, and frigid rain were we not assembled in the open air, we faculty in cupped seats running over, our students' caps and beach balls tossed by gales – as if they were, well, caps and beach balls. So there you have it. *Res ipsa loquitur*.

Shelter and process in place as we must, the acknowledgement of what we have meant to each other and what we want for each other will remain the heart of Commencement. By this measure our 2020 Commencement is already the best in memory, as the importance of what we do together in the cause of human flourishing is magnified in the unforgiving light of contagion, as so much else is diminished. 'Social distancing' has driven home how much the world we've created here is a collective social enterprise for which we are all grateful.

How can I begin to acknowledge and reciprocate the outpouring of gratitude from our students, who have done their part to preserve the fabric of academic community even as their own lives were upended this spring? How can I thank enough the colleagues, deans, and staff who bore with generosity, compassion, and wisdom the immense burdens of pandemic response? How can I thank enough the donors who believe so much in the value of our work that they continue to sustain us even in the face of present uncertainties?

What I can say now, as my 16th year as Chair winds down, is that it is a great privilege to have a place in your lives as a part of an academic community that continues to grow with new challenges and opportunities. I am grateful to our wonderful students, faculty and staff, and colleagues and friends across the entire campus to which we will some day return.

Be smart, cherish the goodness in each other, and hang onto those beach balls. We'll get through this.

Randall R. Curren

COMINGS AND GOINGS

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COMINGS:

We are very excited to have two new colleagues joining us July 1st:

Mark Povich (PhD in Philosophy, Neuroscience & Psychology, Washington University, 2017), currently at Tulane University, will join us as a Visiting Assistant Professor. His research is primarily on mechanistic and mathematical explanation, and his teaching in philosophy of science and mind will include a new cross-listed course in Philosophy of Brain and Cognitive Science

Natalie Hannan (PhD candidate in Philosophy, Columbia) will join us as a visiting Doctoral Fellow for 2020-21, and a Postdoctoral Associate for 2021-22. She will pursue her research on The Socratic Paradoxes and Plato's Epistemology and teach classes in ancient Greek philosophy and philosophy of religion.

GOINGS:

Hayley Clatterback, returned to The University of Wisconsin-Madison January 1, where she completed her PhD before joining our faculty in July of 2015. She has found love, and we get that. We are taking it pretty well, despite missing her a lot and wishing she had stayed.

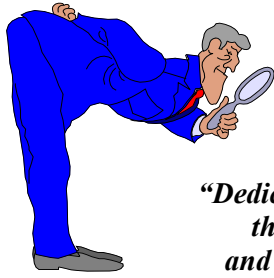
Tyron Goldschmidt's two years as our visiting assistant professor in philosophy of religion is coming to an end. We wish him the very best as he pursues other opportunities.



2019 UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN

Thank you for your support!

Our department achieved 83% participation this year! Thank you to all who support our community!



*“Dedicated to the Truth,
the Half-Truth
and the Occasional
Bald-Faced Lie”*

FACULTY NEWS

PAUL AUDI

It was another good year of teaching and research. I got away for two conferences, the New England Workshop in Metaphysics, and the Eastern APA, both times giving comments on very interesting papers. One, by Jonathan Schaffer, was a piece on functionalism and grounding; the other, by Umrao Sethi, was about sensible properties and perception. It was great doing some philosophy of mind, which hasn't been my focus lately. I hope to get some writing done on both of these topics.

It was a delight co-teaching a seminar on the metaphysics of the self with Earl this Spring, and I'm very excited to co-teach with Alison on parthood in the Fall. I recently, finally, returned to some work on tropes, and am hoping to spend a lot of time writing this summer. (It looks like it will not be a typical summer, however, so we'll just see.) One way or another, I'll be thinking about time, change, explanation, persons, and a bunch of other stuff.

EARL CONEE

In the past academic year, I taught, much as I usually do (except for the Zooming), I engaged in philosophical research, much as I usually do, I engaged in academic service, much as I usually do, and I wrote this departmental newsletter entry, with my usual emphasis on the usual and the usual unusual detail.

RANDALL CURREN

When I submitted my annual news a year ago, I didn't foresee that a thunderstorm would descend on our 2019 commencement and leave me stranded in airports for 27 hours, as I made my way to lectures in Egmond aan Zee, Dublin, London, Edinburgh, and Birmingham, England. That all worked out in the end, and after four weeks back home I spoke at conferences in Liverpool and in Dharamsala, in the foothills of the Himalayas, where I spoke with HH the Dalai Lama over lunch at his residence and had an exchange with him during a live broadcast across India, Mongolia, and Russia. That was the highlight of an extraordinary calendar year of speaking events that made it a good time for me stay at home for a while when January 2020 arrived. With all that has happened since, I am feeling very grateful for 2019, and for the extraordinary goodwill of my students in the *Seminar for Majors* and *Environmental Justice* this spring. It has been wonderful getting to know each other in ways we might not have without the pandemic.

WILLIAM FITZPATRICK

I approach the end of the spring, 2020 semester just thankful to have gotten through it and helped my students to do the same. The sudden transition to Zoom went better than we might have expected, but it remains such a different experience from the personal interaction at the core of so much of what we do. I miss seeing my students and colleagues face to face, and even just being physically in my classroom, and it's strange having no idea when we'll be able to enjoy those things again. It's been a while since I've been able to think much about research, but in the months before the pandemic I published "Moral Progress for Evolved Rational Creatures" in *Analyse & Kritik*, as part of a symposium on *The Evolution of Moral Progress*, by Buchanan and Powell, and wrote a new piece on negligence and moral responsibility called "Varieties of Negligence and Complications for Moral Blameworthiness," forthcoming in a Cambridge University Press volume entitled

Agency, Negligence and Responsibility. After the semester ends, I will get back to work on several commissioned projects: a chapter on "Non-Naturalistic Moral Realism" for the *Oxford Handbook of Moral Realism*; an article for a special issue of *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* on Moral Phenomenology; a piece for a Cambridge volume on the Trolley Problem; and a book on Ethical Realism for Cambridge's *Elements of Ethics* Series. I continue to serve as an associate editor for *Ethics* and as the undergraduate adviser for the department, along with advising a number of graduate students.

JENS KIPPER

It has been my second year at the University of Rochester. Teaching has been a lot of fun. And thanks mainly to my students, the online part of it wasn't a complete disaster. I published a book on the social impact of Artificial Intelligence. (You may find it even more opaque than my other work, since it is in German.) I also published a paper in the *Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery*, which came as much as a surprise to me as to anyone else. Fortunately, I had some great co-authors who are actually knowledgeable about orthopedics.

I am still trying to learn more about the nature of the mind and representation. Regarding the latter—Zeynep (Soysal) and I wrote a paper together. Since it is more than twice as good as what I usually produce, I hope reviewers will treat it kindly.

ALISON PETERMAN

I continue my work on "Mad Madge" Cavendish, the 17th century genius natural philosopher with the fabulous wardrobe, who was called "a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman" and "crack-brained and bird-witted." I am right now finishing what I pledge will be my last paper on Spinoza, the 17th

century God-intoxicated heretic with the unremarkable wardrobe, who was called a "miserable atheist" with a "wicked spirit", and his philosophy an "appalling and ridiculous chimera." My next project will be to compile all the Cavendish and Spinoza burns. On the teaching front, I taught Introduction to Philosophy to the very first cohort of our new Rochester Education Justice Initiative, at Groveland Correctional Facility. The students in the program couldn't be more wonderful and our weekly discussions were the best of any class I've ever taught.

ZEYNEP SOYSAL

Here are some highlights from my academic year. Last summer I wrote a paper explaining how we can solve the puzzle of extrinsic justifications in mathematics, i.e., the puzzle of explaining why the fruitfulness of a mathematical axiom can be evidence for its truth. (Spoiler alert: It has to do with analyticity.) Before Zoom was the normal thing to do, I gave a virtual talk in Gdansk, Poland, where I explained why the universe of sets is not a set. Jens Kipper and I wrote a paper together, in which we explain why nobody can reject descriptivism about reference (basically). Part of that work was done in Miami Beach. It was really fun to co-author with Jens. I taught my first graduate seminar on hyperintensionality in the Spring, and it was, at least from my perspective, really wonderful. Attendees included faculty and students from the linguistics department, from Cornell, from Tulane, and we also had some superstar guest speakers. Members of the seminar have been wavering between accepting impossible worlds and rejecting all modality. My plan this summer is to figure all of this out, and dive head first into the problem of logical omniscience. (Maybe analyticity will help?)

ROSA TERLAZZO

On paper this should have been a terrible year – I had my first emergency room visit ever and spent about 6 weeks sick in the fall, I spent 11 months unable to sell our house in Kansas, and now we're living through a global pandemic! But I also got to join the U of R Philosophy Department, where I get to be pretty much daily impressed and delighted by my colleagues and students, I get to ride my bike into work (when we were actually allowed to go into work), and – like 2/3 of the population of the US, apparently – I now know how to make homemade bread. Oh, and I got tenure. So all in all, a pretty good year.

On the teaching front, I've gotten to talk with students about a lot of my favorite subjects, like structural injustice, and race, gender, and global justice (I know, I'm a super fun dinner party guest), and I can't wait to do more of it. It's a joy how interested and engaged the students here are. On the research front, between sickness and pandemic, I've gotten to cancel a keynote at the Annual CUNY Undergraduate Philosophy Conference, as well as talks at Clemson University, the Bled Ethics Conference, and the annual Politics, Philosophy, and Economics conference in New Orleans. I did manage to sneak in a few actual talks at Virginia Tech, the North American Association for the Philosophy of Education Annual Conference, and the Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy Workshop, though – as well as get a couple of papers published on transformative experiences, adaptive preferences, political liberalism, and obligations to resist oppression. And in between it all, I got to coach our amazing Ethics Bowl team, and watch them place 12th in the nation! So like I said – a pretty good year.

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

PH.D. GRADUATE ADMISSIONS FOR 2020/21

Zachary Crouch (Texas Tech University)

Agnieszka Dygus (University of Warsaw, Poland)

Xinlu Li (New York University)

Sumin Oh (Ewha Womans University, Seoul, South Korea)

Ali Sanaeikia (University of Tehran, Iran)

Vincent Tanzil (SE Asia Bible Seminary, Indonesia)

Tong Zhao (Nanjing University, China)

EDWARD PECK CURTIS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING BY A GRADUATE STUDENT

Kelley Annesley

2019 OUTSTANDING ESSAY AWARD

Matthew Maxwell, "*Ockham, Miracles, and Causal Regularity*"

2019/20 TEACHING ASSISTANT OF THE YEAR AWARD

Zachary Barber

2019/20 MASTER OF ARTS DEGREES AWARDED

Kelley Annesley

Yanssel Garcia

John Kwak

Nathanael Smith

2019/20 PH.D. DEGREE AWARDED

Kyle Blanchette, PhD

“Bridging the Gap Between Personal Survival and Personal Ontology”

(Paul Audi, advisor)

KELLEY ANNESLEY

In the past year, I passed the Qualifying Exam and started writing my dissertation. Happily, I was also awarded both a Curtis Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Graduate Student, and a Doust Fellowship through the Writing, Speaking and Argument Program for the upcoming academic year. I am grateful both for the opportunity to continue to teach during the next year, and to remain on campus!

YANSSEL GARCIA

With another year passing by, I'm happy to say that I'm receiving my Master's degree and have begun to work on my dissertation. Not much longer now! The semester hasn't exactly gone the way we would have all liked, but I'm hopeful that things will return to normalcy soon, and we'll all be working on our respective projects where we belong in Lattimore.

JOHN KWAK

John Kwak, after beginning his UR doctoral studies in 2006-2008, returned to complete his Ph.D. in fall 2019! (This was after a transfer to USC, a life detour that took him out of philosophy, work as a tax consultant and as clergy, and having two kids!) Not having expected to have the opportunity to finally finish his studies, he's extraordinarily grateful for and excited about this opportunity, which he aims to complete by spring 2021. He is resuming his prior work in philosophy of language, specifically on the nature of linguistic competence

and its bearing on theories of meaning, while living at his home with his family in his hometown of Beaverton, OR.

GRADUATE ALUMNI NEWS

CHARLES CARDWELL (PHD 1971)

The 2019-2020 academic year has been interesting, if not delightful. Three nice things quickly come to mind: *My Hornbook Ethics* (Hackett) was the subject of an "author meets critics" session at the 2019 Tennessee Philosophical Association meetings. (The critics had almost all nice things to say about the book.) The second edition of *Growing Wisdom* (Kendall-Hunt) is under contract and scheduled to come out in August. And I had a great visit with my UofR Doctoral Classmate, Marc Lowenstein, who was passing through Tennessee.

The life-changer of the year has been -- no surprise here -- COVID19. The College terminated all on-ground classes at Spring Break, locked down the campus, and moved to cyberspace. To me, "disaster" is the proper descriptor here. I'm working 12-16 hour days seven days a week and almost all of that is purely clerical work. Nothing I do in cyberspace takes less than twice as long as it would in Kantian space. Often, what I might have done in class in 10 minutes now takes 10 minutes per student. What little I can do that might be called teaching offers no satisfaction. I understand teaching philosophy as engaging in Socratic dialog. I just can't see how to do that on line with 150 students (a light load for me, normally I am closer to having 200 students in a semester) in an asynchronous cyber environment. I am, apparently, a dinosaur.

How Socrates would fare in cyberspace? Not well, I think.

EILEEN DALY-BOAS (MA 2000)

I'm currently very happy as the librarian for Philosophy and Education here at UR. I was recently promoted to Librarian III, and this past January, celebrated 15-years as a librarian at the River Campus Libraries. In the summer of 2019, the library was host to the Association of Research Libraries' Digital Scholarship Institute, where librarians across the country come together to learn technologies related to digital work, including data programs, mapping software, and digital presentation tools. I was one of the data visualization instructors, teaching Tableau. This year, much of my focus has been on Open Educational Resources, Creative Commons licensing, and Open Pedagogy. I'm a co-editor of an upcoming Open Access book, "Open Pedagogy Approaches: Faculty, Library, and Student Collaborations." I get to use some of my philosophy "chops" as there is a lot of discussion about rights and equity and fairness when discussing Open Access. My summer plans have been tossed out the window (I know I'm not alone), and instead, I'll be finding ways to provide the best library services in an online, or possibly hybrid, or possibly in-person classes. (I have been mentally adding the modal operator for possibility in front of every statement for about six weeks.) And finally, a reminder that while I'm the librarian for current UR students and faculty, I'm also happy to assist our alumni or former faculty or staff! You can find my research guide here: <http://libguides.lib.rochester.edu/phl>

LORETTA KOPELMAN (PHD 1966)

Dear colleagues,

I hope everyone is safe and well and that by the time this newsletter is distributed the worst of Covid-19 ravages are behind us. Many philosophers working in bioethics have helped to generate or review triage policies related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Arthur and I, who both serve on the Ethics Committee of a large, tertiary hospital in the D.C. area, helped review its policies on the

triage of patients in anticipation of the need to ration scarce resources such a ventilator.

Like everyone else, we are visiting and teaching by means of our computers. We taught our first ethics seminar by Zoom in March at Georgetown School of Medicine.

On January 29 I gave a talk at Georgetown University, Kennedy Institute of Ethics and Pellegrino Center for Clinical Bioethics on my recently published paper, "On Pellegrino and Thomasma's Admission of a Dilemma and Inconsistently." I believe Georgetown University has highest concentration of Pellegrino enthusiasts in the world but it seemed to go well.

We are trying not to dwell on the dangers of the pandemic to family and friends—our daughter is a pediatrician in the DC area of Northern Virginia and our son is an emergency medicine physician in LA.

JAMES HUNTER LESHER (PHD 1967)

Jim Lesher has fully, finally, and officially retired from teaching philosophy at UNC-Chapel Hill. He taught his last class on December 12th, 2019, and celebrated the occasion by undergoing knee replacement surgery the next day. He has now completed three months of physical therapy and hopes to get back on the tennis court some time this summer—assuming that the Chapel Hill Tennis Club is still in operation. He and his wife Eleanor are sheltering in place in Carrboro, North Carolina. 'Il faut cultiver notre jardin', literally.

ERIC MACK (PHD 1973)

In our retirement Mary (my wife) and I continue to work on our academic projects – Mary on extremely esoteric topics in medieval philosophy of language and logic, Eric on natural rights theory and its history. The wild and carefree road trips that we had anticipated have for some reason not materialized.

BO MOU (PHD 1997)

This is a summary report of my scholarly work in the recent years (2018-2020).

(1) My monograph book *Cross-Tradition Engagement in Philosophy: A Constructive-Engagement Account* (in “Routledge Studies of Contemporary Philosophy” monograph series) is published in 2020; this book explores one fundamental issue “how cross-tradition engagement in philosophy is possible” by examining a range of theoretic and methodological issues (including the issues of normative bases, incommensurability, and philosophical interpretation) together with several representative case studies covering issues in philosophical methodology, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language and logic, and ethics.

(2) Another recent monograph book of mine, *Semantic-Truth Approaches in Chinese Philosophy: A Unifying Pluralist Account* (Lexington Books, 2019) explains a general across-the-board account of truth in view of relevant resources in Chinese philosophy, which is a sister volume to my 2009 monograph book *Substantive Perspectivism* (“Synthese” Library, vol.344) which explains an earlier line of the foregoing account of truth through engaging the contemporary debate between deflationism and substantivism on the philosophical issue of truth. (A “Book Symposium” session on this book has been scheduled to be held in the main program of 2020 meeting of Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association, San Francisco (April 10, 2020) but postponed due to the current coronavirus situation.)

(3) My edited four-volume set of research-reference book *Chinese Philosophy* (in Routledge’s “Critical Concepts in Philosophy” reference book series) was published in 2018.

(4) My edited anthology volume *Philosophy of Language, Chinese Language, Chinese Philosophy: Constructive Engagement* (Brill, 2018) explores two closely related issues: <1> how reflective elaboration of some distinct features of the Chinese language and of relevant resources about language in Chinese philosophy can contribute to the contemporary study of philosophy of language and <2> how relevant resources in contemporary philosophy of language can contribute to philosophical interpretation of Chinese philosophy.

JEFFRIE G. MURPHY (PHD 1966)

Rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated. I have now--I kid you not--received another email from a philosopher telling me that she had heard that I was dead and was happy to learn that I was not when she read an email I sent her telling her how much I liked a recent essay of hers. Was this simply more evidence for the principle that no good deed ever goes unpunished? At any rate, when I emailed her back I shared a death anecdote sometimes attributed to Mark Twain that describes my current health and my mixed feelings about where I live far better than the famous "rumors" quotation with which I started this email. A friend wrote to Twain and asked if a mutual friend had died. Twain replied, "No he is not dead, although he is living in Arizona." I did not publish anything in 2019 but have a couple of pieces scheduled to appear in 2020. Who knows, however, what effect the corona virus will have on academic publishing and on many other aspects of life that matter far more than that. I have just finished re-reading Camus' *THE PLAGUE*. It is not hard to guess why I had done that, of course, but I had forgotten what a fine novel it is and, although set in a different place in a different time, how much of our current situation he captures in rich moral and psychological complexity.

NATHAN NOBIS (PHD 2005)

Some of the most interesting things I did last year include (with a co-author) publishing a short, introductory, open-access book on abortion, called *Thinking Critically About Abortion*, available at www.AbortionArguments.com. This book was the result of one essay leading to another and then the thought that making this more readily available would do some good, and it does seem like it's done some good, and it has also led to some well-received follow-up writings also. Beyond that and various other projects, I continue to serve as Lead Editor of *1000-Word Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology* at www.1000WordPhilosophy.com. Excellent submissions are always wanted! Finally, last summer I also had a well-received article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, entitled "[Why Writing Better Will Make You a Better Person](#)."

JAMES LEWIS VAN CLEVE (PHD 1974)

I feel fortunate to be both healthy and more or less fully employed in the face of the Covid crisis. Apart from worrying about the future of our democracy, my laments are minor—I can't always tell whether my students are present in more than name on Zoom, and the only tennis court in town that is not locked up has no net (which you'll find, if you try it or think about it, makes for more exercise).

The piece of work I'm proudest of these last few years is "Brute Necessity," available on my USC website. The historical figure I'm paying most attention to is Hume; having written books on philosophers who replied to Hume (Reid and Kant), I'm going back to the *provocateur*.

In the fall of 2018 I was a visiting professor at MIT, with a return engagement set for the spring of 2021—a chance to be near my daughter, daughter-in-law, and grandson in Cambridge.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

RANDALL CURREN

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WILLIAM FITZPATRICK

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JENS KIPPER

BOOK

2020. *Künstliche Intelligenz – Fluch oder Segen? (Artificial Intelligence – Curse or Blessing?)*, Metzler.

JOURNAL ARTICLE

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LORETTA KOPELMAN (PHD 1966)

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JAMES HUNTER LESHER (PHD 1967)

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‘MacNeice the Heraclitean’ (forthcoming in *Philosophy and Literature*).

ERIC MACK (PHD 1973)

I was overly optimistic last year when I anticipated the publication of my *The Essential John Locke* in 2019. But it did come out in March of 2020 (Vancouver, Fraser Institute). I do know that a nice podcast on “Why Not Socialism?” recorded for the Institute for Liberal Studies is out: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5NBDfh34PA&feature=youtu.be>

I now optimistically predict that “Rights, Morality, and Egoism in Individualist Anarchism” in *Routledge Handbook on Anarchism* and “Individualism and Rights: Libertarianism in Academia” in *Dissenting Philosophers* (Palgrave MacMillan) will be out during 2020.

Personal website:
<https://sites.google.com/site/professorericmack/>

My latest book, *Libertarianism*, is now available from Polity:
<http://politybooks.com/bookdetail/?isbn=9781509519293>

NATHAN NOBIS (PHD 2005)

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“Making Ethics Happen: Addressing Injustice in Health Inequalities,” (with Stephen Sodeke) *American Journal of Bioethics*, March, 2020; 20(4):100-101.

MARK SAGOFF (PHD 1970)

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ROSA TERLAZZO

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JAMES LEWIS VAN CLEVE (PHD 1974)

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