Letter from the Chair
Robert Pasnau

The following remarks were adapted from the welcoming address given at the May 2006 Commencement ceremony.

I believe that Philosophy is the most dangerous of disciplines. This might not strike you as something that one ought to take pride in, or even advertise – and indeed perhaps it is not, these things being something of a matter of taste. But I think it worthwhile at any rate to say something to both students and their families about the character of philosophical study, and at the end it will be up to you whether or not this is something you feel good about.

Philosophy is a dangerous discipline in several different respects. First, it has been, historically, dangerous to be a philosopher, inasmuch as philosophers have historically suffered for their views. Socrates, the very first philosopher, was put to death by his fellow Athenians, at the end of a public trial at which he was accorded all of our modern due process rights but made the timeless error of serving as his own attorney. Several generations later, Aristotle – the greatest of all philosophers – felt forced to flee Athens for the remote island of Euboea, remarking that “he did not want the Athenians to commit a second crime against philosophy.” Boethius was put to death in 524 CE. Abelard, in the twelfth century, was hounded his entire career by religious authorities (not to mention by the father of the student he seduced). Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600. Descartes left France for the tolerant Netherlands, where he wrote all his most important work – his motto was *Bene vixit qui bene latuit* (He has lived well who has lived well hid). David Hume, in his great *Treatise of Human Nature*, took as his epigraph a saying of Tacitus (I will spare you the Latin this time): “What rare happy times, when one may think what one wants, and say what one thinks.” Hume was writing in the 18th century, and by this time it was not so dangerous to be a philosopher. Happily, things have gotten better still, and indeed for those of us who are fortunate enough to work at an American university, we are protected not just by the strongest guarantees of free speech of any country in the world, but also by a tenure system that truly does allow professors both to think what they want and to say what they think.

But if it is not quite so dangerous anymore to be a philosopher, still philosophy can be dangerous to others. Some of you may have seen or heard of a recent book listing the 100 most dangerous professors in the United States. It is a striking feature of that book that all 100 are liberals – though surely we can all agree that there must be some very dangerous conservative professors out there as well. One of the professors on that list of 100 is in this room, and we are proud to have her as a member of our department. But it should also be said that if there were other lists of 100, written from other ideological perspectives, we would very likely have other faculty members on those lists too. This is to say that philosophy is an equal-opportunity offender: we offend religious institutions, but we are equally likely to offend science. Philosophy played a central role in Marxism, but it also played a key part in the Reagan revolution.

(continued on page 5)
Interview with Claudia Mills

Over the summer, Bob Pasnau interviewed Claudia Mills about her teaching and research, and her other career as a children’s author.

Bob: What’s the most fun class you’ve taught here?
Claudia: I just taught my very most fun class last semester. It was a combined grad/undergrad class on Rousseau, who is now my most favorite philosopher in the whole world.
Bob: I don’t think of you as doing history of philosophy.
Claudia: Well, I think I was attracted to Rousseau as much because of the person as because of the philosophy. So we spent a lot of time in the class situating Rousseau’s philosophy in the context of his life. We read his Confessions, which is one of the most amazing books ever written and one of the stunning masterpieces of autobiography. That’s how we introduced the course; we started out with the early years of Rousseau, and then we finished the course with the end of Rousseau’s life, the closing chapters of the Confessions and his Reveries of the Solitary Walker. The course also allowed me to indulge my love of literature, because Rousseau was the author of the bestselling novel of the eighteenth century, Julie, or the New Heloise. We spent several weeks reading it; it’s an enormous epistolary novel. We also listened to Rousseau’s opera The Village Soothsayer, for which he wrote both the libretto and the score. It was the toast of Paris in the 1750s.
Bob: I’ve never read the Confessions. Is there a lot of philosophy in it or is it just an autobiography?
Claudia: It certainly has a lot of psychology in it. People see it as an anticipation of Freud’s awareness of the importance of childhood sexuality: Rousseau tells you everything about his early childhood sexual experiences; he spends a large part of his book on his childhood, and it was unusual to see somebody take childhood that seriously. The book also connects with Emile, Rousseau’s treatise on education, because we can see how Rousseau’s own experiences as a child helped shape his philosophy of how children learn. But we mainly read it just to encounter the man. Rousseau begins the book by saying he’s going to show you for the first time in history a man as he actually was — good, bad, everything — he’s going to withhold nothing, and as you read it, he invites you then to share your own confession, saying that if you do it honestly, you will not be able to say that you were better than Rousseau. But the thing is that everyone is better than Rousseau! Rousseau did all kinds of wicked things: he had five children and gave them all away to a foundling asylum, and much more.
Bob: Does it really seem as if he’s being honest? That he’s told you everything?
Claudia: Yes, though colored by his own interpretations, of course. Toward the end of his life he’s descending into paranoia, constantly claiming that he’s the most unfortunate man who ever lived and that no one has ever been more mistreated... but he was indeed persecuted for his writings, and exiled, and betrayed by many of his friends such as Diderot.
Bob: There seems to be a lot in this class that is connected to children and childhood and family and stuff that you’re interested in. You’ve been working on a series of papers on these topics, haven’t you?
Claudia: Yes, over the last few years I’ve gotten more and more interested in ethical issues involving the family. That’s going to be the grad class that I do in the fall. I have a series of papers on everything from what values we want to raise our children with — do we want to encourage our children to have a particular set of values that we determine for them or provide them with as open a future as possible? — and I have a paper on the rise of Ritalin and its increasing use in young people, and on the balance between work and family, and “workplace wars” between working parents and other parents. I just finished an essay examining some possibly problematic reasons for having children. I look at some cases where people have been producing children basically as sources of spare parts for other children: they had a child who needed an organ transplant and produced a child just to have a donor for the sibling. All kinds of issues — it’s a very fruitful and timely topic.
Bob: You mentioned Ritalin. I was just reading in The New York Times about summer camps where the kids line up for breakfast, but first they line up for their pills. They get their pills and then their breakfast cereal.

Claudia: I think that is the main job of school nurses in America now, to hand out the meds throughout the day.

Bob: Do you disapprove of this?

Claudia: I see it as an object with all the other enhancement activities that we’re engaging in with children and I don’t find it any more inherently problematic than other enhancement activities. I think we’re going too far in the direction of enhancement, but for me, if you’re doing lessons on two different instruments, and three different sports, and Odyssey of the Mind, and Destination Imagination, you might as well give your kids some medication. So it’s more the goals I find problematic than the means.

Bob: So you are telling me that music lessons are of a kind with taking drugs?

Claudia: Depending on the spirit with which it’s pursued, I think yes. I think if it’s all pursued for the enjoyment and enrichment of the child then it seems different than if it’s pursued as a project of producing a maximally successful child who will impress everybody on every possible dimension. I think there is a certain frantic quality to parenting these days which is part of what I criticize throughout the series of essays. But I love medication.

Bob: You love medication?!

Claudia: Yes! I have another essay on the ethics of passing, of representing yourself as something that you aren’t, and trying to turn yourself into something that you aren’t, and that’s one of the questions that I look at there. Certainly I think it is morally problematic when people want to alter themselves to conform to expectations that nobody should have, such as being white or male or heterosexual. So those expectations are problematic, but just to alter yourself for other reasons seems more like a form of self-creation. Why should you have to be whatever you’re stuck with through the natural lottery? Why not alter yourself in whatever way that you choose? That seems more authentic in a way, because you’re actually choosing your identity instead of just sticking with what was handed out.

Bob: You mentioned imposing values on your children versus giving them more room to be what they want to be. Do you have a view on that?

Claudia: Joel Feinberg has this famous essay called “The Child’s Right to an Open Future” and what I argue in response to Feinberg is that the open future is something that in a way is an incoherent objective. Whatever we do as parents is going to shape our children in some way or another. So there is no way we’re going to provide some ideal vacuum in which they are going to develop themselves. If parents refuse to shape values, peers and teachers and media and video games step in. I use an example in the paper: I have a friend who wanted his child to be raised with a completely open choice in religion, so they were taking the child one week to a Quaker meeting, and the next week to a Buddhist temple, and the

(Continued)

Michael Huemer’s new book, Ethical Intuitionism, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in November 2005. During his 2005-2006 sabbatical, he wrote twelve papers, on such subjects as the coherence theory of justification, foundationalism, the value of simple theories, Moore’s paradox, deontological ethics, and Peter Singer’s ethics and metaethics.

Alison Jaggar. Since last summer, I’ve published several articles including the following. (1) “Western Feminism and Global Responsibility,” (2) “What is Terrorism, Why Is It Wrong and Could it Ever be Morally Permissible?” (3) “Saving Amina: Global Justice for Women and Inter-cultural Dialogue;” (4) “Whose Politics! Who’s Correct?” Last January, I gave the keynote address at the Conference on Feminist Ethics and Social Theory (FEAST), in Florida, and in April I gave the Hurst Lecture at American University. Also in April, I gave a talk on academic freedom at the Central Division meetings of the American Philosophical Association. I enjoyed teaching a course on democratic theory last fall and am looking forward to teaching a course on race.

(An Interview with Claudia Mills, continued from page 3) next to a synagogue, and the next week to a Catholic mass, and reading all sorts of books in the library about the different creeds that underlie all these religious experiences. But it seems to me that rather than giving this child an open future they were almost guaranteeing that this child would grow up with no religious commitment at all. Even if you gave a whole month to Catholicism rather than just a week, you’re not going to get a really deep understanding of what it is to live as a Catholic. So you haven’t really provided the child with any more of an open future than if you had chosen to raise your child as a committed Catholic.

Bob: Yeah, it seems insane to think that you could wander into some church or synagogue and get a good sense of what a religion is about on one particular day.

Claudia: He did supplement this with library books ...but also for me, as one of the last people in America maybe or at least in the philosophy department who does practice a religion, it seems as if for a lot of people religion is as much about community as about creed. It’s less about subscribing to some particular dogma or doctrine as living in a certain kind of faith community. And that’s something you can experience only over time.

Bob: But don’t you think that in general Americans very much do believe in creed? For the vast majority of Americans, isn’t it not just about community, but about the doctrines?

Claudia: I’d say most...maybe this is untrue, but I think most people would be quite surprised to find out what the creeds of their church are in any detail. I think they know very little about the historic struggles to hit on just the right wording that became the text of their creed. I think a lot of people who recite creeds, if they do recite them in church which I see less and less in America today, recite them just in a rote way, thinking very little about what the words actually mean. I think, for example, regarding life after death, many Christians believe that the dead person is a disembodied spirit that looks down from heaven: you die at 10:00 in the morning and at 11:00 your disembodied spirit is somewhere in heaven looking down on earth. I don’t think many Christians think seriously about what the resurrection of the body means.

Bob: I think that’s right. But what about something as basic as Jesus’ being divine? That seems like one that Christians are really committed to.

Claudia: Some yes and some no. There is such a spectrum within any faith, but certainly I know many Christian pastors who don’t believe that. Or who believe that the most important part of prayer is social activism, and that heaven is realizing peace and social justice here on earth; Jesus is important because he told us to love one another rather than because he has any kind of divine connections.

Bob: I have to ask you about your other career, as a children’s book author. How many books have you written?

Claudia: I’m up to 39. For a while I forgot the exact number, but now I actually write down each one with its number when it comes out so I don’t forget. I think I used to be able to name them all in order, but now I’d have to look back at my CV. I always forget one or two.

Bob: They’re mostly for pre-teens right?

Claudia: The oldest I’ve done is for eighth grade. I have easy readers for first and second graders, and chapter books for third and fourth graders, and then novels that I would expect to be read more by fifth and sixth graders, even if they have a seventh or eighth grade protagonist.

Bob: Do you think of these as separate careers, or is there an interaction?

Claudia: There is a lot of interaction between them. I really became interested in philosophy because as a child reader I was always drawn to the big ideas in books. I always thought that the theme of the book was the most important thing, not so much the moral but the message, the idea that there was some life-transforming truth that the character would learn in some way. So what really drew me into philosophy was literature. And as a reader I continue to value that in books, and as an author I always think the most important part of my story, particularly for the older kids, is some sort of philosophical breakthrough that the character has. Some of the books have been quite overtly philosophical.
The Philosophy Department will be beginning a series of public lectures this fall and spring, aimed at the general public and to be held three times a semester on weekday evenings in Boulder. If you still live in the Boulder area, we would be delighted to see you there. Keep an eye on The Daily Camera and the department web site for further details.

The series is the result of a generous gift from CU alumnus Greg Collins.

Tooley Named Distinguished Professor

Michael Tooley has been named College Professor of Distinction. This is the first year the title has been awarded, and Professor Tooley was one of only four faculty members from throughout the College of Arts and Sciences to receive the honor, out of dozens who were nominated. It is the highest honorary title available in the College.

“These four professors are highly accomplished scholars with many books, articles and awards among them,” said Todd Gleeson, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “They are also superb teachers and mentors to young scholars pursuing their own studies, and the college is pleased to publicly honor them.”

(Letter from the Chair, continued from page 1)

revolution, but they have also made the case for Catholicism’s rejection of birth control.

And this brings to my final point, and back to the notion that it is still in a way dangerous to be a philosopher. If one majors in a science, one knows more or less what one is getting into. In these fields, at least at the undergraduate level, there are right answers and wrong answers, and success in the discipline is a matter of coming up with the right answers – that is, mastering a body of facts and methods. In the humanities, in contrast, the governing sentiment seems to be that there are no right and wrong answers, and that what matters is one’s personal, creative reactions to art and literature. Philosophy stands curiously in between. On one hand, unlike in the other humanities, philosophers tend to be confident that there are indeed right and wrong answers to philosophical questions. (I think that all my colleagues would endorse this view.) On the other hand, quite unlike in the sciences, there is absolutely no consensus in philosophy over what those answers are, even at the most elementary level – indeed, especially at the most elementary level. This makes the study of philosophy a wildly unpredictable affair. One simply does not know, at the start of one’s studies, where one will come out. You cannot look the result up in the back of the book. One can start out religious and end up an atheist, or one can start out an atheist and end up religious. One can begin as a tax-and-spend liberal and end up a libertarian, or vice versa. Not only are all these outcomes entirely possible, but they happen all the time. This is dangerous, because one can end up at a place where one didn’t want to go (to say nothing of where your parents might have liked you to go). And what makes matters worse is that students of philosophy often end up not just holding a view, but persuaded that their view is right and that others are wrong, the reason being that they have arguments for their view. In this way, philosophy can change your life, and I am sure that many of the students (and parents) sitting here know exactly what I mean. Moreover, the good news – or maybe the bad news, depending on your taste – is that an education in philosophy isn’t over when you leave the university. You will, I promise you, continue to think like a philosopher for the rest of your life, which can be both a wonderful and a dangerous thing.
Faculty Moves

Two years ago, the Department had nine open lines. After five hires in 2004-2005 year, we made three more hires this past year.

Graeme Forbes comes to Boulder from Tulane University, where he taught for many years and held an endowed chair. He was born in Scotland, and received his doctorate from Oxford. Graeme works on metaphysics, philosophy of language, and logic, and is a leading figure in all of these areas. His latest book, just published by Oxford, concerns the analysis of propositional attitudes. His wife, Marilyn Brown, has also been hired by CU, as a professor of art history.

Bradley Monton works on the philosophy of physics and decision theory. He received his PhD from Princeton University, and taught at the University of Kentucky for six years before coming to Boulder. In addition to his ongoing work on technical topics connected to physics and decision theory, he is working on a book on the philosophy of religion, in which he attempts to debunk the leading arguments for the existence of God. His interests include rock climbing, kayaking, and skiing.

Michael Zimmerman has been appointed Eaton Professor of Humanities, and will direct the Center for Humanities and Arts. He also comes from Tulane University, where he spent his entire academic career. (His wife, too, has been hired as a professor at CU, in the English Department.) Michael is a leading authority on Heidegger, as well as environmental ethics. He is a renowned teacher at Tulane, particularly for his class on Buddhism, which includes a "lab" section devoted to meditation.

Julie Adeshchenko presented her paper, "Innocence and Guilt within the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict," at the Center for Values and Social Policy.

Dan Demetriou presented a paper (co-authored with Graham Oddie), "A Problem with Moral Fictionalism" at the annual Australasian Philosophy Conference.

Barrett Emerick presented a paper, "Russell, Tables, and the Promise of Fallibilism," at CUNY’s graduate conference.


Peter Higgins published "Sexual Disorientation: Moral Implications of Gender Norms," in Feminists Contests Politics and Philosophy and "What is Poverty?" (co-authored with Audra King and April Shaw) in Global Ethics: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory.

Heri-Young Kang will be taking a tenure-track position this fall at the University of Nevada at Reno. She presented "Rethinking the ‘Circumstances of Global Justice’ in Non-Ideal Conditions" at the Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association.

Derek Kern presented a paper, "Must Primary Qualities be Inseparable for Locke?" at the Southwestern Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy.

Audra King’s paper, "What is Poverty?" co-authored with Peter Higgins and April Shaw, is forthcoming in Global Ethics: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory.

Mary Križan will present her paper, "Corpses, Seeds, and Statues" at the American Philological Association.

P. J. Lonelino has presented several conference papers this year, including "Whose Nature? Bioprospecting in Third World Countries;" Transcending Woman as Object through Fashion?;" "Environmental Justice: A Proposal for Addressing Diversity in Bioprospecting."

Jay Lynch presented his paper, "Deliberative Democracy after Capitalism," at the graduate student conference at Loyola University, Chicago.

Donna Reeves presented a comment on "A Menchanic Version of Limited Democracy."

Matt Roberts defended his dissertation "A Historical Survey and Conceptual Account of States of Affairs" in July. He will be a visiting professor at Wheaton College this year.

Brian Robinson defended his MA thesis "Not Near Enough: Kim, Physicalism, and Property Dualism," directed by Robert Hanna. He will beginning PhD studies at CUNY and will be an adjunct instructor this fall at Brooklyn College.

April Shaw’s paper, "What is Poverty?" co-authored with Peter Higgins and Audra King, has been presented at: the Pacific Division of the Society for Women in Philosophy, the Biennial Meeting of the Association for Feminist Ethics and Social Theory, and the Conference for Addressing Diversity in Bioprospecting.

Graduate Student Notes

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Dan Demetriou presented a paper (co-authored with Graham Oddie), "A Problem with Moral Fictionalism" at the annual Australasian Philosophy Conference.

Barrett Emerick presented a paper, “Russell, Tables, and the Promise of Fallibilism,” at CUNY’s graduate conference.

Jason Hanna presented a paper, “Science, Wonder, and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature,” at CU’s Center for the Humanities and Arts Colloquium.

Peter Higgins published “Sexual Disorientation: Moral Implications of Gender Norms,” in Feminists Contests Politics and Philosophy and “What is Poverty?” (co-authored with Audra King and April Shaw) in Global Ethics: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory.

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Our Spring 2006 graduation ceremony, held on May 12th, honored 43 undergraduates and 16 graduate students, including some students who will complete their degrees in August. The formal ceremony, which was held following the University-wide ceremony, was presided over by Department Chair, Robert Pasnau (see page one for the text of his remarks). The graduation address was delivered by Diane Mayer, an instructor with the CU Philosophy Department since 1981. Opening music on guitar and violin was provided by Kevin Garry and Margarita Sallee. The Department acknowledged eight undergraduates who graduated with honors and five who graduated with distinction for their outstanding work. Our graduate students, including three doctorates of philosophy and thirteen masters-of-arts graduates, were presented with their diplomas by their dissertation chairs, who provided information on each student’s research. Awards were presented for the winners of departmental prizes. Corwin Aragon and Scott Wisor were awarded the Graduate Stahl Prize for Community Service, and Derek Koloditch was awarded the Undergraduate Stahl Prize for Community Service. John Ivy was awarded the Jentzsch Prize for the outstanding graduate student paper. John Spencer was awarded the Undergraduate Essay Prize. The formal ceremony was followed with a reception in the University Memorial Center.

Department of Philosophy 2006 Graduates

**Doctor of Philosophy**

Hye-Ryoung Kang  
Heidi Petersen  
Matthew Roberts  

**Master of Arts**

Julie Adeschchenko  
Brandon Bogardus  
Kyle Fruh  
Scott Hagaman  
Jason Hanna  
John David Ivy  
Stephen Kifer  
Mary Krizan  
Pamela Lomelino  
Kristin Mickelson  
Brian Robinson  
Christina Schulz  
Joanna Weidler-Lewis

**Bachelor of Arts**

Jeffrey Aslan  
John Avery  
Omid Bachari  
David Barton, *cum laude* (in Geology)  
Ted Bendixon  
Douglas Bernard  
Robin Brazell  
Jonathan Byerley  
Annie Capell  
Joshua Carrafa  
Erling Christiansen  
Christina Clawley, with distinction, *summa cum laude*  
Katherine Crowell  
Colin Doolittle  
Jennie Dougherty  
Adam Feldman  
Amy Freirich  
Joseph Garcia  
Sonya Gustafson  
Tessa Hill  
Errol Hughes, *summa cum laude*  
Vera Hyatt, *cum laude*  
Mike Jackson, *magna cum laude*  
Steven James, *summa cum laude*  
Partha Kar  
Jamie Kearns, with distinction  
Alexia Kirmaier  

**Bachelor of Arts**

Drew Knowles  
Derek Koloditch  
Michael Lion  
Elisabet Lund-Bardi  
Justin Marcellus  
Shane McCallan  
Jessica McDonald, *cum laude*  
Molly McLellan, *cum laude*  
David Meens, *with distinction, summa cum laude*  
Kara Noel  
Mathew Pearson  
Jacob Pellouchoud  
Jonathan Power  
Evan Pushchak, *with distinction*  
Heidi Roberts  
Peter Routhier, *summa cum laude*  
Alex Ruge  
Matthew Schlickenmaier, *magna cum laude*  
Vandy Sears  
Jeffrey Shepherd  
Colleen Smith, *with distinction, magna cum laude*  
Robert Teklits  
Susan Tepper, *summa cum laude*  
Rachel Urish  
Megan Vida  
Benjamin Weible
Support the Philosophy Department

Philosophy is one of the most vibrant and engaged departments in the University. Help us continue with these efforts by making a tax-deductible donation. The items mentioned here are just a few of the many possibilities. For more information contact the department chair, David Boonin, at 303-492-6964, or boonind@stripe.colorado.edu.

University of Colorado at Boulder
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Philosophy

$200 – funding for student research
$500 – undergraduate scholarship
$1,000 – sponsor the annual faculty teaching award
$3,000 – summer funding for a graduate student
$15,000 – graduate student fellowship
$50,000 – endow an annual public lecture
$400,000 – endow the Center for Values & Social Policy
$1,000,000 – endow a distinguished professorship
$2,000,000 – endow a chair of philosophy
$10,000,000 – naming rights for the Department

Enclosed is my gift of:
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