



# Philosophy

Fall 2007

Department Newsletter

University of Colorado at Boulder



## Letter from the Chair

David Boonin

*The following remarks were adapted from the welcoming address given at the May 2007 Commencement ceremony.*

Philosophers commonly distinguish between instrumental goods – things that are good as a means to some further end – and intrinsic goods – things that are good in and of themselves. So if the study of philosophy is itself a good thing, there ought to be some kind of argument to show that it is good in one or the other of these two senses.

The claim that a philosophy degree is good in the instrumental sense is a very common one – or, at least, it is very common among those whose job it is to try to get people to sign up for philosophy classes. A number of years ago, for example, the American Philosophical Association sent around a flyer to be posted in philosophy departments that highlighted the following piece of information: philosophy majors do better on the Law School Admissions Test than do majors in any other subject. A philosophy degree, on this account, is good because it is good as a means to scoring well on standardized tests.

I have to admit that this argument has never struck me as particularly convincing. Suppose, after all, that you came across a flyer that announced: “The students on our basketball team are taller than the students on any of our other teams. So if you want to be taller than other students, come join our basketball team.” In the case of the fact that basketball players are taller than other athletes, the flaw in the reasoning would be perfectly obvious: basketball attracts tall people; it doesn’t make people tall. But the structure of the argument in this case is just the same in the case of the argument from the fact that philosophy majors do better than other majors on standardized tests. It could be that studying philosophy causes you



*David Boonin, Chair*

to do well on standardized tests. But it could just as well be that the sorts of people who would choose to study philosophy in the first place are precisely the sorts of people who will do well on standardized tests in any event. If that’s the case, then the instrumentally good thing to do would really be this: make yourself the sort of person who would choose to study philosophy (since being that sort of person will be enough to get you the good test scores), but then go ahead and study something else that’s easier and more fun instead (joke at the expense of another department tactfully deleted here). So I’m skeptical about arguments for the claim that a philosophy degree is instrumentally good.

What about the claim that studying philosophy is intrinsically good? This amounts to the claim that one should study philosophy for its own sake, even if doing so produces no further rewards. This position is part of a long and distinguished tradition. Socrates is famous for having claimed that the unexamined life is not worth living. Aristotle argued that happiness is the end for the sake of which all other choices are made, and that the best account of

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## Faculty Activities

2006-07

**David Barnett** published his view of indicative conditionals in the journal *Mind*. He presented his view of subjunctive conditionals at the University of Texas. He contributed an argument that conscious beings are not composed of other things to a forthcoming collection of anti-materialism papers to be published by Oxford. And, according to his mother, he soundly defeated his colleague and formidable opponent, Robert “Mice on Fire Do Not Suffer” Hanna, in a public debate over what we owe to animals.

**David Boonin** served his first year as Chair of the Department, focusing largely on the job searches that led to three new faculty hires. In addition, he

happiness was one on which happiness involves the life of philosophical contemplation. Mill, in a passage that every student of philosophy has surely encountered at one point or another, maintained that it would be better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. All of these views, in one way or another, come down to the claim that the careful study of philosophy makes a human life a better life – not better at producing some further good, but just better, just good.

While one can produce a long list of distinguished thinkers who have held this view, however, I find that there is something rather suspicious about the list: they are all philosophers. I have never seen an economist or an engineer, a physicist or a chemist, an anthropologist or a sociologist, argue that the best human life is one that involves dispassionately contemplating the relations between the various axioms in different systems of modal logic. And I am inclined to think that if you surveyed pilots or soldiers, painters or dancers, physicians or accountants, you would get a very different picture of the kind of life that is most worth living. Few of them, I suspect, would take you up on the offer to spend their lives meditating on abstract, eternal, *a priori* truths. Even fewer, I think, would go along with such a plan once you explained that doing this difficult work was supposed to be “its own reward.” So while it would be nice to believe that a philosophy degree is intrinsically good,

it’s not clear to me that we would be justified in believing it.

So where does this leave us? And, more importantly, where does it leave our poor, innocent students? I’m inclined to think that the answer lies in a third, if less frequently noted, sense in which we use the term ‘good’. This is the sense in which something can be a good instance of the kind of thing that it is. The official distance of a marathon race, for example, is 26 miles and 385 yards. It may be that there is nothing intrinsically good about running this precise distance, and no particular instrumental good to be achieved by aiming at just this length rather than at some other. Still, given that there are marathon runners, it seems reasonable to say that some people are good marathon runners and other people are not, and that if you are going to be a marathon runner you should aim to be a good one rather than a bad one.

This third sense of good may be able to help to answer the question I am concerned with here. When our students decided to major in philosophy, after all, they were not at that time deciding to *become* philosophers. In the most important sense, they had already become philosophers long before they came to CU, when they started to become the kind of people who actually enjoy thinking about the bizarre sorts of questions we discuss in the classes that we teach. Their question, then, was not “Should I be a philosopher?” but rather “Given that I already am a philosopher, should I be a good philosopher or a bad philosopher?”

By working carefully to train them to think more clearly, to argue more rigorously, to be open to positions that might at first seem unworthy of consideration (reference to the work of a few of my colleagues prudently omitted here), and to follow the argument wherever it might go, my colleagues and I have not turned our students into philosophers. But we have done our best to help them to become *good* philosophers, and they have done their best to learn both from our insights and from our mistakes. It is admirable when people aspire to be good versions of the sorts of people that they are. This, in the end, is why I think that what our students have done during their time with us is good, and why their achievement is deserving of our respect and our celebration. □

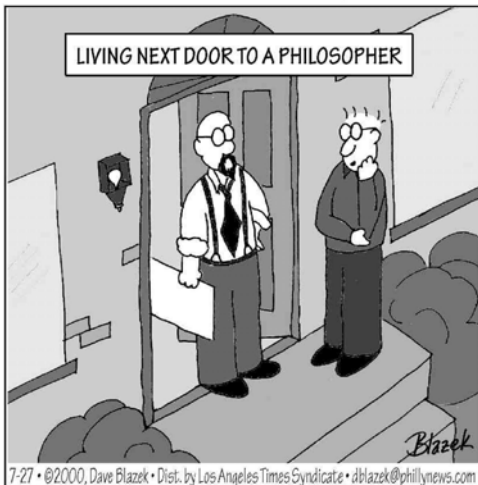
completed his book on punishment, to be published by Cambridge University Press, and began to devote his research energies to a new project on issues in applied ethics involving race.

**Sheralee Brindell** accomplished two important goals in the past year. First, she got CU Boulder included as one of the Ethics Bowl regions in the Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl system. Our inaugural competition will be hosted on the Boulder campus on November 10, 2007. Second, she played in the World Series of Poker Ladies Championship, placing 38<sup>th</sup> of 1286 entrants (a new record!) and bringing home a cool stack of hundred dollar bills. She promises to put several of them to good uses.

**Carol Cleland** finished an essay on historical natural science for Blackwell’s *Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography*. Recent papers include “Epistemological Issues in the Study of Microbial Life” and “Does ‘Life’ Have a Definition?” (with Christopher Chyba). She continues work on her book, *The Quest for a Universal Theory of Life: Searching for Life as We Don’t Know It*, under contract with Cambridge. She gave a paper and participated in a panel on “Making Microbes Visible to Philosophy of Biology.” She also attended three workshops: “Philosophical and Social Dimensions of Microbiology,” at which she delivered a paper; “Tree or Forest? Searching for Alternative Life on Earth,” at which she delivered a paper; and “The Future of Intelligence in the Cosmos,” at which she tormented other speakers.

**John Fisher**, after more than 30 years of philosophy, can finally believe six impossible things before breakfast. With this ability, he has been defending impossible positions. Last year he presented a paper arguing that some environmental artworks perform nature, and this year he will give a paper arguing that all

## Loose Parts by Dave Blazek



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 "... so you're saying, not only how do I know the garbage you threw over my fence is real, but maybe the fence isn't even real, and ... hey, this is the same trick as last time!"

# Interview with Wes Morrison

*Prize-winning teacher Wes Morrison specializes in philosophy of religion. Over the summer, he spoke with David Boonin about his life and work.*

**David:** I thought I would start at the beginning. What exactly is philosophy of religion?

**Wes:** Philosophers of religion try to think clearly and critically about the basic claims of various religious systems of belief. In the context of Anglophone philosophy, we concentrate mainly on fairly standard beliefs about God and the afterlife. Are any of these beliefs reasonable? Can a plausible case be made for or against them?

**David:** When people talk about philosophy of religion these days, it often sounds as if what they are really talking about is the philosophy of Christianity in particular. Do you or other people working in the area deal much with problems that arise from doctrines that are more distinctive of Judaism or Islam or other religious traditions?

**Wes:** I myself have a special interest in the Book of Job, and my paper on Job is my personal favorite among the things I've written. I made use of several Jewish sources when I wrote that paper, and I explicitly rejected various Christian interpretations. The concluding paragraph is actually built around a quotation from a Hassidic Rabbi. "A man should carry two stones in his pocket," he said. "On one should be inscribed, 'I am but dust and ashes.' On the other, 'For my sake was the world created.'" That's the paradox of the Book of Job in a nutshell. But you're certainly right that most people working in the philosophy of religion today are coming at it from the side of Christianity. A few try to make sense of explicitly Christian doctrines – Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, and so on. Even so, probably ninety percent of what's done in philosophy of religion concerns beliefs shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Eastern religious ideas get rather less attention, but a lot of us do worry about the problems posed by religious diversity – and about some of the more striking differences between Eastern and



Western values.

**David:** And how did you first become interested in the philosophy of religion?

**Wes:** My dad was a preacher and that was one factor. I went through an intense adolescent rebellion against almost everything that I had been taught.

**David:** Did this rebellion have a philosophical aspect?

**Wes:** I think so. I began asking the philosophical questions in my senior year in high school: looking into traditional arguments for the existence of God, that sort of thing.

**David:** What kind of high school was it?

**Wes:** It was a big public high school in Seattle.

**David:** So while you say you had a religious upbringing, your education was a secular one?

**Wes:** Well, actually my elementary school was a religious school, founded by my father, who was its Principal. It was called the Light and Life Christian Day School. "The light of the world is Jesus." That was one of the first things I learned in school. There was even a song with that title, written partly by my mother, and we sang it every day.

**David:** What was it like going to school where your father was the Principal?

**Wes:** Well, it meant that whenever the teacher sent me to the Principal's office, I was sure to get a whipping. (Laughing) We called ourselves "Free Methodists," but actually we were not at all "free-wheeling." It was a fairly rigid and dogmatic sect.

**David:** Were most of your friends growing up also in this tradition?

**Wes:** At the beginning, yes. Later, when my

wild animals are beautiful, even the ugly ones. He also gave a paper on a Buddhist approach to nature appreciation and one sketching a general model for factoring the moral value of artworks into an assessment of their artistic value (a theory he hopes is possible). He continues to collaborate on a book on nature aesthetics with CU Ph.D. Ned Hettinger. Finally, he is working on songs—not writing or singing, but thinking about what they are.

**Graeme Forbes** joined the department in the fall of 2006, about the same time his latest book, *Attitude Problems*, was published by Oxford University Press. Since arriving here, he has given invited presentations at a Workshop on Essentialism at the University of Nottingham, and at the Arché Conference on Vagueness at the University of St. Andrews.

**Ben Hale** had several articles accepted for publication, including "Crossing the Property Line," "Gavagai Goulash: Growing Organs for Food," "Choosing to Sleep" (with Lauren Hale), and "Technology, the Environment, and the Moral Considerability of Artifacts." He presented at several international conferences and will present at several more in the fall, including his papers, "What's Fair, What's Right? Respecting Autonomy in Population Policy" and "Applied Philosophy and the Policy Sciences." In fall 2007, he will start as an Assistant Professor in Environmental Studies. He will continue with a cross-appointment in Philosophy, serving as Director of the Center for Values through the fall and teaching for both departments.

**Robert Hanna** was a visiting fellow at Fitzwilliam College in the fall, where he lectured on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and continued to enjoy the weather for its own sake. His book, *Kant, Science, and Human Nature*, was published by Oxford Univers-

father moved and I hit the public schools, things changed and I was in for a lot of trouble.

**David:** Do you blame, or maybe I should say credit, the public schools for your rebellion?

**Wes:** It's hard to say. I think I had a philosophical mind. Some of us are just born with that, and questioning came naturally to me. But for a long time, I really did try to stay true to the faith I'd been taught. I can remember refusing to bring eleven cents to my seventh grade class to support a dance we were putting on. You see, dancing was against my religion. You can imagine how well this went down with my classmates.

**David:** I'm also trying to imagine what they could do with eleven cents. In any event, what about college?

**Wes:** I remember having a big fight with my parents about that. They wanted me to go to a small Free Methodist college in Seattle, but I had a big scholarship to Northwestern University and I was determined to take it. Eventually, my father caved in, but my clear recollection is that he made me promise not to take any philosophy classes.

**David:** Really? And how long did it take before you broke your promise?

**Wes:** Not long. I took Introduction to Philosophy the very first term. I found the whole thing absolutely fascinating, and immediately changed my mind about what I wanted to do with my life.

**David:** Was philosophy of religion in particular something that attracted you right away or was it more just philosophy in general?

**Wes:** I think it was both. I did take a philosophy of religion class when I was a sophomore. We used a fine anthology edited by Bill Alston. I was deeply interested in the things we read, and I can still remember some of the papers that I wrote for that class. Later on, I got interested in existential phenomenology, which was heavily emphasized at Northwestern back then.

**David:** And did you see a connection between those two interests?

**Wes:** Yes. I still wanted to be religious, and some of the existentialists I read seemed to provide examples of the kind of faith I aspired

to. I thought both Kierkegaard and Tillich were pretty special.

**David:** And did you have conversations with your father during this time when you were taking classes?

**Wes:** Not about philosophy. This was the beginning of a long period when I told my parents as little as possible about what I was really thinking. My mother often "witnessed" to me, and certainly my folks prayed for my salvation every day. But they were also very proud of me, imagining my accomplishments to be far greater than they actually were. My dad, who is still alive, brags about his professor son quite a bit.

**David:** As well he should. Speaking of your accomplishments, let's talk a bit about some of your research. You've published several pieces on something called the "Kalâm Cosmological Argument." Could you give a brief explanation of what that is?

**Wes:** Well, now, there's a bit of *Islamic* lore for you. That argument goes back to the work of Islamic theologians in the eighth and ninth centuries. The word "kalâm" is derived from the phrase, "kalâm Allah", which means "word of Allah", and refers, naturally, to the Qur'an. In contemporary American philosophy, however, the primary proponent of this argument is a very conservative Christian named William Lane Craig. But you asked what the argument is. Its first premise is that the universe must have had a beginning. And there are purely philosophical arguments for that premise – arguments that try to show that a beginningless series of events is impossible.

**David:** So there could be no infinite past on this view.

**Wes:** Right. Time itself has a beginning. But whatever has a beginning must have a cause, in which case it follows that time – and the universe – have a cause. Further reflection supposedly shows that this cause must be personal in nature.

**David:** I take it from your use of the word "supposedly" and maybe a little bit of a grin that won't show up on the transcript here that you are somewhat skeptical about this argument?

**Wes:** Indeed. I think that every step of the

ity Press. He finished a book with CU Ph.D. Michelle Maiese, *Embodied Minds in Action*, to be published by Oxford. In the Spring he taught the most fun Kant course ever to 25 amazingly nice and smart CU students. He published an article or two and continued work on his autobiography, *My Idea of a Good Time*. Recently he got a buzz cut ("and now looks like a fuzzy greying tennis ball" according to his daughter) and turned 50.

**Chris Heathwood** taught a big intro class for the first time, which went much more smoothly than expected, thanks to assistance by graduate students Kacey, Stephen, and Tom. His graduate class read two books and had visits from the authors of each. He had two papers accepted for publication: "Fitting Attitudes and Welfare," which argues that value can not be explained in terms of what we ought to desire, and "On What Will Be," which criticizes Westphal's views about time. A paper arguing that pleasure can be explained in terms of desire appeared in *Philosophical Studies*. Several projects for the coming year concern desire-based theories of welfare, of pleasure, and of reasons for action.

**Michael Huemer** continued to defend his thesis of Phenomenal Conservatism, according to which all justified beliefs are justified by virtue of how things appear to oneself, in "Compassionate Phenomenal Conservatism" (*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*) and "Phenomenal Conservatism and the Internalist Intuition" (*American Philosophical Quarterly*). His "Epistemic Possibility" appeared in *Synthese*, and "Is There a Right to Own a Gun?" was reprinted in *Gun Control: Opposing Viewpoints*. Presently, he is painstakingly editing this newsletter.

**Alison Jaggard** enjoyed teaching a graduate course on race, ethni-

argument can be effectively challenged.

**David:** You want to give an example?

**Wes:** Probably the most plausible *sounding* claim in the Kalâm argument is that whatever begins to be must have a cause. I've raised doubts even about that. Craig thinks this principle is intuitively obvious, and he defends it by saying things like, "Nobody in his right mind would think that a raging tiger could just pop into existence right here, right now!" But I'm inclined to say that the intuition about tigers presupposes that we are working within a familiar context governed by reasonably well known regularities. By contrast, when we are talking about the origin of the whole natural order, we lack a context for any clear intuitions about what could or couldn't be the case. At least I don't have any. I also think Craig's anti-infinitist arguments are full of holes. But those are deep waters and it's much too long a story to get into here.

**David:** And what about the claim that if the world did have a beginning, that implies a personal cause of the beginning, a personal creator?

**Wes:** To get that argument off the ground you have to presuppose all sorts of things that are philosophically very controversial. You have to agree with Craig that there are just two kinds of causes, personal causes and impersonal "sufficient reason" type causes. You rule out the latter possibility in the following way. First, you establish that the cause of the universe would have to be eternal (otherwise it would have a beginning, and we'd be off to the races). Next, you point out that if the universe had an eternal sufficient cause it would be eternal too, which we've supposedly shown it isn't. This then leaves you with the other possibility – that a personal being freely chose to create a universe with a beginning in time. I've had a few critical things to say about that part of the argument as well.

**David:** Why do think this particular argument has gotten the amount of attention that it has?

**Wes:** William Lane Craig is a very energetic and talented man who writes a tremendous amount of stuff, writes vigorously and clearly, and who crisscrosses the country debating all sorts of people, including some very important philosophers. Some years ago, for example, I

witnessed a debate between Craig and our own Michael Tooley, before an overflow audience in the main lecture hall in Duane Physics.

**David:** And who, if I may ask, won the debate?

**Wes:** Well, a transcript of that debate is online at Craig's website.

**David:** A very tactful answer!

**Wes:** I think Craig calls it "A Classic Debate on the Existence of God." You can read it and judge for yourself. But I have to admit that I borrowed a couple of points from Tooley in my own critique of Craig's anti-infinitist arguments. Not without attribution, of course!

**David** (suppressing urge to make an impudent comment about CU investigations into plagiarism): What are you working on now?

**Wes:** Right now I am working on a couple of puzzles about the relationship between God, if there is a God, and our most fundamental moral principles. One paper is tentatively called, "What if God Commanded Something Terrible?" I'm dealing with a very old objection to the claim that God's commands are the ultimate standard of moral obligation. What if God said something like this: "Starting tomorrow, I want you to sacrifice every child on its third birthday in an excruciatingly painful and prolonged procedure." Would it then be our moral obligation to obey? Well, most people's moral intuition, I hope, would be, "No way." But the divine command theory seems to imply that if God said to do it we would be morally obliged to go along. There seem to be just two general strategies for dealing with this problem. The first is to say that there is no such possible situation as the one envisaged, since God's moral nature makes it impossible for him to issue any such command. The other is to say, "Yep, if God commanded it, we would have a moral obligation to sacrifice those kids. But God hasn't commanded anything like that. So everything is okay."

**David:** And how do you respond to that second strategy?

**Wes:** It's very difficult to know how to respond when somebody just bites the bullet and is willing to endorse absurdities. But the situation here is a bit more complicated than that. Bob Adams, for instance, defines wrongness as contrariety to the commands of a *loving* God.

city and empire for the first time. She published several articles, including "Reasoning About the Capabilities: Nussbaum's Methods of Moral Justification," "Naming Terrorism as Evil," "Iris Marion Young's Conception of Political Responsibility," and "Teaching in Colorado; Not a Rocky Mountain High: Academic Freedom in a Climate of Repression." She gave several conference and campus talks, which included an exciting trip to Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Forthcoming books include *Abortion: Three Perspectives*, co-authored with Michael Tooley, Philip Devine and Celia Wolf-Devine; *Pogge and his Critics*; a co-authored book on *Ethics Across Borders*; and a projected book on *Global Gender Justice*. She is currently organizing an international conference on global gender justice to be held in Oslo.

**Dan Kaufman's** paper "Descartes on Composites, Incomplete Substances, and Kinds of Unity," will appear in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*. He is writing the chapter on identity for the *Blackwell Guide to Locke's Essay* and the entry "Descartes' Theory of Substance" for *Philosophy Compass*. He gave talks at Arizona, UC Davis, and the Pacific APA. He is working on two papers on Descartes' theory of material objects and one on Hobbes' anti-realism about parts and wholes. This spring, he will be visiting faculty at the University of Michigan. The first album by his band, The Inconsolable, received positive reviews in the *Denver Post*, *The Onion*, and *Westword*.

**Mitzi Lee** continued to work on Plato's *Theaetetus*, resulting in a chapter on that dialogue for the *Oxford Handbook on Plato*. She is now working on a follow-up to her 2005 book, a chapter on the antecedents of Greek skepticism, for the *Cambridge Companion to Ancient Scepticism*. She spent much of the past year working on

If God *were* to command the terrible thing, then God would not be loving and we would *not* have an obligation to obey. On the other hand, Adams concedes that we would not have an obligation to *disobey* a hideous divine command. I myself find even this weaker implication to be extraordinarily counterintuitive. But it's much too long a story to tell in detail. The basic issue, as I see it, is whether our most fundamental moral principles are necessary or contingent. For example, is it necessarily true that – all other things being equal – it's wrong to cause a lot of suffering? If it is, then even an Adams-type defense of the divine command theory must fail.

**David:** How do you respond if a defender of the divine command theory plays the “God works in mysterious ways” card and says, “Well, if God were to command torturing three-year-olds to death, God would only be commanding that because God in His infinite wisdom had a good reason for commanding us to do that.” Some reason that we couldn't see. Maybe it turns out that pain is actually good, or this pain will produce some greater good, or the three-year-olds really deserve it, or what have you.

**Wes:** That's very closely related to another issue I bring up in this paper. The fact is that according to the Biblical record there are some pretty ghastly divine commands. For example, in 1 *Samuel* 15, God commands King Saul to exterminate the Amalekites, killing women and children and babes in arms – and, for good measure, all the livestock. Lots of conservative believers take the line you are suggesting. It's a “hard passage” they say, but God must have had a very good reason. God's reasons are God's business, not ours. What do I say to such people – to people who are content to say that God's reasons are inscrutable? Well, I'm fond of quoting John Stuart Mill to the effect that it's meaningless to call God good if he doesn't measure up to the standards of the best human beings. How did Mill put it? Something like this, I think: “I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.” I can't say it any better than Mill.

**David:** One more question about your work:

I noticed when I was looking at your CV that your very earliest publications were on people like Heidegger, Husserl, Sartre, people who are paradigmatically continental philosophers. Your most recent work, though, is on people like Alvin Plantinga, Richard Gale, very specifically analytic philosophers. Was there a gradual transformation, or a sort of sudden break at some point, or do you not view the two traditions as so diametrically opposed?

**Wes:** I'd say that I am an analytic philosopher by temperament but not by training. I did graduate work at Northwestern at a time when continental philosophy was practically the only game in town, and that's what I specialized in. But if you look at those old papers of mine, you'll see that they were all – in one way or another – critical of the continental philosophers. My Ph.D. dissertation was on phenomenology and the problem of the external world. I argued that the problem had not been adequately dealt with by any of the big name phenomenologists. Certainly, you don't solve the problem just by saying “being-in-the-world” really fast and putting in a lot of hyphens. We were told over and over that the subject/object dichotomy had been undercut, and that you couldn't meaningfully ask any of the old questions. But I thought I could find meaningful ways to ask them.

**David:** You continue to teach a course on existentialism that covers some of these figures. Do you teach it differently from the way you would have taught it near the start of your career?

**Wes:** Probably not. I do feel that when I teach existentialism, I have to use some other part of my brain. Existentialism is all about *angst*, being “thrown” into the world, having to make hard choices, deciding the shape of one's life, and so on. It's all very dramatic and in some ways it's close to my heart. In addition to the “big books,” some of the twentieth century existentialist authors wrote plays and novels, and I incorporate some of that material in my existentialism classes. Of course, we also read bits and pieces of *Being and Time* and *Being and Nothingness*. But the main task with those books is to get clear about what they're saying – itself a non-trivial task. Once that's done, I certainly feel free to raise a few critical questions. But I wouldn't say that it's my

the Department job searches and is delighted to welcome three new colleagues in the fall, including two with a strong interest in ancient Greek philosophy, Dominic Bailey and Kathrin Koslicki.

**Claudia Mills** spent her spring sabbatical doing research on multiculturalism and liberalism and continuing her work on ethical issues involving the family. She presented her paper “Competing Claims to Children” at the annual conference of the Association of Practical and Professional Ethics in Cincinnati.

**Bradley Monton** loved his first year at CU, which included an undergraduate course on time travel and an introductory logic course where he actually got some students to love logic. He has a paper forthcoming in *Philosophy of Science* about how many dimensions space has according to quantum mechanics. He submitted a paper arguing that time travel can occur in the absence of causal loops, an idea he got from teaching the time travel class. This year, he will participate in an interdisciplinary seminar on “Faith, Reason, and Doubt” sponsored by the Center for the Humanities and the Arts. He is finishing a book arguing that physics does not provide evidence for the existence of God. In his spare time he enjoys kayaking, climbing, hiking, biking, and skiing.

**Wes Morriston's** paper “Is God Free?” appeared in *Faith and Philosophy*. Three papers on the supposed connection between God and the foundations of morality are nearing completion.

**Robert Pasnau** returns to teaching this fall after a year on sabbatical, which he spent mainly in Boulder, writing the first 600 pages of a book on the medieval origins of modern philosophy. He continued work as editor of the forthcoming *Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*. For fun, he took up kayaking.

principal emphasis.

**David:** That reminds me: I noticed on your website that you posted two Tolstoy stories that you said everyone should read: “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” and “The Death of Ivan Ilyich.” Why should everyone read these?

**Wes:** Well, let’s take “The Death of Ivan Ilyich.” It’s a frightening story about a rather successful man – a fairly distinguished jurist – who thinks he’s living well because he’s always copied the “best” people, thinking what “they” think, doing what “they” do. And then he gets

clobbered by a cancer, and begins to reflect on his life, asking himself whether he’s missed something important. It’s quite a struggle, but in his dying hour he is at last able to admit to himself that his whole life has been wrong, that he has missed out on “the real thing.” So what is the “real thing”? I won’t give you my answer, but I think it’s a question we all need to wrestle with. Probably my interest in that question is the deepest reason why I’m still pursuing philosophy of religion.

(You can – and should – find both stories at <http://spot.colorado.edu/%7Emorristo/>) □

## Renewal of the Center for Values and Social Policy

The 2006-07 academic year was a year of new beginnings for the Center for Values and Social Policy. Most visibly, the Center took on a new face, as its website and informational material underwent a radical overhaul. Several faculty and graduate students – Ben Hale, Chris Heathwood, Bob Pasnau, Tait Szabo, P.J. Lomelino, Martin Eyestone, and Martin Chamorro – helped make this happen by coordinating an extensive internal audit, reviewing all existing documents and past programs during the twenty-five year history of the Center.

The Center also played host to many successful events. As usual, Claudia Mills pulled together a phenomenal slate of speakers for the Friday Center Talks. With the support of the Collins Foundation, Diana Hsieh and Bob Pasnau created and coordinated an outstanding series of public talks for the Think! series. Alison Jaggar, Annette Dula, Ben Hale, Dayna Matthew (Associate Dean of the Law School), Scott Wisor, P.J. Lomelino, and Tait Szabo have been working to convene a conference on the Use of Prisoners for Medical Research, to be held in the spring of 2008. Funding for the conference will be provided by the Ford Foundation and the Law School. With the help of an IMPART grant, Professor Ajume Wingo from UMass–Boston was supported at the Center for a semester of research.

At the beginning of the year, the Center was awarded a \$65,000 grant by the Dean of the Graduate School and the Vice Chancellor’s Office for Research to initiate a program in ethical research conduct. This grant will be used to coordinate the efforts of faculty from across the sciences to develop an ethics curriculum for graduate students in the physical and engineering sciences at the University of Colorado. The Center also assumed an editorial home for the “Ethics in Film” online journal ([www.ethicsinfilm.com](http://www.ethicsinfilm.com)), which was initially launched by Bob Kolb (formerly of the Leeds School) and Cindy Schoepner (MA candidate in Philosophy). Ben Hale, Scott Wisor, and Martin Eyestone are working (slowly) to convert the journal over to Department servers. □

## Think! Begins Second Season

The Philosophy Department’s public lecture series, Think!, begins its second season this fall. Last year’s series was a tremendous success, with large audiences in attendance for talks on a variety of topics, as well as debates on animal rights and the nature of a just war. Topics this year include the nature of life (Carol Cleland), affirmative action (David Boonin), what is art? (Simon Sparks), and why no one needs to worry about going to hell (Wes Morriston). The series is funded thanks to a generous donation from the Collins Family Foundation. A complete list of events is available at the web page of the Department’s Center for Values and Social Policy. □



**Robert Rupert’s** paper “Realization, Completers, and Ceteris Paribus Laws in Psychology” appeared in the *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*. His paper “Ceteris Paribus Laws, Component Forces, and the Nature of Special-Science Properties” was accepted for publication in *Noûs*, and his essay “The Causal Theory of Properties and the Causal Theory of Reference, or How to Name Properties and Why It Matters” was accepted at *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. He spent a lot of time writing about extended cognition, Frege’s puzzle, and causal theories of mental content. He also won a Provost Faculty Achievement Award.

**Michael Tooley** completed the book *Knowledge of God* that he is writing with Alvin Plantinga, to be published in Blackwell’s *Great Debates in Philosophy* series. He completed his opening statement and is finishing his response to the other statements for a three-way debate volume on abortion to be published by Oxford University Press. He spent his sabbatical working on problems in the philosophy of perception, including work on a refutation of external world skepticism. He attended a conference in Slovenia, where he read a paper on Michael Huemer’s Phenomenal Conservatism.

**Michael Zimmerman** completed a book, *Integral Ecology: Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the Natural World*, with Sean Esbjorn-Hargens, to be published by Shambhala. He learned the ropes as director of the Center for Humanities and the Arts and became acquainted with the Philosophy Department, of which he is very happy to be a member. Future research topics include the implications for humanity of technological developments in AI, robotics, genetic engineering, and nanotechnology. Is the human being about to be eclipsed by something unimaginably smarter? □

## Welcome to Our Newest Faculty Members

**Dom Bailey** read Philosophy and Classics at Trinity College Cambridge, and was later Teaching Fellow in Philosophy at Corpus Christi College Oxford. He is primarily interested in Ancient metaphysics, epistemology, and logic, but also in modern perspectives on those topics. His work has appeared in *Phronesis* and *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*.



**Eric Chwang** came to CU Boulder in the spring of 2007. He received a Ph.D. from Princeton University and an M.D. from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas (not affiliated with Baylor University in Waco!). He most recently was a post-doctoral bioethics fellow at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, where he developed his current interest in ethical issues surrounding medical research. More generally he has been interested in topics in normative ethics, especially



centered around rights and the role of consent, and in applied ethics, in particular medical ethics. He also enjoys feigning expertise in philosophy of science and language.

**Kathrin Koslicki** was born in Munich, Germany, where she spent the first eighteen years of her life. She came to America when she was twenty, after driving her motorcycle (then a Honda XL500, single-cylinder Enduro) across France, Spain, and Portugal for a year, trying (and failing) to understand Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

After a year of studying philosophy and classical philology at the University of Tübingen, Germany, Koslicki completed her undergraduate work at SUNY Stony Brook in 1990, received her PhD from MIT in 1995, and spent the next decade or so teaching in New Orleans, Los Angeles, Florida, and, most recently, at Tufts University. She joined the CU Philosophy Department this fall, thrilled to have escaped Boston's gloomy, six-month-long winters.



Her interests in philosophy lie mainly in metaphysics, the philosophy of language, and Ancient Greek philosophy,

particularly Aristotle. She is currently finishing a book manuscript in metaphysics, entitled *The Structure of Objects*, to be published by Oxford University Press; this project defends a structure-based theory of parts and wholes.

Koslicki continues to make the world a more dangerous place by riding her motorcycle all over the country. In keeping with her biker image, she also plays guitar and sings. She will try to fit into the local culture by engaging in excessive amounts of physical activity, especially yoga (ashtanga), cycling (mountain and road), rock climbing, and backcountry skiing.

**Alastair Norcross** arrived in Boulder in August 2007, after serving fifteen years in Texas (with ten months off for good behavior in the 1999-2000 academic year at the University of Arizona, in Tucson), first at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, where he was the Easterwood Professor of Philosophy from 1992 to 2002, and then at Rice University from 2002 to 2007. Before that, he taught at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, NY, while finishing a Ph.D. at Syracuse University, home of the mighty Orangemen. Before that, Norcross received a B.A. in Classics from Oxford University. Before that, you don't want to know about ("trust me," he says). Despite its most strenuous efforts, Texas never managed to break Norcross. He has never used the expression "y'all" (though he has mentioned it plenty of times, usually in exasperation). He has never been to a rodeo, worn cowboy boots, or owned a gun. He has never said or thought a good thing about George W. Bush. He does, however, still miss Ann Richards and Molly Ivins.



Norcross's research, which is primarily in ethical theory, is focused on the articulation and defense of consequentialist ethical theories such as utilitarianism. He has published articles in a wide range of philosophy journals, including *The Philosophical Review*, *The Journal of Philosophy*, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Analysis*, *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Social Theory and Practice*, and *The Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*. He also works in several areas of applied ethics, such as euthanasia, abortion, and animal rights. He has edited (with Bonnie Steinbock) an anthology entitled *Killing and Letting Die*. He is currently working on a book in which he argues that consequentialist ethical theories should not be interpreted as theories of either the rightness or goodness of actions, but instead as scalar theories that evaluate actions as better or worse than possible alternatives.

□



## Award-Winning Students: Spencer, Wisor, and Wyckoff

**Eaton Award.** John (Jack) Spencer won the Department of Philosophy's 2006-07 Eaton Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Achievement, administered by the Center for the Humanities and Arts. Jack is a well-rounded student who did top-notch work in mathematics and economics, as well as in philosophy. He has been described by various faculty members as "clearly at the head of an excellent crop of graduating philosophy majors," "the best undergrad I have had at CU," and as having "a sharp, penetrating, and open mind." In addition to his Eaton Award, Jack graduated *summa cum laude* and won the 2006 Jentzsch Prize for best undergraduate philosophy essay. Jack was admitted to some of the very best Ph.D. programs in philosophy and is now a graduate student in philosophy at Princeton University.

**Stahl Prize.** This year's winner of the Stahl Prize is Scott Wisor, honored for his remarkable activism to halt the genocide in Darfur. While continuing as a full-time

graduate student, doing excellent work in his philosophy courses, Scott has become the Senior National Field Organizer for the Sudan Divestment Task Force, a project of the Genocide Intervention Network. He was the in-state leader of the campaign at the University of Colorado to require the endowment to divest from targeted companies that operate in Sudan and who thereby support the government of Sudan's ability to commit genocide against the people of Darfur. Scott then led the campaign at the state legislature for House Bill 1184 which requires the state's pension funds to divest from Sudan, moving over \$140 million out of companies complicit in the Darfur genocide. The Sudan divestment movement represents the largest grassroots economic mobilization against a foreign government since the anti-apartheid era.

**Jentzsch Prize.** Jason Wyckoff won the Jentzsch Prize, awarded for the best philosophical essay by a graduate student. His paper, "On the Failure of the Fair Play

Account of Political Obligation," was selected unanimously by the Jentzsch committee. The paper presents a series of objections to those arguments that have attempted to justify the obligation to obey the law by appealing to a principle of fairness. The paper is part of a larger project in which Jason argues against a number of other attempts to justify such an obligation. Jason will present the paper to the Department in a lecture this Fall. □



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## Some Recent Graduate Student Accomplishments

**Amandine Catala** was a fellow at the Center for Humanities and the Arts and an honorary fellow with the Belgian American Educational Foundation.

**Dan Demetriou** co-authored with Graham Oddie a review of Mark Kalderon's *Moral Fictionalism*, which appeared in *Mind*, and a paper, "The Fictionalist's Attitude Problem," forthcoming in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*. Dan presented his paper "The 'Geach-Frege' Objection to Non-Cognitive Fictionalism" at the Southwest Graduate Conference in Philosophy and his paper, "When Monkeys Bark Up the Wrong Tree: A Defense of Grice's Natural Meaning" has been accepted for the 2007 St. Louis University Graduate Student Conference. Dan won 2007-2008 Emerson-Lowe Dissertation Fellowship.

**Barrett Emerick's** paper "Reparations

through Respect in Interpersonal Discourse" was accepted to the 2007 Feminist Ethics and Social Theory conference, in Tampa, FL. Barrett and fellow graduate student **Cory Aragon** have had a paper called "Men Teaching Feminism: Rethinking Feminist Pedagogy from a Male Perspective" accepted to the 2nd Annual CUNY Feminist Pedagogy Conference: "What's Feminist about Feminist Pedagogy?" in NY.

**Jason Hanna's** paper "Getting Lucky, Getting Even, or Getting Away with (Attempted) Murder: The Punishment of Failed Attempts" was published in *Public Affairs Quarterly*. Jason also presented a paper, "Democracy and Children's Suffrage," at the Center for Values and Social Policy and the Pacific Division APA.

**Peter Higgins** presented a number of conference papers: "A Partial Method for

Constructing Just Immigration Policies" (Central Division APA); "Open Borders and the Right to Immigration" (Pacific Division APA); "A Partial Method for Constructing Just Immigration Policies" (Feminist Epistemologies, Methodologies, Metaphysics, and Science Studies Conference); and "Open Borders and the Right to Immigration" (Eastern Division APA). Peter also won a Devaney Dissertation Fellowship for 2007-08.

**Diana Hsieh** published "Egoism Explained: A Review of Tara Smith's *Ayn Rand's Normative Ethics: The Virtuous Egoist*" in the Spring 2007 issue of *The Objective Standard*.

**Mary Krizan** presented several conference papers: "Conception, Deception, Reflection: Spinoza on Finite Modes" (Central Division APA); "Corpses, Seeds, and Statues" (SAGP session of the American

Philological Association); and “A Defense of Diareisis in Plato’s *Gorgias*” (Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, Fordham University).

**P.J. Lomelino** was lead GPTI and graduate student assistant for the Center for Values and Social Policy. She also presented the following conference papers: “Crossing Species Boundaries: A Feminist Critique of Creating Human/Nonhuman Chimeras” (Pacific Division APA); “Women’s Empowerment As It Relates to the New Millennium Goals” (Feminist Epistemologies, Methodologies, Metaphysics and Science Conference); “Should the United States Legalize Torture?” (Canadian Society of Women in Philosophy); “Crossing Species Boundaries: An Ethical Analysis of Creating Human-Nonhuman Chimeras” (Pacific Society for Women in Philosophy); “Human Rights for All Persons” (Social Philosophy Conference, University of Victoria); and “Environmental Justice: A Proposal for Addressing Diversity in Bioprospecting” (International

Conference on Diversity in Organizations, Communities, and Nations).

P.J. also published two papers: “Environmental Justice: A Proposal for Addressing Diversity in Bioprospecting” (*International Journal of Diversity in Organizations, Communities and Nations*); and “Individuals and Relational Beings: A Call for Expanding Universal Human Rights” (*Social Philosophy Today*).

**Cindy Schoepner** published three papers: “Administrative Procedures Act” and “Vatican Bank” (*Encyclopedia of Business, Ethics, and Society*); and “Transubstantiation in Aquinas and Ockham” (*Student Organization for the Study of Religion Journal*).

She also gave the following presentations: “Teaching Business Ethics with Film” (panelist, Teaching Business Ethics Conference, CU Boulder); “Bringing the Power of Film to Business Ethics Education” (Society for Business Ethics Annual International Conference, juried selection of panel); “Bringing the Power

of Film to Business Ethics Education” (Academy of Management Annual International Conference, juried selection of panel); comment on “Probability and Utility: Pascal’s Wager Defended” (Rocky Mountain Student Philosophy Conference).

**Tait Szabo** presented a paper, “Sex and Commerce: Feminist Approaches,” by invitation of the Philosophy Department at the University of Wyoming, November 2006.

**Scott Wisor** won the Stahl Prize, awarded by the Philosophy Department for service to the community.

**Jason Wyckoff** presented his paper, “Solving the Problem of Timing Maxims in Kantian Ethics” both at the Pacific Division APA meeting, and at the Center for Values and Social Policy. Jason was awarded the Jentzsch Prize for “On the Failure of the Fair Play Account of Political Obligation.” □

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## Department Members Honored for Publications

Members of the Department were honored for their publications on a wide variety of philosophical subjects over the last year. In the fall of 2006, Robert Pasnau received a Provost Faculty Achievement Award in recognition of his book *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge University Press). In the spring of 2007, David Boonin was given an Eaton Faculty award in honor of his book *A Defense of Abortion* (Cambridge University Press). Toward the end of the summer, the Department learned that Robert Rupert is to receive a 2007 Provost Faculty Achievement Award for his article “Challenges to the Hypothesis of Extended Cognition” (*Journal of Philosophy*) and that David Boonin is to receive one for his book on abortion. As the newsletter was being prepared for production, the American Philosophical Association announced that Mitzi Lee is one of two people to receive an honorable mention in the 2007 APA Book Prize competition for her book *Epistemology after Protagoras* (Oxford University Press). Pasnau won the APA Book Prize in 2005 for his book on Aquinas and Boonin received one of the two honorable mentions that were awarded that year for his book on abortion, making CU the only department in the country to have three members who have been recognized by the profession’s most prestigious book award for younger scholars. □

## Summer Seminar Focuses on Philosophy of Science

This past summer, for the eighth straight year, the Philosophy Department ran a three-week intensive seminar for students considering graduate study in philosophy. The seminar, which attracts students from around North America, is designed to give undergraduates the experience of a graduate seminar, and is particularly aimed at students from smaller colleges that are not able to offer high-level coursework.

The topic this year was the philosophy of science, and as usual the course was team-taught by various faculty from the Department, as well as several distinguished visitors, including Bas van Fraassen from Princeton University. Students from previous years have gone on to graduate school in nearly all the most selective Ph.D. programs in the country. This year’s class of twenty students was perhaps the strongest group ever. □



# Philosophy Graduation, 2007

The Spring 2007 graduation ceremony was held on May 11. The Department honored the fifty-four Bachelor of Arts and five Master of Arts graduates, including some students who completed their degrees in August. The Department acknowledged ten B.A. students who graduated with honors and six who graduated with distinction for their outstanding work.

The formal ceremony, which was held following the University-wide ceremony for the Boulder campus, was presided over by Department Chair, David Boonin.

The graduation address was given by Bruce Bodaken, the chairman, president, and CEO of Blue Shield of California, a 3.2 million-member, not-for-profit health plan based in San Francisco. A native of Iowa, Bruce earned a master's degree

and was a teaching associate in philosophy at the University of Colorado before embarking on a career in health care.

Sheralee Brindell, the Undergraduate Advisor, and Robert Rupert, the Honors Advisor, made the presentations of degrees, and awards were presented to the winners of Departmental prizes. Scott Wisor was given the Stahl Prize for Community Service; Jason Wyckoff was awarded the Jentzsch Prize for the outstanding graduate student paper; and John Spencer, II was awarded the Eaton Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Achievement.

The opening and processional music was provided by Kevin Garry and Margarita Sallee. The formal ceremony was followed with a reception in the University Memorial Center. □

## Philosophy Department Graduates, 2007

### Bachelor of Arts

Ian Achey  
Elan Ben Ami, *with distinction*  
Spencer Blackstock  
Emily Bludman, *cum laude*  
Harrison Breitman  
Kristi Chapin  
Meredith Clements  
Nicholas Cook  
Alison Davis  
Robert Donald, *magna cum laude*  
Mackenzie Eason, *summa cum laude*  
Shon Feder  
Jenny Ferenc  
Joseph Ficarrota  
Dustin Gault, *magna cum laude*  
Walter Gorsuch  
Matthew Guzzo  
Ashley Howard  
Patrick Janson  
Lucas Johnson  
Benjamin Kegley, *cum laude*  
William Kerner  
Ryan Kieffer  
Steven Knievel  
Thomas Krueger  
Luke Langley  
Sheldon Lavis  
Heather Levesque  
Taylor Link  
Nathaniel Lucas

Ashley Lutts  
Adam Maerz  
Maelaghlin O'Connor, *cum laude*  
Gregory Pemberton  
W. Everett Piper  
Jenna Porter  
Edward Post  
Ari Pregon  
Amelia Reed  
Cooper Roberts  
Lia Rubinoff, *cum laude*  
Nicholas Shaw  
Robert Simpson  
Jason Sophinos  
John Spencer, II, *summa cum laude*  
Ryan St. John  
Matthew Swoveland  
Jacob Wells  
Lindsey Wilkinson  
Shawn Williams, *magna cum laude*  
Tyler Wood  
Karina Wratschko  
Brian Zapp  
Chase Zeman

### Master of Arts

Lisa Leininger  
Ricardo Morsella  
Marlisa Moschella  
Matthew Seacord  
Jason Wyckoff

# 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 David.Boonin@Colorado.edu.*

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