



Rutgers Philosophy Newsletter

Spring 2011

Alvin Goldman to Deliver Annual Jack Smart Lecture

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This summer distinguished Rutgers philosopher Alvin Goldman will be in residence at ANU, where he will give the annual Jack Smart lecture. The inaugural lecture was given in 1999 by Smart's successor as head of the ANU philosophy program, Frank Jackson, and has since been given by such influential philosophers as Peter Singer, David Lewis, and Rutgers' own Jerry Fodor.

When asked how he reacted to the invitation, Alvin replied: "I suppose that I thought, 'With all of the lasting contributions Jack Smart made to philosophy, where does my thinking most intersect with his?' The answer I gave (myself) was, 'We are both proponents of philosophical naturalism, meaning that scientific perspectives should shape and inform our philosophical perspectives.' [Smart was one of the first proponents of the mind-brain identity theory.] So philosophical naturalism is what I'll talk about in my lecture." Alvin's talk will be entitled "Philosophical Naturalism and Intuitional Methodology."

Women-in-Philosophy Community Dinner

Female philosophers kick off the semester with the first-ever Women-in-Philosophy Community Dinner.

Female (and a few male) undergraduates, curious about what it is like to be a woman in philosophy, gathered with female faculty and graduate students in the Seminar Room this past January for dinner and an informal discussion. Undergraduates were given the opportunity to ask female faculty members and graduate students questions while in a supportive and comfortable setting. We caught up with Lisa

Miracchi, the graduate student responsible for organizing the event, and asked about her inspiration for the dinner:

"When people are just starting out in philosophy, it's really important to have visible role models and mentors. When I was an undergraduate, my college did a similar thing and I found it really valuable. We got to meet female grad students and faculty, and learn a little bit about what life was like for them. Not only did it put me in a context where I could meet women who did what I wanted to do, and ask questions about what life was like for women in philosophy, it opened the door to further interactions with these women, whom I would have been unlikely to seek out on my own. Hopefully events like the Rutgers Women-in-Philosophy Community Dinner can encourage female undergraduates to take upper-level and graduate courses, and to pursue philosophy as a career if that's right for them. We definitely plan to have more in the future!"



Female philosophers talk with undergraduates at the first-ever Women-in-Philosophy community dinner.

Giving What We Can Update

The Rutgers chapter of Giving What We Can continues to do its part in the fight against global poverty.

Philosophy PhD students Nick Beckstead, Mark Lee, and Tim Campbell, have been busy this semester giving talks, organizing events, and spreading the word about GWWC. Nick and Mark did a webchat about GWWC with the Chronicle of Philanthropy, and they participated in a GWWC teleconference with Bolder Giving (www.boldergiving.org). At a GWWC event in March, Rutgers philosopher Larry Temkin and GWWC founder Toby Ord spoke to several hundred Rutgers students on the topic, "Global Poverty: Why Should We Care and What Can We Do About It?" And in April, economist Jeff Sachs and Larry Temkin spoke at the launch of the GWWC Princeton chapter.

When asked how they feel about GWWC's growth this past semester, Nick and Mark said: "We're really happy with GWWC's progress here and we are really excited to see it spreading to other universities."

GWWC is an international organization that now has 126 members and over \$35 million in pledged income.

Nick Beckstead watches Larry Temkin speak to hundreds of Rutgers students at a GWWC event in March.





Three incoming PhD students get to know one another during their visit – (left to right) Pamela Robinson (University of British Columbia), Nick Tourville (University of Minnesota), and Georgi Gardiner (University of Edinburgh)

Prospective PhD Students Visit the Department

And the incoming class is....

Twelve prospective graduate students came out to New Brunswick this spring to meet the current members of the department and spend a few days as part of our intellectual community. Two days packed full of meetings and exploration, closed out by great talks (by Derek Parfit and Preston Greene) and great parties (hosted by Faculty of Excellence Dean Zimmerman and Outstanding First-Year Lucy Jordan) gave them a real taste of the philosophical intensity and close-knit community that characterize the department.

The main events of the visit were held on Thursday 3/24 and Friday 3/25, but many of the prospective students came in Wednesday night and stayed through Sunday so they could catch some of the Rutgers-Princeton graduate conference and spend more time soaking up the atmosphere around Seminary Place. No wonder so many of them decided to join us!

Eight students will be starting at Rutgers this coming fall: William Fleischer (Virginia Polytechnic Institute MA), Georgina Gardiner (University of Edinburgh), Simon Goldstein (Yale), Beth Henzel (Washington and Lee), Anton Johnson (Amherst), Pamela Robinson (University of British Columbia), David Rose (Carnegie Mellon MA), and Nick Tourville (University of Minnesota).

Nico Kirk-Giannini (Harvard) won a Clarendon fellowship to study philosophical theology at Oxford; he is deferring for two years and will start at Rutgers in 2013.

New Faculty Profiles:

Then and Now

Susanna Schellenberg:

"I never planned to become a philosophy professor. I was supposed to become a musician. But when I was 18, I changed my mind—in part since my parents were rather keen on



my becoming a musician; in part since I was a compulsive truth seeker. After a detour through math, I found myself studying philosophy. That background has formed the way I do philosophy. In music, precision, detail, technique, and expression are everything. That's what philosophy is all about as well—at least for me. If one plays an instrument, one develops an idea of the ideal timbre that one strives for. One never quite reaches it, since one adjusts this idea as one approaches it. It's a kind of attitude one adopts. Carried over to philosophy this attitude manifests itself in aiming to strike a particular note. But also in endlessly fixing and correcting what needs fixing and correcting. There's always a remarkable amount that needs fixing and correcting. I begin each project with hope and enthusiasm, but find it hard to ever call one done. But although I've resigned myself to the sadness that comes from never being satisfied, I do love philosophy. I love the elegance in precision achieved when it's done well, especially if what is said is insightful and possibly even true. My advice to grad students: avoid philosophical cliques."

Holly Smith to Develop Department's First Online Course

Ethics professor Holly Smith was awarded a \$22,182 Entrepreneurial Grant by the School of Arts and Sciences to develop an online version of Introduction to Ethics, which will be the philosophy department's first fully online course. Jon Winterbottom will co-teach the course, interacting with students on discussion boards and holding email office hours while Holly develops the course materials. The course, which is limited to 30 students for its inaugural run, filled up almost immediately. Holly explains: "Many of these students are clearly having difficulties balancing demanding jobs and family responsibilities with their coursework, and for them an online course like this seems to be an ideal solution. I only wish I could let them all in this fall, but it suggests there will be lots of demand for the course when it is offered again." We look forward to catching up with her about the course in the fall!

Rutgers-Princeton Graduate Conference

Thomas Blanchard (conference co-organizer, with Tim Campbell and Kurt Rothschild) reports

The Princeton and Rutgers philosophy departments held their 11th annual joint graduate conference on March 26 and 27, 2011. After a long review process of the roughly 100 submissions received this year from all over the world, Princeton and Rutgers philosophy grad students selected six outstanding graduate student papers for presentation. The conference started with an opening keynote on generics and cognition by Sarah-Jane Leslie (Princeton). Rima Basu (Toronto) then opened the series of

graduate presentations with a talk about expressivism and the Frege-Geach problem, followed by Andrea Onofri (Saint-Andrews) who argued against non-pragmatic Russellianism, and Justin Dallmann (USC) who offered a new Frankfurtian account of moral agency. On day two of the conference, Chaz Firestone (Brown) presented a paper on visual paternalism, Yu Izumi (Maryland-College Park) talked about definite descriptions and Kelly Vincent (Colorado-Boulder) presented an objection against Kit Fine's theory of weak grounding. Jonathan Schaffer (Rutgers) closed the conference with a keynote on structural equations and metaphysical dependence. Each graduate presentation was followed by a commentary from local graduate students, including on the Rutgers side Pavel Davydov, Lisa Miracchi and Carlotta Pavese. Thanks to the excellent participants and a large audience, the two conference days – and the dinners and parties that followed – were the occasion for numerous lively and productive discussions!

New Library Donation

The philosophy department library will be growing quite a bit in coming months, thanks to a generous book donation from the Ammonius Foundation big enough that Dean Zimmerman had to rent a U-Haul to bring it all in. The library originally belonged to Marc Sanders, who founded Ammonius, and was donated to us by his son Eric, now head of the foundation. Martha Bolton reports: "I estimate that the gift will add 150-200 volumes to the library of our collection.... Many of these books fill real gaps in our holdings."

Jonathan Schaffer:



"Rutgers then and now-

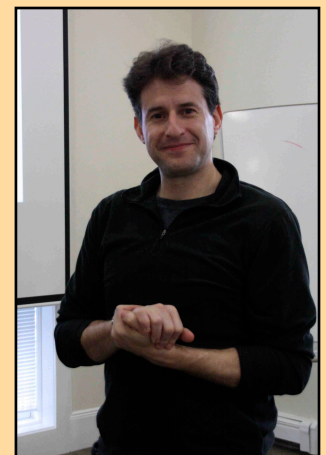
1993: Bill Clinton took office, Andre the Giant died, and I arrived at Rutgers. I remember logic with Vann McGee—"boot camp" for incoming students—the intricate proofs punctuated by the screeches of children playing outside. I remember metaphysics with Tim Maudlin, my voice trembling with a first question.

2011: Eighteen years later. The lifespan of a cat. So many new faces, and all the old faces so much older (except mine of course!) The level of discussion remains but the tone has softened. Davison Hall has become Seminary Place, Loretta Mandel and Ginny Meyer are now Mercedes Diaz and Pauline Mitchell, and the foolish student who nearly drowned in incompletes now plays professor.

To the graduate students, my advice: take photos, cherish editing, and try not to stay awake past 5am."

Branden Fitelson:

"I grew up in Syracuse, NY and went to UW-Madison to study physics (to be like my dad – the theoretical



Job Market Corner

Rutgers dominates job market – in perhaps the most competitive year to date.

The 'job board' got off to a strong start when Meghan Sullivan locked down a well-deserved tenure-track position at Notre Dame mid-fall. Shouts of "movement on the board!" could be heard all through the winter as the department saw more and more jobs coming through. All in all, Rutgers ended up placing 9 people in tenure-track or post-doc positions—3 of those placements at top-20 departments.

When asked about the department's performance in the market this year, placement director Jeff McMahan, said: "On the basis of the information available, Rutgers had better placement results this year than any other department. We had the highest number of people to get either a tenure-track job or a postdoc (9), the highest number of people to get a tenure-track job (7), and the highest number to get a tenure-track job in a top-20 department (3). There's only one explanation of our success: our students are exceptionally smart and exceptionally well supervised."

Grad students gather 'round to hear Ron Planer on the guitar and Erik Hoversten on the ukelele – (Clockwise from left) Stephanie Leary, Mark Lee, Lisa Miracchi, Jenny Nado, Erik and Ron.



Here is the final list of destinations:

Luvell Anderson – Penn State (Post-doc)

Gabriel Greenberg – UCLA (TT)

Allison Hepola – Samford (TT)

Karen Lewis – USC (TT)

Jennifer Nado – Lingnan University, Hong-Kong (TT)

Meghan Sullivan – Notre Dame (TT)

Carrie Swanson – Indiana University (post-doc) [turned down TT offer from Wayne State]

Christy Mag Uidhir – University of Houston (TT)

Evan Williams – Purdue (1-2 year position)

Julie Yoo – CSU Northridge (TT)

Philosophy Engages in Policy

Larry Temkin joins international policy makers at a conference this summer.

Larry Temkin was the only philosopher invited to a conference entitled "The Impact of Ageing on Developed Economies", sponsored by the Ditchley Foundation. The conference will bring together leading policymakers from

everywhere from India to Germany, as well as scholars in fields like public policy and economics, to work towards a better understanding of the challenges that ageing populations pose for developed economies

physicist). By the end of my undergraduate career, I realized that I'd be happier studying philosophy in graduate school (philosophy of science became more attractive to me than science itself – as a career). So, after completing my physics and math degrees, I stayed in Madison to pursue a philosophy PhD. Nine years later, I was on the philosophy job market. I got various jobs, all of which I turned down to follow my wife (Tina Eliassi-Rad) to the Bay Area. After doing some replacement teaching at Stanford for one year, I spent a year at San José State as an assistant professor. The following year, I managed to land a job at Berkeley, where I got tenure in 2007. In 2010, I followed Tina to Rutgers, where she is currently assistant professor of computer science.

My research has been focused primarily on the foundations and applications of various sorts of formal/logical models and techniques (mainly, involving probabilistic concepts) in philosophy of science, epistemology, and cognitive science. I have written extensively on probabilistic approaches to confirmation, inductive logic, and inductive inference. Recently, I've become interested in so-called "reasoning fallacies" involving probability and inductive inference. This has led me to some inter-disciplinary work at the interface of cognitive science and philosophy. I have been a co-organizer of the annual Formal Epistemology Workshops (FEW) since their inception in 2003, and I currently serve on the editorial boards of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the Journal of Philosophical Logic, and Episteme.

My advice for the graduate students: Don't give up."

Rutgers Around the World

Rutgers philosophers regularly travel around the world for talks and conferences, and this term is no exception.

Andy Egan has been quite a globe-trotter this year, telling audiences in Glasgow, Barcelona, and NYC "Why Ethics is All About Me". He also traveled to Oslo to discuss epistemic modals at the Arché Contextualism & Relativism group meeting, and presented "Two Euthyphro Questions in Semantics" at the LOGOS Conference on Semantics at the University of Barcelona last November.

Alvin Goldman gave a keynote lecture at a London conference on "Collective Epistemology: The Epistemic Lives of Groups", and presented "Social Epistemology and Collective Epistemic Agents" at a conference on "Trust and Cloud Computing" at Cambridge this April. He then traveled to France to give a talk in a social epistemology workshop, entitled "Social Epistemology, Collective Agents, and Scientific Networks."

Other members of the department have been doing a lot of traveling as well. Martha Bolton also traveled to France, to present "Locke's Thinking on Space and Substance" at a conference on the mentalization of space in early modern philosophy and science at the Université Blaise Pascal. Barry Loewer was the keynote speaker at the ten-year celebration of the philosophy department at Central European University in January, presenting "Boltzmann Brains and other Epistemological Catastrophes". And Tim Maudlin participated in a symposium called "The Concept of Reality in Physics" at the 75th anniversary meeting of the German Physical Society in Dresden, in March.

Frankie Egan is currently in Israel as a

"There's only one explanation of our success: our students are exceptionally smart and exceptionally well supervised."

– Jeff McMahan on the department's performance in the job market this year

and to look for both domestic and international strategies for addressing those challenges. The issue is an increasingly pressing one: the average number of children per woman in all OECD countries has decreased from 3.2 to 1.6 in recent decades, and it is predicted that by 2050 on average one out of three members of the rich world will be retirees. Larry has long engaged with questions related to ageing; his work has questioned a number of normative claims, like the Pareto Principle and various Narrow Person-Affecting Views, that are often taken for granted by those discussing issues connected with ageing but which Larry believes to be especially problematic in that case. He is excited by the chance to "make a concrete difference on an important issue that is going to have an increasingly large global impact in the coming years."

Think or Swim! Graduate Student Water Polo Team Returns

Erik Hoversten's poolside reporting:

"Cogito Ergo Swim returned to the water this winter. This year's intramural innertube water polo team was composed of Alex Anthony, Marco Dees, Heather Demarest, Preston

Greene, Erik Hoversten, Mary Salvaggio, and Meghan Sullivan. Unfortunately, the team wasn't able to duplicate last year's energetic run into the post season, as they finished with just two victories. But there was much to be proud of. Preston's power shooting led to a number of goals. His scoring was complemented by the touch shooting strategy that netted goals for both Heather and Erik. Mary's defense was unrelenting, and Meghan and Marco were instrumental in setting up offensive attacks. The team MVP was surely Alex, whose athleticism in goal was truly inspired."

Talks This Term

It was a busy semester of talks, with two named lectures and several Monday talks added to the regular Thursday colloquium schedule.

Richard Foley kicked off the springtime colloquium series with a talk entitled "When is True Belief

Grad students and prospectives with April birthdays blow out candles after Preston Greene's grad talk.



visiting research fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In April she gave a talk to the psychology department's Cognitive Group, entitled "What Notion of 'Representation' does Cognitive Science Need?", and in May will present "Is *Representation* an Explanatory Primitive in Computational Cognitive Models?" at the conference on Computation, Realization, and Representation, also at the Institute. Holly Smith will also be leaving the department for an exotic locale this summer, with a Visiting Fellowship at RSSH/ANU. And closer to home, Doug Husak is currently a Fellow at the Straus Institute for the Advanced Study of Law and Justice.

Graduate Students in Print

A list of recent grad student publications:

Matt Benton: "Two More for the Knowledge Account of Assertion", forthcoming in *Analysis*

Tim Campbell, "Animalism and the Varieties of Conjoined Twinning" (with Jeff McMahan), forthcoming in *Essays in Animalism* (ed. Paul Snowdon and Stephen Blatti)

Karen Shanton, "Memory, Knowledge, and Epistemic Competence", *Review of Philosophy and Psychology 2*

Meghan Sullivan, "The Minimal A-Theory", 2011 Bellingham Summer Philosophy Conference and corresponding issue of *Philosophical Studies*

Chris Weaver, "Whatever Could be Caused Must Actually Be Caused", forthcoming in *Synthese*

Knowledge?" He was followed by David Sosa's "Against Bewitchment By Means of Language" (aren't we all?). Christopher Hitchcock then spoke about some of his work on actual causation, and John Broome gave the annual Mesthene Lecture, on "Rationality Through Reasoning". Next Derek Parfit told us a difficult truth about ourselves – namely, that "We Are Not Human Beings" – and ACLS fellow Matt Walker talked about his resolution to a puzzle about Aristotle's account of the choiceworthiness of friends. David Papineau gave possibly the most controversial talk of the semester, arguing that we only see 30 colors. The talks series will be closed out by Ted Sider's Class of 1970 lecture, "Is Metaphysics About the Real World?", on April 21, and Howard Robinson's talk on the knowledge argument on April 25.

In keeping with the philosophy department's *second* unofficial motto, "There's always a talk on Thursday (and sometimes on Friday too)", we've also had a great string of faculty and graduate student talks this semester. Our faculty speakers this term were Susanna Schellenberg, who developed an account of perceptual experience that was aimed at explaining both its phenomenal character and its ability to serve as a source of evidence, and Ishani Maitra, who argued for an evidence-responsiveness constitutive rule of assertion. The grad talk series began with a talk on grounding by Alex Skiles, a visiting student from Notre Dame; it continued with a talk by Lisa Miracchi about what recent work on embodied cognition can tell us about perceptual content and a talk by Jenn Wang on structuralism about possible worlds. Next Zachary Miller told us why metaphysicians shouldn't care about natural

language semantics, and Tom Donaldson told us why everyone *should* care about the truth. The grad talk series was rounded out by Marcello Antosh's talk on internalism about practical reason and Ben Levinstein's "Bayesian Puttering". In addition to the regular mix of pizza, beer, and no-holds-barred questioning that characterize the grad talk series, this term organizers Michael Johnson and Richard Dub introduced "themed" grad talks celebrating springtime holidays and the graduate student community's love for Mexican food. The themed grad talk series ended with a departmental Easter egg hunt right before Ben's talk; potential prizes ranged from priority in Q&A to automatic refutation of Ben's argument (or, for Ben, automatic refutation of all audience objections). Thanks to everyone who helped make these talk series happen – we look forward to even more great talks in the fall!

Faculty and students have dinner at Pad Thai before the Temkin and Ord GWWC event.





An Interview with Jerry Fodor

A Rutgers icon on the mind, What Darwin Got Wrong, and (of course) opera

US: How did you get interested in philosophy? What kinds of questions drew you in at the start?

JF: Hm, interested in philosophy - uh, I'm not all that sure that I am interested in philosophy!

This is back in the Stone Age, of course, when I was at Columbia. They didn't have a major system, so I just sort of wandered around until I found something that I liked, and philosophy was the department - I guess I decided pretty early on that if I had to work on anything, then these were the kinds of questions that I wanted to work on. Also I'd been interested ever since - as long as I could remember - in questions of vaguely the form 'How does the mind work?' and I knew even then that what the psychologists were telling me wasn't true, and that the reason that it wasn't true was that it was confused. I mean, *at least* that. So philosophy of mind seemed a natural subject to work on. Really that is what I'm interested in, how that part of the mind

that doesn't involve questions about consciousness - thank god! - how to develop theories of that sort of thing. Actually, I think when I first started being a graduate student, which was also in the late Stone Age, I actually wanted to do aesthetics...but it occurred to me that one of the things you have to think about if you want to do aesthetics is... the notion of representation, so I thought, good, I'll take a week off and figure out what representation is, and it's turned out to be a very long week. That's probably the closest as one can get to a characterization of the direct route.

US: You said that you could tell even back then that there was something wrong with what the psychologists were doing...?

JF: Well, yeah, that wasn't hard - back then everybody was a behaviorist. Uh, and even I could see that that wasn't right! I actually took a year's introductory psychology course to see what was going on, and what was going on was preposterous! I mean, when somebody says "Well, I'll tell you how the mind works, but you have to believe that there's no such thing as believing"...!

US: Could you briefly explain your Language of Thought hypothesis, in a way that people who aren't familiar with it can get ahold of?

JF: Oh. There's a long tradition, it goes back to Descartes, maybe goes back to Plato, of thinking that roughly speaking people don't act out of the way the world is, they act out of the way they believe the world to be. That is, they act out of the way they represent the world...You can read a lot of what's been going on in philosophy in the past two hundred years, at least in the Anglophone tradition, as trying to say what mental representations are like such that you could characterize mental processes like thinking and planning and so forth and so on, as the manipulation of those representations. And except for behaviorists, everyone who's actually thought it was a good idea to develop a theory of mind has ended up thinking something like that.

So Descartes was interested in questions like - and this is a long time back - 'could mental representations be pictures, and if they can't be why can't they be, and if they can be how can they get employed in tasks like reasoning?' So it's an old

question, and I didn't invent it. And in fact there are roots in - the oddest people turn out to be bedfellows in this tradition - there are roots in the scholastic tradition; William of Ockham had a theory which he himself described as a language of thought theory. If you're looking at mental representations, you want to figure out what mental representations could be like such that they play a role in determining actions and thought and so forth and so on, then a language is a very good thing to model it on, not just a set of pictures or a set of words but a language. Why is that? Well, one thing is that languages are productive...and thought's productive too. So right away the way the architecture goes - you act out of the way you represent the world, and the medium that you represent the world in is something like a natural language - that wouldn't be very surprising. Ok, so that's the language of thought thesis. And then you begin to eliminate some of the more boring ways of elaborating that thesis, so that you get back to something worth worrying about. So for example you have to eliminate the thesis that you think in English. That would explain why mental representation is something like linguistic representation, because it is linguistic representation, but that can't be right, because then you wouldn't be able to think in the process of learning a language, and so either you're going to get a regress or you're going to get an absurdity. So all of these rather heavy-handed applications of the idea of mental representation get eliminated and what you're left with is a very bloody hard problem. And one of the reasons it's hard is that it's really very interdisciplinary. Some of these arguments, like the argument from productivity, all you have to do is to understand the argument, you don't really need a lot of data to show you that you can think new thoughts just like you can utter new sentences. But then when you get down to the details, you need a lot of empirical stuff - stuff you do, or somebody does, in the laboratory, so there're tie-ins with psychology; there are very close tie-ins with linguistics, because if you go around saying that the language of thought is very much like a natural language, that prompts the question "Good, so what is a natural language like?" And the linguists are supposed to know, so you go over and ask them. And that's how it becomes an interdisciplinary thing... So you take all of this stuff home with you and worry about

it for 20 or 30 years, you might actually develop a substantial version of the language of thought theory. But there is something like a language of thought theory in almost every mentalist – that is, almost every non-behaviorist has agreed, except for the ones who think you think in pictures. It's just they call it something different.

US: On the topic of cognitive science - to what extent do you think it's a philosopher of mind's responsibility to pay attention to things like neuroscience?

JF: This is just an eccentricity of mine. I mean, in principle there's no bound to it. In practice, my view is that very little has come out of it, at least for the purpose of developing theories of reasoning, theories of action and so forth. Why is that? Well, because the techniques that we have, by and large, are techniques that tell you where things happen, which isn't what you want to know – you want to know what's going on...The thing is, you need a sketch of what you think the mind is doing before you can ask sensible questions about how it really manages to do it. And psychology is now so bifurcated that the people who know how to run fMRI machines are generally not people who have interesting things to say about what these three pounds of flesh might actually be doing.

US: How do you feel about the embodied cognition movement?

JF: Oh, god. That's a, that's a kind of – I don't wanna talk about that. Who could doubt that the mind is embodied? And given that we are all clear that the mind is embodied, where does that get us? I mean, everybody knows the mind is embodied, unless you've got religious stuff or something, some metaphysical or ideological biases, but now, right, I agree, the mind's embodied, and now what do I do? Search me!

US: What do you take the philosophical significance of Pylyshyn's FINST to be?

JF: I think that really has got a substantive answer. I'm interested in the question of what kind of system of

representation thought takes place in, or something like this. What's the character of that kind of language if it is a kind of language? And of course one has sometime to face the question how the thing is related to the world, that is the question of, if there is some such language, what's its semantics like? ...So the problem of naturalization – of getting rid of entities which are obviously higher-level entities, I mean nobody thinks the world is made out of intensions or intentional states – well, I won't say quite nobody but nobody sane, put it that way, thinks that quanta or elections have thoughts and so on, so the notion of intentionality and all those mentalist kind of notions either have to be dismissed from psychology entirely, as Skinner wanted to, or you have to have a theory that reduces them or that identifies them with some relation that you think can hold between the mind and the world, and the causal relation is a natural one. And finally I think that FINSTs, as Zenon says, that those kinds of representations, are a very good reconstruction of notions like object...So it does two things if it works. One is it gives us a sort of model for how the mind-world relation, and hence how the semantics for the language of thought, is to be understood. And the other thing is it gives us almost for free an account of singular terms, so 'this' and 'that' and 'John', all those kinds of things, which are essentially referring expressions, they're arrays of symbols which present objects and things demonstrated to the mind...Roughly speaking, I think the things that function as objects, the things that get represented as objects are the things that can be tracked in Zenon's sense.

US: So you received a lot of criticism in the wake of [What Darwin Got Wrong](#)... (**JF:** Sure did!)...So I'm wondering if there's anything about the book that you thought either your critics had misinterpreted, or...

JF: Yeah! You can't criticize it unless you read it, and so far as I can tell they didn't...There are several things coming out, not by us, saying something's gone wrong here, because if you've read the book you

can't interpret it that way. I mean, we've been accused of holding views which we explicitly and frequently deny in our book. When I was teaching introductory philosophy many, many thousands of years ago, I learned the following truth about pedagogy. Never tell an undergraduate 'don't say such-and-such', because they'll remember the such-and-such part.... So I think the criticism has been really thoroughly irrelevant.

US: What's the biggest point they've misunderstood?

JF: Oh! Well, you won't believe this, but the argument turned on a case of a kind which everybody knows, I mean everybody knows there are such cases, and it has the form OK, given there are cases like this, and given you want to give a Darwinian explanation, tell me how that explanation's going to go, and I'll show you in fact, not in a complicated demonstration, you'll just see if you look at it, that there can't be an explanation of *that* kind that would be mechanistic, and everybody wants their theory to be mechanistic. So that's the basic tactic. And interestingly, and not surprisingly, what they missed is that notions like 'select for', which play the central role, essentially, in Darwinian explanations are intensional, with an s, and they didn't notice that. So they don't have a way of getting from...reconstructing things like here's a trait which is selected for so-and-so, not for such-and-such, where both so-and-so and such-and-such are consequences of your having the trait. That's essentially the form of the argument, and we said it over and over and over again in many, many different ways...too many different ways. That was a mistake. We should have said, look, here's the argument in one-syllable words, and then stopped writing. Instead of which, we made digressions and so on, in all sorts of ways. Because we thought the ramifications of not facing up to the problems that intensionality raises are extremely clear in this case, and it's not just in trying to reconstruct some ordinary language notion, it's that you want to do some sort of theory construction, namely the kind Darwin wanted to do, where the explanations have the logic of intensional concepts, when you haven't recognized that they

do. And that's a good way to get in a lot of trouble. It's, in fact, it's recapitulating in a way that's ironical but sad, it's recapitulating the history of Skinnerian behaviorism over the last 50 years or so. Because exactly what Skinner failed to do is notice that stimulus and reinforcement and things like that are intensional notions...

US: So on another note, what's your favorite opera?

JF: At the moment – I mean it changes every week, but at the moment it's *Pelléas et Mélisandre*, it's a Debussy opera. It's almost nobody's favorite opera, but I think it's a masterpiece, for reasons that have to do with the way the story fits the music – the usual stuff. Also, it's – the lead role is for a mezzo-soprano, and I like mezzo-sopranos. But you know, there are very few kinds of operas that I don't like, in fact there are very few *particular* operas that I would actively stay away from. There are a few and unfortunately they're the ones that make money for the Met, so you can't stay away from them as much as you'd like to if you have a season subscription. But as long as they do stuff I like now and then, I'm not going to complain much.

US: Do you have a sense for what it is about opera that gets you?

JF: Oh, yeah, it's actually doing what can't possibly be done. It requires for success – and, really, real success is quite rare – it requires the integration of a wide variety of talents, just as Wagner rightly said, and the people who have to be integrated are, in fact, divas, and so it's amazing that it ever comes off. But when it does come off, it's as rich a source of emotional contact as anything I know in the arts... I remember sitting in the Metropolitan opera with tears running down my cheeks because I was watching a Wagner opera in which nobody had moved for about 20 minutes, and it was sung in a language I don't understand, so I kept on asking myself – what on Earth? Why on Earth am I so moved by this? And the answer was, basic fact about the universe, like

quantum mechanics. Hmm. Got to do with resonance.

US: Last one, promise! Where do you see things going in cog sci and philosophy of mind? Where do you think the future is going to be, where would you like it to be, what role if any do you think you're going to play in that?

JF: Well, that's really hard, and prognostications always turn out to be false anyway. But I think one thing that has to happen, and I think I agree with Randy Gallistel about this, one thing that has to happen is that people really have to get over their associationism. Everybody knows what the relevant arguments are but somehow they haven't been internalized. Or they're condescended to as just philosophy, or something or other. That's a bad idea, because some of the objections continue to be pertinent, and if you're going to hold on to the doctrine you have to meet them, at the price of irrelevance. So it would be very nice to see how the field would look if somebody actually said, OK, associationism is out, it's not going to be that kind of solution. What else is left? The second thing I would like to see worked out, and this has been something that philosophers and logicians have worked on but not usually under the constraint of psychological reality, is how on earth does semantics work, where the constraint of psychological reality says that if you postulate a system in which the mind represents the world, then you've got to show that people actually do use that system in representing the world, and you take on the consequences of the kind of system that it is. So it should be a help that people are developing pictures of how the semantics works for English. The trouble is they haven't taken the notion of psychological reality seriously. It's a constraint they simply aren't willing to face. Why aren't they willing to face it? Well because they want to be able to say things like 'it's a function from worlds to objects' or something... functions don't make anything happen! You can't have a function in your head!

And if what you mean is that you have the representation of a function in your head, tell us what that representation looks like so that it will mesh with psychological processes like recall and so on and so on. That unfortunately is not taken very seriously. It's an area in which the philosophical tradition has been extremely parochial, in large part because most of the guys who work in this area are either linguists or logicians. So that's a direction in which I think things are going to have to develop, because nobody else besides the philosophers and the linguists have the tools. Oddly enough, what you need is for the formal scientists to stop being contemptuous of the empirical scientists. They are, and it's very hard to get them around the table and say, OK, let's work on this kind of problem – how do you deal with mental representation and intentionality, for example, which I care about. So the interdisciplinary liaisons which are required are only partially formed, so if you tell a psychologist 'it works the same way it does in logic' they stare at you bewildered, and if you tell a logician 'it works the same way it does in English (or it doesn't)' he looks at you with a wild surmise too! So while everybody, where everybody is mostly deans, is deeply in favor of hyphenated disciplines, psycho-linguistics or whatever, that really hasn't got sunk deep enough into the tradition, at least for the purposes of the kinds of questions I'd like to be able to ask. Ah, maybe the neuroscientists will learn something interesting someday, maybe the people doing artificial intelligence will learn something interesting someday, but so far the prospects have not been good.

US: Someone should tell them what's interesting!

JF: They won't believe you!

Thank you to Meghan Sullivan

Everyone here at Newsletter Headquarters wants to say a big thank you to outgoing (and first-ever) editor Meghan Sullivan. She quite literally made the newsletter what it is today (this is her template we're using!), and has also been an enormous part of making the graduate student community as good as it has been for the past several years. Her keen intellect, goofy sense of humor, and genuine kindness will be missed sorely, both by the newsletter crew and by the department as a whole.

A Letter from the Chair:

The end of this semester coincides with my last semester as chair. My four year term as chair has felt like being caught in a whirlwind. If it ever occurred to my high school friends when we were voting "most likely to do this or that..." they would have voted me "most likely never to be the chair of anything." In fact, thanks to Facebook I have recently been found by some of them asking in astonishment whether I could possibly be the same person they knew back when.

Somehow a lot has been accomplished in the last few years. The department moved onto College Ave and into our two very nice Seminary buildings where we have both espresso machines and water coolers. In the last few years there have been some goings and comings. Sadly Brian Loar retired due to illness and Tim Maudlin is moving after 25 years at Rutgers. But we added a number of really great "younger" (compared to those who have been here for a while) faculty, most recently Branden Fitelson, Susanna Schellenberg and Jonathan Schaffer. (We hired Jonathan in part so we can boast that we have PhDs in each of the top three philosophy programs in the world.) An incredible number of our colleagues and their spouses have given birth to babies (see the prior newsletter) and books in the past few years. The long awaited NHC ranking of graduate departments finally came out and though their interpretation requires a team of rabbis there is a consensus that Rutgers was ranked one of the top two philosophy departments in the US. In the last four years about 30 graduate students completed dissertations and found positions in philosophy departments around the world and about 30 new graduate students have entered

the program. A few hundred undergrad philosophy majors have graduated with a number going onto graduate programs and many more into the real world. A number of new initiatives have been started including on-line courses, a new MA in legal philosophy, an "outreach program" (just starting) to bring philosophy to schools in our region, meet philosophers Fridays for undergraduates, the undergrad philosophy journal and this newsletter. One of the things I wanted to accomplish as chair is to increase philosophy's connections with other departments and increase our interdisciplinary projects. There is a number of ongoing and planned cooperative projects with, among others, linguistics, psychology, math/physics, English, religion, and computer science. I have been telling the administration that they should think of philosophy, in Reggie Jackson's words, as "the straw that stirs the drink." We are hoping they keep the glass full.

One initiative that we are just now starting is creating an endowed dissertation fellowship. It is really important to support graduate students during the grueling year they are writing their magnum opus. This effort is being kick started by an anonymous donor who has given the department a challenge grant of \$150,000. A number of others including faculty in the department have promised further contributions. Our goal is \$300,000. That may seem very difficult but I think it is achievable. Any readers of this who would like to contribute can get in touch with me (loewer@rci.rutgers.edu) and I will provide more information about the fund and tell you how you can contribute. You can also help by spreading the word to potential donors.

It goes without saying but I will say

The department's headquarters
on College Avenue.



it since this is my last chair's letter. Thanks are due to the many people who helped me along the way. Our staff is really great. Ann, Mercedes, Pauline, and Stacey keep things running. For me personally, Pauline's work and support has been incredibly valuable. I am really grateful to her. I also want to thank all my colleagues and students who helped running the department especially those who provided advice (at times keeping me out of trouble) and helping with the move. Jeff K will be taking over as chair, Thony as graduate director, and Ruth as undergrad director. Branden will be replacing Ruth as graduate recruiter and Jeff M will continue his excellent work as Placement Director. The department is in good hands. I will be traveling (London, Budapest, Australia, Fiji, Kenya) and finishing off my book on laws and chances.

Have a great summer,

Barry

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