

The Stetson Gadfly

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY NEWSLETTER



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2012 HALL AWARD PRESENTED TO AMANDA McMULLEN

This year's award went to Amanda McMullen. Amanda presented a senior thesis entitled: "Dispositional Essentialism: A Response to Robert Hanna's Skeptical Argument against Scientific Naturalism". In the fall, Amanda will enter a graduate program in philosophy at the University of Miami. Congratulations Amanda!



The Ronald L. and Margaret Smith Hall Philosophy Award was established in 2001 by Prof. Ron Hall and his wife Maggi to honor and recognize the most outstanding graduating senior in the Department of Philosophy. Given at the annual Honors Convocation each spring, a recipient is chosen on the basis of grade point average, quality of senior thesis, and the intention to continue philosophical studies at the graduate level. In addition to its monetary component, the recipient receives an award certificate and has his or her name engraved on a plaque listing previous winners. The plaque is honorably displayed on a wall outside the Philosophy Department offices.

Past Recipients:
Matthew Hoffman (2011)
Derek Stottlemeyer (2009)
Bradford Hewitt (2008)
Chantel Wonder(2007)
Brendan J. Rogers (2006)



"I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you." -Socrates

TYCE HERRMAN WILL BE BICYCLING OVER 3,700 MILES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Tyce Herrman, our graduating philosophy major will be celebrating his graduation, with a memorable rite of passage by cycling across the country to help build houses and raise awareness for affordable housing.

Tyce will be taking a 3,757 mile bicycle trip this summer with the "Bike & Build" non profit organization. They will be starting in Portsmouth, N.H. across the country, for 70 days and ending up in Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

They will be stopping along the route to volunteer with helping build affordable housing for Habitat for Humanity. "Not only are we raising funds that go directly to organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together, we are getting people interested in and motivated to help end the affordable housing crisis" said Tyce. "We'll drop our bikes and pick up a hammer." said Tyce.

He hopes to collect at least \$4,500 toward affordable housing projects. If you would like to support Tyce with his mission, you can follow his blog at <http://www.razoo.com/story/Tyce-And-Francis-2012-Fundraising-Bike-And-Build-Trip>

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR



One of my favorite FAR SIDE cartoons featured a dog preparing to ride a unicycle across a tight rope at a circus. The caption: He was an old dog and this was a new trick. Well I am an old dog and I confess to resisting new waves in philosophy. OK, I will just admit it: I am (methodologically speaking) an unregenerate ordinary language philosopher. And even though this is not in vogue, I do my best to keep this approach to philosophy alive, or at least to give my students a taste of it before they leave. In this regard, Wittgenstein, Austin and Cavell are my heroes. With them, I think that the primary philosophical task is not that of advancing theses. And like all of these heroes, I agree that philosophy is one of its own worst enemies. Don't get me wrong: I am not in favor of doing philosophy in, even though it is the culprit in so much that has gone wrong in our thinking. Normally, we live without philosophical problems. Only when we reflect do we run into philosophical confusion. Why? Here is the irony: paying attention to what we normally say, or would say, can save us from the bewitchment philosophical theses generate regarding what we must mean by what we say. How easily we are misled when philosophers tell us that such and such is what we must mean when we say that something is real, or good, or that we know it. For me, the primary task of philosophy is to clear the confusions this insistence engenders. We do this by resisting the temptation to generalize special cases, or more positively, by returning words from their metaphysical to their ordinary use. To have a go at making a case for this approach to philosophy, I am teaching a course in the fall on the work of Austin, and a course in the spring on the work of Wittgenstein. Wish me luck.



A Requiem for Ethical Reflection? By Josh Rust

Ethical Reflection has had a hard time of it lately. It's become popular to downplay the role that explicit, self-conscious reflection plays in our moral and ethical lives.

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt is famously interested in the link between reasoning and moral competence. He charges that many philosophers, beginning with Plato, have subscribed to "the rationalist delusion" insofar as they assume that reason better tracks moral truth, so enabling us to behave more morally. Kant, for example, thinks that human virtue must find its source in practical reason, as sensible inclinations toward self-love would otherwise threaten to lead us astray. But intuitionists like Haidt worry that Kant has reduced sensible inclinations to self-love, displacing a suite of automatic and instantaneous moral intuitions with rational deliberation.

In support of the rationalist delusion, which holds that it is a mistake to think that moral reflection makes much of a difference to our attitudes and behavior, Haidt has recently cited several empirical studies that Eric Schwitzgebel and I have conducted over the past few years (Haidt 2012, 89). If moral reflection improves moral behavior, we might reasonably expect ethics professors to behave better than socially similar non-ethics philosophy professors. But when we studied the matter we found that ethicists were no more likely to vote than most other professors. Nor do ethicists appear to behave no more courteously at philosophy conferences. Ethicists are no more likely to respond to student email inquiries than non-ethicists. Finally self-reports suggest that on many measures—e.g., staying in touch with one's parents and blood donation—ethicists do not behave more morally than non-ethicists. These findings represent a challenge to those who think that the study of ethics can increase one's general moral competence.

Despite being an author of these studies, I'm less inclined to skepticism about the value of ethical reflection than is Haidt. I do think the studies suggest that the study of ethics does *not* give one an all-purpose tool—a moral Swiss Army knife—that can be mechanically applied to any particular situation (e.g. a rule like the Categorical Imperative or Utilitarian calculus). But I think it's equally rash to simply identify our moral competence with a host of pre-reflective intuitions and emotions. In the fall I'll be teaching a class focused on ferreting out the positive role that explicit moral reflection in the development of our moral capabilities.



TOP HONORS AWARDED TO OUR PHILOSOPHY MAJOR

Congratulations to Tyce Herrman for receiving the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award for top leadership. One of Stetson's highest awards. Our newest Provost, Elizabeth "Beth" Paul presented the award by saying "The spiritual qualities of the young man receiving this award today are reflected each day in the dedication he has to serving others and improving the world around him." Herrman has been a Hatter Harvest gardener since the garden's creation, led students on beach and park cleanups and wrote the SGA legislation for the Green Bike initiative. He co-founded Stetson Progress, which serves as an outlet for activists on campus through initiatives such as Occupy Stetson. "Through his studies of Philosophy and Environmental Science over the past four years," Paul continued, "he has investigated not only the depths of his soul, but also some of the most pressing environmental and political questions of our time." This summer, Herrman will join with his best friend, Francis Sams, on a cross-country [Bike & Build bicycle trip](#) to raise awareness and funding for affordable

housing. After that, Herrman hopes to join the Peace Corps or go to graduate school. "With his passion and scholarly pursuits," Paul said, "he no doubt will change the world for the better."

Alumni News

Mary Bernard (Class of 2007) is working on a Ph.D. in French at the University of Illinois.

Sonal Patel (Class of 2007) Attending Columbia University to pursue the Master's Degree in Education.

Mary Bernard (Class of 2007) is working on a Ph.D. in French at the University of Illinois.

Tiffany L. Porter (Class of 2006) "I will be entering my final year of law school at the University of Akron, where I am Editor-in-Chief of the 2012-2013 *Akron Law Review*. I am spending the summer interning at the U.S. Attorney's Office. I also have an amazing daughter, Sophia, who will be turning four on July 4th."

**De-
maris Del Valle** (Class of 2005) is a practicing public defender in Miami.

**Stepha-
nie Andor-Rice** (Class of 2005) "Currently teaching Algebra at University High in Orange City. Go Titans!!! I am married and have a little boy that will turn two this summer. I think about Dr. Hall, Dr. Brady, and Dr. PB every time we get to set theory and venn diagrams in the curriculum. All that goes through my head is logic symbols they taught me. I know what I do is not as glorious as some of our Alumni but I truly enjoy being able to share what I have learned with my students."

Kaam (Class of 2004) completed a Masters in Religious Studies from the University of Chicago.

(Class of 2004) is working for The Lily Foundation as a Chaplin in Chicago. Wes recently completed his Master of Divinity at Chicago and was ordained.

(Class of 2003) is a practicing physician in Birmingham Alabama .

trone (Class of 2003) is finishing a Ph.D. in philosophy at Georgetown.

Dean Johnston (Class of 1977) is a Master Architect. Dean designed and built his first passive solar homes in Columbia County, New York, in 1980. Since then he has designed and build custom homes, cabinetry, furniture and sculpture using a wide variety of materials and styles from Vermont to Hawaii. His life long commitment to ecologically ethical design influences all aspects of his current work.

James Dator (Class of 1954) is Director and Professor at Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies, Department of Political Science he is on the Board of Editors of the following journals, regularly reviewing many manuscripts for possible publication in them each year: *Foresight -Futures -Futures Research Quarterly -Intergenerational Justice Review Journal of Futures Studies -On the Horizon: Futures of Education -Technological Forecasting & Social Change*.

**De-
Stepha-
nie**

**Rob Van
Wesley Sun**

Matt Smith

Dan Quat-

Senior Research Titles and Abstracts 2011-2012

Shannon Abelson— “Wittgenstein, Malcolm and Weil: the Religious Point of View” - Ludwig Wittgenstein claimed to see problems from a religious point of view, but also claimed he was not a religious person. Norman Malcolm has investigated what Wittgenstein could have meant by this, but came to a conclusion which I will argue fails to address the spirit of the concerns which captivated Wittgenstein. I will argue that he felt a kinship with the religious person, stemming from a shared attitude toward the world and a shared response to deep problems of human existence—the religious point of view. Both Wittgenstein and the religious person recognize and wrestle with the deepest problems facing human beings, with the readiness of each to embrace the wonder of existence itself. Unlike Wittgenstein, Simone Weil is an exemplar of a person who simultaneously held the religious point of view, embraced religious beliefs and lived by these beliefs. My aim is to reflect upon the type of attitude toward the existence and its problems that the religious point of view entails, while also examining ways in which it might be possible to make Wittgenstein's remark intelligible. In other words, I will look at how one might be able to intelligibly hold the religious point of view without religious belief.

Brooke Bernstein - “Making the Legal World: Creating a General Theory of Jurisprudence through the Merger of John Searle's Social Philosophy and the Legal Theory of H.L.A Hart” - For more than 50 years, the topic of positivist jurisprudence has been dominated by the philosophy of H.L.A Hart, and particularly by his most famous book *The Concept of Law*. *The Concept of Law* undertook several large problems in legal theory, including an intense critique of John Austin's command theory. In his critique, Hart redefines the concept of law through the use of two creations: a distinction between primary and secondary rules and a distinction between internal and external points of view. Primary and secondary rules gave form to the law, while the distinction between internal and external points of view introduced a sociological element to the law that previous theories greatly lacked. However, Hart failed to create a working general theory of jurisprudence. I argue that this failure arises from Hart's definition of law, which fails to locate the source of authority that separates legal institutions and other institution. The deficiencies in Hart's definition of law can be ameliorated through the inclusion of John Searle's social philosophy in *Making the Social World*. Particularly Searle's discussion of status functions and deontic powers can provide a more nuanced definition of law, which builds on the foundation already laid by Hart, but is better suited for a general theory of jurisprudence.

Anders Brent - “Homeric Justice : On the Uses of Dike and Themis” – This project aims at reconstructing the Homeric Greek conception of justice. It will focus on the use of key Greek words that exemplify and express Homeric justice. This will create a framework through which the conception of justice will be shown to be coherent throughout the Iliad and the Odyssey. Previous scholarship shies away from making such a claim due to alleged inconsistencies, but this research will focus on showing the necessity of the coherency of justice in the Homeric world. The first priority of this research will be to determine the most appropriate way to interpret issues of justice in Homer; the second, to provide the conceptual framework for interpretation with the support of text-based examples. Analysis of the use of specific words in their lexical and narratological contexts will serve to elucidate Homeric actions not only within their own frameworks, but also to understand them in light of our modern conceptions of justice and morality. The danger of misapplying modern conceptions of justice will be avoided by using the reconstructed conceptions of justice and by demonstrating clear parallels. Ultimately, this is an attempt to elucidate the understanding of Homeric justice, the modern conception of justice, and how one might apply the Homeric concept to the modern in a meaningful way.

Tyce Herrnan - “Ecofeminism, Phenomenology, and the Logic of Domination: An Attempt to Address the Modern Ecological Crisis” – Ecofeminism recognizes that oppression of Others, categorized by gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, non-humanness (including individual entities and ecosystems) and all other forms of domination, are interrelated and self-reinforcing. Addressing any particular mode of domination, in this case human domination of the natural world, must first address the underlying patriarchal logic of domination. Ecofeminist theory has provided fruitful critique and introspection on the roots of our ecological crisis, but framing ecofeminist theory in the philosophical framework of phenomenology allows for a more robust moral conversation. The logic of an ecofeminist phenomenology accounts for our fundamentally relational, being-in-the-world selves and the intrinsic value of Others (both human and non-human). I hope to ultimately demonstrate that an injection of ecofeminist phenomenology into current discourse is critically important in addressing our modern ecological crisis.

Senior Research (continued)

Amanda McMullen— “Dispositional Essentialism: A Response to Robert Hanna's Skeptical Argument against Scientific Naturalism”

-Robert Hanna asserts that because Scientific Naturalism holds that the intrinsic properties of objects are non-relational microphysical and thereby necessarily epistemically inaccessible ones that Scientific Naturalism is a skeptical position. Furthermore, he holds that because Scientific Naturalism is skeptical that we ought to accept his own positive view, Transcendental Idealism. I argue that Hanna has in mind only a particular *version* of Scientific Naturalism called Categoricalism, which is indeed vulnerable to his skeptical criticism. Another version of Scientific Naturalism, Dispositional Essentialism, is a Scientific Naturalist position that evades Hanna's skeptical criticism while avoiding the metaphysical commitments entailed by Transcendental Idealism.

Jordan Nein – “Philosophical Conversion: An Analysis of the Nature and Stability of a Belief System” - Drawing on the work of Michael Polanyi, it is argued that because belief systems require resistance to contrary evidence in order to maintain stability, conversion to a different belief system is problematic. Polanyi argues that such conversions are not the result of straightforward refutations by contrary evidence, but rather are effected by a loss of confidence in that system of beliefs on the part of the believer.

Tim Ryder - “Disambiguating Adaptation to Climate Change in Coastal Environments: An Analysis of Climate Action Plans?” Coastal climate adaptation refers to the current and future human actions in response to global sea level rise due, in part, to global climate change. In the United States, the states composing the Atlantic Coast have published influential Climate Action Plans. These documents are fundamentally shaping current and future policies as well as determining the breadth of the impact sea level rise will have upon their coastline. Ambiguity has infiltrated these documents due to the lack of a precise definition for the term, “adaptation.” Therefore, an examination and reconstruction of ‘coastal climate adaptation’ and adaptive responses was performed. Based on methodically disambiguating the term, a new, more succinct and precise definition will provide the basis for an analysis of individual state’s current policy direction.

Philosophy Club news

By Amanda McMullen, President

This past year for the Stetson University Philosophy Club has doubt-

lessly been quite an exciting one! We explored a diverse array of topics, ranging from the philosophical significance of Homeric epics to Scientific Realism to Kant's philosophy of history. I may also add that Club membership has swelled over the past year, attracting a number of new, faithful attendees (and hopefully budding philosophers!).

We were also fortunate enough to host two guest speakers, Dr. Steven Davis (Claremont-McKenna College) and Dr. Sidney Axinn (University of South Florida, Professor Emeritus, Temple University), this past semester. Dr. Davis delivered both a lecture on the distinctive nature of the Christian faith titled "Is Christianity Unique?" and a breakfast discussion, "Christianity and Horrendous Evils", addressing the challenges of maintaining one's Christian faith while confronted by the suffering that seems inherent in the world.

In contrast, Dr. Axinn spoke with us from the vantage of a particular philosopher, that paragon of reticent brilliance, Immanuel Kant. Yet, Dr. Axinn focused our attention on a topic that we may not readily associate (although undeservedly so) with Kant: his philosophy of history. Lecturing to a room surfeited with students, Dr. Axinn drew upon Kant's "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View" to explain Kant's view on how human history exhibits a purposive pattern, which has its objective in the achievement of a civic society.

Both Dr. Davis's and Dr. Axinn's talks inspired spirited debate as well as serious ethical reflection and we are greatly honored to have been able to host them!



Joshua Rust, Anders Brent, Amanda McMullen, and Ron Hall at the Senior Honors Banquet

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Faculty News

From Ronald Hall: Professor Hall devotes much of his scholarship to reviewing the scholarship of his colleagues in the philosophy of religion from around the world. He is the Editor-in-Chief of *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. In this capacity, he writes an *Editorial Preface* for each of the 6 issues per year of the journal. He also keeps updating the Logic text that he wrote and the department uses in its beginning course in logic course. Life at Stetson is good: our department is flourishing with an average of 20 majors per year; and so important for me, our small faculty and staff happily converse in a spirit of collegiality.

From Susan Peppers-Bates: Joshua Rust and I had a peer-review paper accepted for a conference on Harry Potter & Philosophy at Marymount College. We also presented our paper, "Friendship, Identity Politics, and Harry Potter," at the above described conference in NYC. I also received a Summer Grant for 2011 to work on a project on Rene Girard's philosophical theology of sacrifice. Due to husband's sudden illness, hospitalization and death in the summer of 2011 project remains uncompleted. I will write the paper this summer 2012, submit to the Society for the Philosophy of Religion Conference in the fall, and send the article for publication to the Society's journal in Spring 2012. I also anticipate a related article relating Girard's conception of scapegoating to American Racism to be submitted to the Black Catholic Theological Quarterly in Fall 2012.

From Joshua Rust: I love being a father! It's been fun to watch Quinn grow up and begin to master the basics—eating, walking, and, now, speech. Go Quinn! On the philosophical front (not to suggest that parenting isn't philosophical) I've published a number of essays this year. I'm most proud of "Aesthetic Norms and Institutional Realty" which takes John Searle to task for having an overly limited conception of human motivation. He also replied to my essay. Both my essay and his response can be found here: cargocollective.com/joshuarust. In "Ethicists' Courtesy at Philosophy Conferences" we've continued our empirical work investigating the moral behavior of ethicists. Ethicists don't appear to behave worse than non-ethicist philosophers. But shouldn't we expect them to behave better? I think so. Bad ethicist. No doughnut.

From Sylvia Walsh Perkins: Scholar in Residence in the Philosophy Department, translated an original collection of discourses by Søren Kierkegaard, *Discourses at Communion on Fridays* published by Indiana University Press. She was also the Keynote Speaker for an international Kierkegaard Conference on Kierkegaard at the University of Copenhagen in May 2012.

From Robert L. Perkins: Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, had an article, "...just urging him to go his own way...": Kierkegaard and Religious Pluralism" accepted for publication in an anthology, *Kierkegaard, Christianity, and Religious Pluralism*, edited by Dr. Andrew Burgess, University of New Mexico, to be published by Mercer University Press.

