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Philosophy @ X

WHAT'S NEW IN THE DEPARTMENT

It has been an interesting and busy year in Philosophy @ StFX, and 2005-06 promises to be the same.

In the fall, the Department will be offering a number of courses for the first time – **Philosophy of Law** (Phil 372), **Social and Political Philosophy** (Phil 371) and **Ethics in Health and Medicine** (Phil 366). We will also be offering a senior seminar on the **Philosophy of Immanuel Kant** (Phil 460).

A new professor, Dr. John Cook, will be joining the Department of Philosophy in the fall – he is our second new faculty member in as many years. (*Read more about Dr. Cook on page 3.*)

In the past year, several books have been published by professors in the Department, and Department members continue to be invited to give lectures across Canada and around the world.

The StFX Philosophy Club has been active as well – and their new T-shirts are one of the “must have” items of 2005.

The breadth and range of study and research – by students and by faculty – in Philosophy at StFX is remarkable. The quality of our teaching and research has been long recognised. Dr. Steven Baldner received the University’s Distinguished Teaching Award in 2004, and Dr. William Sweet received its Research Award in 2001. Inside this newsletter you’ll see some of the reasons why, in its last external assessment, the reviewers stated that the “Philosophy Department is almost certainly the best small department in the country.”



FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Back row (left to right): Louis Groarke, William Sweet (Chair), James Mensch.

Front row (left to right): Stephen Baldner, Christopher Byrne, Laura Byrne. *Missing:* Ed Carty

FACULTY NEWS

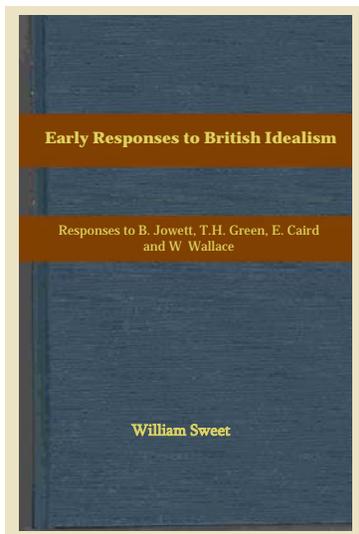
Department Chair **Professor William Sweet** has been actively involved in teaching and research, both at home and abroad, over the past year.

This year Professor Sweet has taught 'Contemporary Anglo-American Philosophy' – which he reminds us he lived through as an undergraduate and a graduate student – as well as a pilot course in Health Care Ethics.

Last summer, Professor Sweet lectured in India, China, Thailand, and in Europe. He gave the Principal William Miller Lectures at the University of Madras (India), and also taught a graduate course in philosophy of religion at Dharmaram College in Bangalore, India. As well, he gave a series of 9 lectures at the Fu Jen University in Taiwan, where he held the Lokuang Chair in Philosophy and Culture.

Later this spring, Prof. Sweet flies to Seoul, Korea, and to Helsinki, Finland, where he is on the Programme Committee for the World Congress of Philosophy that will be held in 2008. He will also be participating in a conference on "Dialogues among Cultures" to be held in Asia this spring.

In the past year, three of his (edited) books have been published – *Approaches to Metaphysics*, *The Philosophy of History: a re-examination*, and *To the Mountain* – as well as his 3 volume critical edition of *Early Responses to British Idealism*. Professor Sweet's latest (edited) book, *Politics, Ethics, and the Challenges to Democracy* in the 'New Independent States', will appear in April 2005.



Early Responses to British Idealism, a three-volume set of essays, edited, annotated, and introduced by **Professor William Sweet**, gathers responses to the major writings of the leading figures of the British idealist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These volumes were published in late 2004 by Thoemmes Continuum Press.

Professor Steven Baldner's article on "Thomas Aquinas on Celestial Matter" was accepted for publication in *The Thomist*. In February of last year, he gave a seminar at Blackfriars, Oxford, on "Aquinas on Prime Matter and the Heavens" – where he undoubtedly scotched the theories of Professor Christopher Byrne. Last November, he presented commentaries – on papers on "Scientific Reporting, Imagination, and Neo-Aristotelian Realism," and on "The Commensurability of Thomistic Natural Philosophy and Cartesian Mechanics" – at the meetings of the Society for Thomistic Natural Philosophy, held with the American Catholic Philosophical conference meetings in Miami, Florida. Prof. Baldner will be on sabbatical leave in 2005-06.

▣

Professor Christopher Byrne has been continuing his research on Aristotle and Plato's natural science and their views on the relation between physical necessity and the good. He gave a presentation at the recent Western Canadian Philosophy Association conference, entitled "How much do Aristotle's Formal Causes explain about Natural Substances?" – his answer was, "not everything permanent about them" – and is currently writing a paper entitled "Aristotle's Definition of the Soul and the Material Cause of Biological Organisms."

Professor Byrne is the Co-ordinator of the Classical Studies Programme at StFX. In 2005-06, he will be teaching courses in **Ancient Greek Philosophy** and in the Classics program, as well as a section of the Introductory course in Philosophy.



Professor Steven Baldner imposing 'form' on Professor Christopher Byrne's 'prime matter'.



Professor Laura Byrne continues to pursue her interests on topics in modern philosophy. Her research, at present, focuses on Spinoza's ethical theory and Early Modern natural philosophy, particularly the development of the concept of mass and the law of inertia in the 17th Century. She is currently working on a paper criticizing the Knowledge Argument, an argument against physicalism

In addition to teaching Introductory Philosophy, Dr. Byrne also has teaching interests in the **Philosophy of Human Nature** and in **Modern Philosophy**.



Professor Edward Carty continues, after retirement from StFX, to teach courses in the Department. Next year, he will offer his famous Philosophy 100 – where he lectures on Socratic dialogue – as well as teach a course in Introductory Latin.

Professor Carty can sometimes be found in his new haunts, in MacNeil Hall, or scouring the 5th floor of Nicholson Tower, where you may overhear him chatting in French with a slight Scottish brogue. In the fall, Professor Carty will likely be found with the St. F.X. University Rugby Club, where he has been he has been Coach since 1967.



Professor Louis Groarke can usually be found in his office into the wee hours of the morning – or at the gym, where he consciously seeks to exemplify the dictum, *Mens sana in corpore sano* [A healthy mind in a healthy body].

This year, Dr. Groarke gave the first lecture of the new Dean's Scholars Lecture Series, on October 27, 2004, on "The Meaning of Freedom." His book, *The Good Rebel*, was the subject of a special book symposium at the Canadian Philosophical Association meetings at the University of Manitoba last summer. Dr. Amitai Etzioni (George Washington University), Dr. Ralph McInerney (University of Notre Dame), Dr. Jan Narveson (University of Waterloo), and Dr. Jason West (St. Jerome's University) all spoke on Dr. Groarke's book.

Dr. Groarke continues to be active in research, particularly on themes in political philosophy. In October, he presented a paper on "Dancing in Circles: Liberal Justifications of Negative Rights" at the fall meeting of the Canadian Maritain Association; Dr. Groake's paper will be published later this year in "Maritain Studies."

Last May, Dr. Groarke participated in a Symposium on Ancient and Medieval Logic ("Aristotle's Theory of Definition: Posterior Analytics II:3-10") which bears on Definition: Posterior Analytics II:3-10") which bears on some issues in his forthcoming book on Aristotle's notion of moral and scientific induction. A paper on Aristotle and biology will be presented at the Canadian Philosophical Association meetings in London, Ontario, in May, and a paper on "Aristotle: Moral Education In Crisis" has been accepted for The Association for Core Texts and Courses (ACTC) Eleventh Annual Conference in Vancouver.



Professor James Mensch's book, *Hiddenness and Alterity: Philosophical and Literary Sightings of the Unseen*, will be published in March by Duquesne University Press. Last summer, he read papers in Olomouc, Czech Republic, at the Husserl Circle conference in Washington, D.C., in Munich, Germany, and at International Society for the Study of European Ideas conference in Pamplona, Spain. In the fall, he presented a paper at the October 2004 Korean-American Phenomenology conference in Memphis, Tennessee, and participated in an author meets critics session, on his book *Ethics and Selfhood*.

In 2005-06, he will be teaching **Phenomenology and Existentialism** (380) as well as a **Seminar on Immanuel Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason**.

INTRODUCING DR. JOHN COOK



John ("Jay") Cook will be joining the StFX Department in the summer of 2005. Dr. Cook is a graduate of Memorial University and of the University of Toronto (Ph.D. 2002), where he wrote a thesis on contemporary philosophy of language. Dr. Cook has taught at

Memorial University, the University of Toronto and, since 2002, at Trent University. He has published in *Philosophy in Review* in his area of specialization – contemporary analytic philosophy and the philosophy of language – but he also has a strong interest in the philosophy of science, early modern philosophy, and the philosophy of law.

Dr. Cook will be teaching **Philosophy of Science** (210), **Logic** (340), and **Philosophy of Law** (372) in the coming year.



PHILOSOPHY AND VIRTUE ETHICS



Professor Thomas Hurka (*far left*) spends some time with department chair, William Sweet (*centre*) and the Dean of Arts, Mary McGillivray

Former *Globe and Mail* columnist, Professor Thomas Hurka of the University of Toronto, participated in this year's annual lecture series in Philosophy, sponsored by the Department and co-sponsored by the Dean of Arts.

A graduate of the University of Toronto and of the University of Oxford (where he played hockey with StFX President Dr. Sean Riley), Dr. Hurka was professor of philosophy at the University of Calgary from 1978 to 2002. From 1989 to 1992, he wrote a weekly ethics column, distributed across Canada, for *The Globe and Mail* newspaper. In addition, he had a weekly spot on the CBC national television show, "Midday" from 1999 to 2000. He is the author of *Perfectionism* (1993), *Virtue, Vice, and Value* (2001), and *Principles: Short Essays on Ethics* (1993), which collects some of the newspaper columns that appeared in *The Globe and Mail*.

Dr. Christine McKinnon, of Trent University, had also been invited to the University this term. Her lecture on "Character and Virtue Ethics" had to be cancelled, however, due to weather conditions.

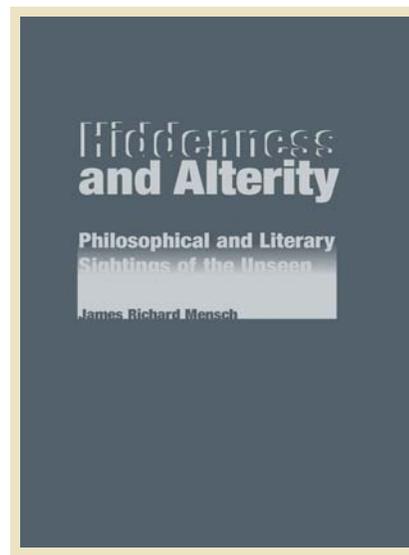
Acknowledged as one of Canada's leading experts on moral philosophy, Dr. Hurka is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, the senior national body of distinguished Canadian scientists and scholars, and is currently Chancellor Henry N. R. Jackman Distinguished Professor of Philosophical Studies at Toronto

On February 11, Dr. Hurka gave a public lecture on "Proportionality and the Morality of War." He also gave a talk, earlier that day, to faculty and senior honours students, on his recent research in perfectionist ethics.

In his public lecture, Prof. Hurka argued that, in articulating just war theory, the issue of 'proportionality' arises in both *ius ad bellum* (morality of the resort to war) and *ius in bello* (morality of the means of fighting).

These issues focus on the relative goods that might be achieved by war, the relative evils that engagement in war might effect, and finally the issue of 'weighing lives.'

In the lively question period that followed Dr. Hurka's lecture, a number of issues were raised, such as the relevance of the loyalty of commanders to their subordinates, the assignment of higher moral weight to one's own citizens in wartime, and the obligation to rebuild or reestablish order following the ending of hostilities.



Prof. James Mensch's latest book, *Hiddenness and Alterity: Philosophical and Literary Sightings of the Unseen*, has just been published by Duquesne University Press. In this book, Dr. Mensch "seeks to define how the hidden shows itself" and raises the question of "the nature and origin of our self-concealment."



NEW COURSES FOR 2005-06

Several new courses will be offered for the first time, starting in the fall of 2005.

Social and Political Philosophy – Philosophy 371

What would an ideal society be like? Should there be limits on human freedom? Do human beings have rights that everyone should respect? Is it ever morally acceptable to disobey or rebel against the state? Questions such as these will be examined in a 3-credit course, beginning in the fall of 2005, on 'social and political philosophy.

The course will refer to texts from classical and mediaeval philosophers, but will focus on modern thinkers (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham, Marx, Mill, Green), including authors from the late 20th century (representing liberal, libertarian, Marxist, and conservative thought, and from non-western perspectives).

Philosophy of Law – Philosophy 372

What is the nature and function of law? What is the relation between law and morality? What is the character of legal reasoning and judicial decision-making? What are the justifications and aims of punishment? Questions such as these will be examined in a 3-credit course, beginning in January of 2006, on philosophical reflection on the law and legal institutions.

Issues discussed may include the nature of values, norms, truth and objectivity, the conditions for legal responsibility, and the implications of diversity and plural values for politics and the law (e.g., legal positivism, value pluralism, cultural diversity and claims of universality). Challenges to the Western legal tradition from non-western perspectives may also be covered.

Ethics in Medicine and Health – Philosophy 366

Students contemplating careers in medicine, health-care, nursing, and related fields – or those just interested in some of the most controversial issues in contemporary ethics – will be interested in our new 6-credit course on ethics in medicine and health care.

The course will begin with a survey of theories about ethics and of major ethical theories in order to supply some of the theoretical background in which these issues are debated. The second part of the course focuses on the philosophical analysis of values in the context of medicine and health. The course then examines a number of contemporary ethical issues through the critical examination of cases and scholarly literature. Issues will

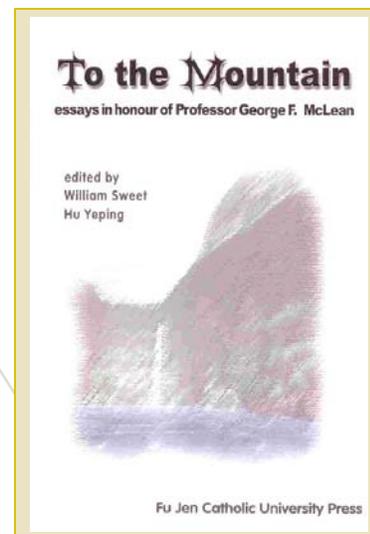
include: the concept of health; the ethical responsibilities of professionals and professional integrity; freedom, autonomy, and consent: death, dying, and euthanasia; abortion and infanticide; research involving human subjects; the allocation of scarce medical resources; confidentiality and privacy; reproductive rights and technologies; medical and non-medical drug use.

Seminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology – Philosophy 460

Topic for 2005-06

Immanuel Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason

Immanuel Kant is arguably the most important philosopher of the modern period, ranking with Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas. His most influential work is the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which he attempts to show the scope and limits of our reason. This book has dominated the tradition of continental European philosophy to this day. Philosophy 460 will, following a series of lectures on the historical background of Kant's works, devote the major portion of the year to a study of this complex, yet richly rewarding work. If time permits, a look at selections from the *Critique of Judgment* will also be included.



Published by Fu Jen Catholic University Press, *To the Mountain: essays in honour of Professor George F. McLean* recognises McLean's mobilization of philosophical research teams in countries around the world. Editors **William Sweet** and Hu Yeping bring together essays from such philosophers as Jean Ladrière, Ghislaine Florival, Nikolaus Lobkowitz, Vincent Shen, Kenneth Schmitz, and Enrique Dussel, that show the impact of McLean's efforts to promote the examination of the nature and development of cultures, and the challenges of modern social life.



(left to right) Martin Capstick, Marie Claude McIntyre, Teri Pecoskie, Therese Tisseverasinghe, & Dan McCulloch. Martin and Dan are sporting the new Philosophy Society T-shirts.

Honours theses 2005

Paul Curry — Individualism and Moral Responsibility: the Political Philosophies of Robert Nozick and Jacques Maritain

Your next door neighbour has lost her job, and her husband has abandoned her. Her situation has come to the point where she cannot even feed her three children, let alone herself. You are not friends, and perhaps you even dislike each other. Do you extend a hand? More importantly, are you morally obliged to do so?

Questions such as these arise in a vast variety of situations, from the domestic to the global scale. Are we obliged to help tsunami victims halfway across the world? Should people be allowed to sell their bodies as prostitutes? My thesis seeks to shed light on these and related questions of moral and political philosophy by considering two prominent theories of the last century: the individualism of Robert Nozick, and the personalism of Jacques Maritain. After presenting and comparing these two theories, I apply them to the contemporary problems of poverty relief and prostitution.

Martin Capstick — David Chalmers and the Problem of Consciousness

We all take the existence of consciousness as a given – but consciousness, its existence, and its nature have been hotly debated in the contemporary philosophy of mind. In my honours thesis, I present David Chalmers' position on the problem of consciousness and then discuss Chalmers' position from both a naturalist (Daniel Dennett) and a non-naturalist (John Searle) position. Although I disagree

and argue against some of Chalmers' conclusions, I argue some important analytical perspectives that are essential to contemporary theories in the philosophy of mind.

Dan McCulloch — The Metaphysics of Substance: An Unconventional Approach

In my honours thesis, I undertake an analysis of the fundamental principles of a metaphysics of substance and accident as articulated by Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas in order to defend the former through my own particular conception of how these principles are to be understood. My claim is that the traditional account of the principles involved commits a category mistake that, once resolved, allows this historic doctrine to reclaim its power to critique the kind of materialistic reductionism that would deny that natural complexes really do have 'essences,' i.e., that they have overarching unity as 'substances.'

Teri Pecoskie — Reconciling Subjectivism and Objectivism in Ethics

Ethical theorists overwhelmingly favor impersonal, universal, principle-based theories in moral decision-making. I argue that adopting a strictly impersonal ethical position overlooks the inevitable fact that morality is contemplated and practiced from a private, personal perspective. Exclusively adopting an impersonal stance will have negative effects in the context of both moral theory and applied ethics. Moreover, impersonal theories pose serious practical difficulties in the fields of politics and policy making.

My thesis proposes an alternative to this prevalent trend in ethics. I suggest developing a new approach that gives greater consideration to our unique, personal preferences and responsibilities.

I focus on the implications of 'impersonalism' for theory and application in turn. My initial task in this paper is to examine some principle-based moral theories to demonstrate their impersonal content. I then proceed to review and critique Thomas Nagel's position in *The View From Nowhere*. Following my critique of Nagel, I propose three alternative ways of approaching morality that respect the unique perspectives of moral agents. My final task will be to demonstrate where appropriate moral action has been achieved through an agent's personal response to the particular nature of a situation rather than through strict adherence to principle.



Jacques Maritain in Taiwan

The French Catholic philosopher, Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), was one of the leading intellectuals of the 20th century, and a key figure in the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in December 1948. Maritain's work has been recognised throughout the world – and some Asian scholars see it as providing a useful bridge between East and West.

Invited late last year by the Institute of Scholastic Philosophy of the Fu Jen Catholic University in T'ai-pei, Taiwan, to serve as the Lokuang Chair of Philosophy and Culture, Professor William Sweet gave a series of nine lectures to faculty and graduate students on "The Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Law in Jacques Maritain, and some contemporary applications." Delivered in English (with Chinese translation), Professor Sweet presented Maritain's natural law theory along with its implications for just war theory, democracy, and solidarity. The text of Professor Sweet's lectures will be published in Chinese at a future date.



Left to right: Prof. Theresa Hsiao-Huei Pan (Dean, Faculty of Philosophy, Fu Jen University), Prof. William Sweet, Dr. Cristal Huang (Professor, Soochow University)

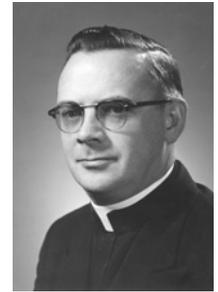
Philosophy Awards and Prizes

The Father Edo Gatto Award and The Father Charles R. MacDonald Medal

The Department makes two awards annually to students of high academic ability.



Edo Gatto (1931-91)
[photo courtesy W. Sweet]



C. R. MacDonald (1920-75)
[photo courtesy StFX]

The Father Charles R. MacDonald Memorial Medal is the Department's highest award to a graduating student, and is normally awarded at convocation. It honours Fr. MacDonald, who taught at StFX from 1946 to 1974.

Born in Glace Bay on 22 Dec. 1920, Fr. MacDonald studied at StFX (BA 1941), Holy Heart Seminary (Halifax), and the Université Laval (Québec) (PhD, 1965). In the 1950s, he established a 'great books' club at StFX "to encourage its members to read many of the classics which everyone wishes to read... but never does." He was recognized as a "brilliant student" both at StFX and at Laval, and was known for his devotion to Plato and Aristotle, "his easy grace of expression, his humble and engaging manner... [and] his ability to say much in little."

The Father Edo Gatto Memorial Award is presented to a student who shows excellence in mediaeval philosophy – particularly in Department's courses in that area. It was established in honour of Fr. Gatto (BA 1952), who died tragically in a motor vehicle accident in Dec. 1991. Fr. Gatto was Chair of the Department at the time of his death.

Born in Dominion, Cape Breton in 1931, Fr. Gatto graduated from StFX with a BA (1952) and studied for the priesthood at St. Basil's Seminary (Toronto). Following ordination in 1956, he received a Licentiate in Mediaeval Studies (from the Pontifical Institute) and a PhD in philosophy from the University of Toronto (1962).

Fr. Gatto taught in the Philosophy Department from 1962 to 1991. He also served on various university committees, including the Senate, Board of Governors, and the X-Ring Committee. He held a number of positions in the Alumni Association including that of President (1980-83). As part of Homecoming 1993, a "Philosopher's Bench," located beside Somers Hall, was dedicated in his memory. The Gatto Chair of Christian Studies was established at the University in his honour.

PHIL 100 – Introductory Philosophy

... studies the major thinkers in the history of philosophy, and introduces students to logic and critical thinking.

PHIL 210 – Philosophy of Science

... examines scientific method and the logic of science.

PHIL 230 - Philosophy of Human Nature

... examines the nature of personal identity, how the mind is related to the body, and the possibility of survival after death.

PHIL 240 – Philosophy of Religion

... looks at different concepts of, and proofs for and against, the existence of God, the soul, and the relation of science and religion.

PHIL 330 – Ethics

PHIL 331 - Ethical Theories

PHIL 332 - Contemporary Moral and Social Issues

... deals with the major ethical theories and their applications to contemporary problems.

PHIL 336 – Ethics in Health and Medicine

... provides a survey of major ethical theories and an analysis of values in the context of contemporary issues in medicine and health.

PHIL 340 – Logic

...introduces students to the rules of reasoning and argument.

PHIL 351 - Socrates and Plato

PHIL 352 – Aristotle

... discuss some of the major writings of the founders of the western philosophical traditions.

PHIL 371 – Social and Political Philosophy

... examines political and social issues in relation to their origins in philosophical discussion.

PHIL 372 – Philosophy of Law

... examines issues involved in philosophical reflection on the law and legal institutions

PHIL 380 – Phenomenology and Existentialism

... examines the central questions of 20th century philosophy in the 'continental' tradition.

PHIL 460 – Seminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology

... discusses questions bearing on the ultimate structure of reality as a whole: the nature of material things; the existence of the immaterial; the meaning of being; what can and cannot be known of reality; whether there is a First Cause.

In 2005-06 the topic is: Immanuel Kant and the *Critique of Pure Reason*

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Thanks to Dr. James Cameron and to Ms. Kathleen MacKenzie for information on Fr. Charles R MacDonald – and to Ms. Marcy Baker for her usual proficiency with all things digital.

Philosophy@X appears, from time to time, usually in the Spring.

Editor: William Sweet