

REPORT ON THE MISSISSIPPI PHILOSOPHY ASSOCIATION MEETING OF APRIL 1, 1989

Our 39th annual spring meeting was hosted by the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Mississippi State University. The new Chair of the Department, Paul Jacobs, welcomed us.

Six papers were presented:

1. John Person (Millsaps), winner of the second prize in the student essay contest, reflected on the place of absurdity in Camus' thought; it is, he maintained, a point of departure for inquiring into the meaning of life rather than an assertion about life.

2. The first-prize paper by Phillip McReynolds (Mississippi State) offered an analysis of pictorial representation in which the necessity of a subject's taking the representation to denote something was stressed. Discussion revolved around the question whether some pictorial forms are universally taken to be representative in the same way; McReynolds insisted that taking certain pictures to be representative of certain things is always learned according to one's (one's culture's) needs and interests.

3. Lou Pojman (Ole Miss) canvassed strengths and weaknesses of different forms of the Divine Command ethical theory as part of a larger project of "working out an adequate morality on which theists and non-theists alike can agree." In discussion, different perspectives on the Abraham and Isaac story were fielded.

(We lunched on Mazzio's fare in the MSU cafeteria and then returned to the Union to hold our business meeting, reported below.)

4. Bennie Crockett (William Carey) traced the development of early Christian theology's identification of Jesus with the "logos," concluding that Christian thought was profoundly shaped by the Greek metaphysical problematic. Whether the "logos" of John's Gospel should be thought of against a Hebrew background, or Greek, or both, was a point of interest in discussion.

5. Tom Flynn (Ole Miss) wondered why modern aestheticians and artists are in flight from the idea/ideal of "beauty." Reviewing various philosophers' thoughts on beauty, he drew attention to Bosanquet's distinction between "easy" and "hard" beauty and related this to Adler's distinction between "enjoyable" (intuitive, subjective) and "admirable" (knowledgeable, objective) beauty. "Beauty cheers." Some challenged Flynn's claim that (a) Plato, setting his sights on "Absolute Beauty," is insensitive to natural beauty, and (b) that is because his paradigm of natural beauty is an unwholesome kind of sexual love.

6. In his presidential address, Ted Ammon (Millsaps) objected to the unreasonableness of a Pyrrhonism (skepticism) that would be closed to the possibility of finding truth. The Pyrrhonist posture is especially undesirable when we face dire social problems and must adopt principles of action superior to "custom." Showing that he knows how to speak presidentially, Ammon declared that our civilization is at a crossroads.

Business meeting

In attendance were Ted Ammon, Bennie Crockett, Rita Hinton, Michael Mitias, Wallace Murphree, Lou Pojman, Pat Riley, Steve Smith, and Forrest Wood.

Secretary-Treasurer Steve Smith reported a balance of \$141.79, down \$78 from last year. It was decided to bring expenditures in line with revenue by dropping our membership in the Conference of Philosophical Societies and our redistribution of the philosophical calendars they send us. Lou Pojman already gets those calendars for some other reason, and anyone interested can request a copy from him. Officers were elected for 1989-90 as follows:

Secretary-Treasurer: Steve Smith
Vice President and Program Chair: Bennie Crockett
President: Rita Hinton

The membership favored the idea of meeting in Jackson next year, and coordinating the MPA meeting with the Dunbar lecture at Millsaps if possible. The Millsaps members said they would see what they could do. --Interest was expressed in hearing about the experience of our members who have taught philosophy in grade school, e.g. Richard Randall in high school and Rita Hinton in first grade. --It was proposed that information be collected from all members on their professional activities and other news from their departments; this could be published in a newsletter, perhaps in the fall. We liked this idea. Hinton and Smith agreed to work on this. A standardized form may be used.

--A LIST OF MAILING ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS OF MPA MEMBERS AND OTHER PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN MPA AFFAIRS IS SENT WITH THIS REPORT. Please help to complete the listings by apprising Smith of correct addresses, phone numbers (do the Universities have departmental phone numbers?), and by suggesting who else should be on the list or who needn't be on it any more.

Many members have paid their dues for 1989-90; others will be reminded on this page. Please chip in, especially to support our student prizes.

Respectfully submitted,



Steven G. Smith
Secretary-Treasurer

____ Your dues are respectfully solicited