

## **Report on the Mississippi Philosophical Association meeting of March 30, 1996**

19 of us congregated at Jackson State University for our 46th annual meeting.

Kristen Brown (Millsaps) presented "Metaphor and Body: Nietzsche after *The Birth of Tragedy*," focusing on a transitional essay, "Truth and Falsity in Their Extramoral Sense" [1873]. Here Nietzsche no longer assumes a primal unity of Being for which there could be a "best metaphor" like music; he shifts to a "free creation" metaphor for Being and an understanding of metaphor as transfigurational rather than truthful. To the question, How, for Nietzsche, can there be a shared world?, the answer was, Shared structures exist but should be seen as questionable.

Laura Angstadt (USM) read the first-prize student paper on "Aristotle's Treatment of Substance in the *Categories* and Book Z of the *Metaphysics*," attending especially to Aristotelian reasons for accepting the composite of matter and form as primary substance. The "nasty consequence" of this view, that every attribute becomes necessary and L. becomes a different person if she cuts her hair, was pointed out.

Asking "Is Tolerance a Virtue for Society?," Paula Smithka (USM) argued that tolerance should not be seen as a prima facie social good because the principle of tolerance can encourage conformity, irrationality, and intolerant special interest groups; indeed, any concept of tolerance paradoxically generates intolerance. One line of response was to seek a way of contextualizing the principle or virtue of tolerance so that it can be affirmed within its proper limits.

In "Consciousness in Concert," Steve Smith (Millsaps) presented a theory of mind and matter as Platonic and Spinozan "reversals" of each other and argued on that basis that since coordination, not contact, must be the relation among neuronal events by virtue of which consciousness exists, there is no a priori reason why widely separate physical events couldn't be coordinated (sometimes) in a consciousness-producing way. Under questioning, Smith was permissive as regards possible vehicles and types of consciousness but restrictive as regards the conditions of personal continuity.

We lunched very lengthily at the Iron Horse Grill. K. Brown wondered whether to tolerate a stick in her food. --In our business meeting there, Secretary-Treasurer S. Smith alluded to a current bank balance (counting bills not yet paid) of -27.24, the deficit owing mainly to a low dues collection of \$125 in the past year. No one batted an eye. But M. Harrington proposed that the four multi-person departments make annual \$100 grants to the MPA, which would not merely put us in the black but enable us to support participation at more ambitiously planned meetings (e.g. running from Friday afternoon to Saturday mid-day). Can the other three departments besides Ole Miss pledge \$100? --Elected officers for 1996-1997: Steve Smith, Secretary-Treasurer; John Meadors, Vice-President/Program Chair; and Bill Yount, President.

J. Meadors offered to host next year's MPA meeting at Mississippi College. --B. Crockett, editor of the HAPS volume of MPA Presidential and other papers, informed us of his *need* to receive more papers to make the volume feasible. He was directed to use his own discretion in assembling the papers. --A proposal that met with mixed response was to divide the student paper competition into undergraduate and graduate divisions. The officers might want to experiment with this in 1997.

Resuming our program at JSU, John Meadors (Mississippi College) examined "D. Z. Phillips on Religious Epistemologies and Concept-Formation." Phillips criticizes Plantinga for treating religious belief as too isolable in principle, like a hypothesis; but then Phillips' way of showing how religious concepts are formed, e.g. as a response to the mystery of divine power encountered in a storm at sea, seems to lead him into the very "experiential expressivism" he elsewhere (agreeing with George Lindbeck) rejects. We discussed how uncertainty can be admitted as an inherent and normal part of thought and argument, even in religion, even by philosophers.

Roy Davison (JSU emeritus) reviewed "History, 'Dasein,' and the Contemplation of Death in the Existentialism of Martin Heidegger," stressing the importance for the early Heidegger of an ideal of resolute and generous individual character and of an orientation toward the disclosure rather than construction of truth. The question was raised, How does Heidegger's apparent continuation of Romantic individualism square with his rejection of the ego-based Cartesian philosophy?

In the Presidential Address, "Can Life Goals Be Rationally Chosen?," David Holley (USM) sought a more nuanced picture of the relationship between reason and desire than either utilitarian or Kantian moral psychology provides. "Desires" can only be sorted out and chosen among if they are shaped by reasoning (at various levels, from the more specific to the more comprehensive). The work of imagination is important. Recalling the earlier discussion of Nietzsche, questioners were interested in the prospects of "aesthetic" evaluation of life.

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Note: the second-prize student essay winner this year was Clay Cazier of Millsaps.

Full-time employed philosophers (those who didn't pay at the meeting) are urged to send in their annual dues of \$10.

Respectfully submitted,



Steven G. Smith, Secretary-Treasurer