

# The Phi Sigma Tau

Bulletin

Fall 1998

A Publication of the Department of Philosophy, Southwest Texas State University

Issue 8

## PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT BRINGS ANTONY FLEW TO SWT IN OCTOBER

*Let us begin with a parable. It is a parable developed from a tale told by John Wisdom in his haunting and revelatory article "Gods." Once upon a time two explorers came upon a clearing in the jungle. In the clearing were growing many flowers and many weeds. One explorer says, "Some gardener must tend this plot." The other disagrees, "There is no gardener." So they pitch their tents and set a watch. No gardener is ever seen. "But perhaps he is an invisible gardener." So they set up a barbed-wire fence. They electrify it. They patrol with bloodhounds. . . . But no shrieks ever suggest that some intruder has received a shock. No movements of the wire ever betray an invisible climber. The bloodhounds never give cry. Yet still the Believer is not convinced. "But there is a gardener, invisible, intangible, insensible to electric shocks, a gardener who has no scent and makes no sound, a gardener who comes secretly to look after the garden which he loves." At last the Sceptic despairs, "But what remains of your original assertion? Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?" ...\**

Such is the challenge to theistic belief discussed by three British philosophers—Antony Flew, R.M. Hare, and Basil Mitchell—in the now famous 1950 symposium "Theology and Falsification." This debate, as alive today as it was at mid-century, will continue this fall at SWT with the arrival on campus of one the original participants in the exchange, eminent philosopher Antony Flew.

Professor Flew will speak on "Can We Survive Our Own Death" on Thursday, October 22 at 2:00 p.m. in the Teaching Theater of the new LBJ

Student Center. On the same day, he will teach a philosophy class and will also be available for informal discussion with students, faculty, and anyone interested in his work in the philosophy dialogue room, USC 231. (See dialogue calendar insert.)

Professor Flew's visit to SWT this fall continues and complements the extensive interest generated in the area of philosophical theology by the spring visit to SWT of Oxford philosopher Richard Swinburne, and in particular on the issue of the rational justification of religious faith. Swinburne is known for presenting a contemporary case for God's existence which attempts to reconcile faith and reason. Flew, by contrast, is known for exploring the issue of what would constitute a refutation of a theistic position like Swinburne's. This exploration is based on Flew's central assumption: that unless the conditions under which theistic beliefs would be false can be explicitly stated, such beliefs are not even meaningful, let alone true.

Born in London in 1923, Professor Flew was educated at Oxford and

the University of Keele. Now Emeritus Professor of the University of Reading, he has taught philosophy at the universities of Oxford, Aberdeen, and Keele, as well as at Minnesota, NYU, Swarthmore, Pittsburgh, Maryland, SUNY Buffalo, USC, Calgary, and UC San Diego. A distinguished and prolific scholar, Flew has authored twenty-five books and edited twelve; in addition he has published more than seventy articles in academic journals. Recent works include *Atheistic Humanism* (1993) and *The Philosophical Essays of Antony Flew* (1997). His 1984 book *God, Freedom, and Immortality: A Critical Analysis* is available at the University Bookstore.

Professor Flew's visit to SWT is sponsored by the Department of Philosophy and the University Lectures Committee.

\*From "Theology and Falsification," *University* (1950-51), reprinted in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, eds. A. Flew and A. MacIntyre (New York: Macmillan, 1955). John Wisdom's "God's" was originally published in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, XLV (London: Harrison & Sons, 1944-45). Both essays have been widely anthologized.

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Philosophy Dialogue Series—  
Calendar Insert

# Personal Reflections

By Rui Zhu

Antony Garrard Newton Flew, a world-renowned philosopher, is coming to give public lectures at SWT on Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>. I am especially excited by the news, not only because I ardently admire him but also because his upcoming visit marks the reunion of our first meeting 8 years ago in Beijing.

Yes, 8 years ago—while I was yet, using Flew’s own word, a “precocious” philosophy graduate at Beijing University. Flew’s 1990 visit was actually one year deferred due to whatever happened at the Tiananmen Square in that very precarious summer of 1989. With a still muddled and confused mind, I greeted Professor Flew in a very somber moment. I was his assistant, interpreter and travel guide as well. I was clearly a kind of travel guide people meet only in their worst nightmare. I took Professor Flew to the wrong part of the Great Wall, a part no one



## Antony Flew

author of more than 20 books. Many can be found on the internet at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

showed any interest in at that time. He was shrewd enough to notice the mistake. As a redemption, I guided him for a second Great Wall tour, this time at the right place. As for my interpreting job, it should I guess be a safe bet that Professor Flew gave me a good endorsement. After all, he knows no Chinese. How could he notice any mistake, even if there was one?

Or, is it a safe bet? Experts on Flew will likely tell me otherwise. Flew is no stranger to betting; on the contrary his insightful criticism of Pascal’s Wager is a telltale sign of his possible answer to my bet. Flew is the last person to rush to judgment, at

least on the issue of God and religion. He relentlessly seeks for truth and evidence. Using words of Hume, Flew’s foremost inspirer, he always “proportions his belief to evidence.” Is there any evidence he could find to give me an endorsement? Is my interpreting job something like an invisible Gardener to him? If so, I could only cry foul if his endorsement was withheld. Suppose I know that I did a very good job, and, therefore, I did a very good job (otherwise I could not *know* it). But how can I prove it to him, who has not the slightest idea of playing the shuttle game between English and Chinese? When Flew demands proofs from religious theories, could believers cry foul as I do?

Any last word on this issue? I guess it would be a safe bet to wait until Professor Flew shows up in front of our doorstep.

## Flew Web Pages

There are many pages on the internet that contain Antony Flew’s name. Here are the most interesting:

- ♦ A brief biography of Antony Flew ([http://www.infidel.org/library/modern/antony\\_flew/flew-bio.html](http://www.infidel.org/library/modern/antony_flew/flew-bio.html))—a brief Curriculum Vitae.
- ♦ Argument to Design: A fresh look at an old family of arguments ([http://www.infidel.org/library/modern/antony\\_flew/design.html](http://www.infidel.org/library/modern/antony_flew/design.html))—An essay written by Flew.
- ♦ Review of *The Wrath of Allah* by Robert E. Burns ([http://www.users.bigpond.com/Atheist\\_Australia/wrath.htm](http://www.users.bigpond.com/Atheist_Australia/wrath.htm))—a review written by Flew.
- ♦ Stephen Hawking and the Mind of God ([http://www.infidel.org/library/modern/antony\\_flew/hawking.html](http://www.infidel.org/library/modern/antony_flew/hawking.html))—another essay by Flew.

*We have a new  
website! Visit it at  
[http://www.swt.edu/  
acad\\_depts/philos/](http://www.swt.edu/acad_depts/philos/)*

**Thanks Beverly for the great website!**

## The Phi Sigma Tau Bulletin

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## Lab Report:

Hello and welcome to a new year. At the end of the spring semester, we packed our belongings and said farewell to Evans Liberal Arts Building. We were pleased to discover that our new Critical Thinking Lab was much larger, which now allows us to have two large tables that can be used for studying (or perhaps even "dialoging"). Our new lab facility is located in the University Service Center, Room 216.

Our Dialogue Series promises to be yet another outstanding one. In October, the distinguished philosopher of religion, Antony Flew, will be discussing the topics of theism and the immortality of the soul. We will also receive a visit from Joe Barnhart, Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of North Texas, and his wife Mary Ann Barnhart, a licensed marriage and family counselor. Joe and Mary Ann have published a number of scholarly works together and they will each present a dialogue in September. John McDermott, Professor of Philosophy at Texas A&M, will also visit the Dialogue Room in September.

We invite you to visit our new website at [http://www.swt.edu/acad\\_depts/philos/](http://www.swt.edu/acad_depts/philos/). The Fall 1998 Dialogue Series Calendar is available for viewing on the web. If you have any questions regarding the Critical Thinking Lab or the Dialogue Series, feel free to call me at 245-2403, or come by my office, USC 216B

Paul Wilson—CTL/Dialogue Series Coordinator

## Beverly Pairett Receives SWT Staff Award

Beverly Pairett, philosophy department secretary, was named SWT Staff Employee of the Month for May 1998. Beverly has been employed at SWT since January of 1994. Since that time she has rapidly learned to handle with efficiency and professionalism all the myriad tasks in the department which constantly require her attention. She supervises student workers, keeps departmental records, stays informed about the latest technology, and serves as prime communicator for both students and professors. (In other words, she's the one who gets to answer all the interminable questions.)

Beverly demonstrates her unwavering commitment to the academic goals of the university by cheerfully providing important support services for activities which may fall outside her working hours and responsibilities, such as public lectures and events sponsored by the honor society, *Phi Sigma Tau*. Remarkably, she is able to manage all

these demands with grace, warmth, and genuine good humor.

In addition to her responsibilities in the philosophy department, Beverly Pairett also contributes many hours of service to the Hays County Women's Center, where she takes crisis calls and generally helps to see that the program runs smoothly at night and on weekends. The president of the Women's Center Board has said of Beverly, "I believe that Beverly's contributions to the Women's Center are very important to the community, make SWT's commitment to our community very real, and are entirely consistent with the very high level of professionalism that she brings to her job."

So, Beverly, here's to you, the *sine qua non* of the department. Congratulations on this well deserved honor.

(By-the-way, a special thanks goes to Beverly for setting up the department's website this summer.)



## Faculty Notes

Professors Lynne and Gil Fulmer and Vince Luizzi attended the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference for the International Society for the Study of Argument (ISSA) in Amsterdam in June, where Lynne Fulmer and Vince Luizzi presented papers. Lynne Fulmer reports:

*The conference provided a valuable chance to see how others approach critical thinking (besides giving us the opportunity to visit one of Europe's most charming cities). There were over 250 presenters from all over the world. All the papers and proceedings were in English. This led me to regard my fellow presenters with something like awe: it is difficult enough to get papers written in our own language; to have to write one in another language for presentation must be really daunting. The range of topics was enormous and made it difficult to choose what presentations to attend.*

*Gil and I chose to attend the sessions on pedagogy since that is where my own paper was scheduled. We gained a number of ideas on teaching critical thinking. Some of the countries like the Netherlands test all high-school seniors and have extensive projects devoted to the improvement of this teaching. I found the interest very high in my work, especially in my use of computers and flow charts as aids to teaching. I quickly ran out of handouts and had many requests for examples of the computer assisted learning exercises I have been using. I had viewed my work as an attempt to get at the processes used in making logical judgments, but following extensive discussion with conference participants, I am inclined to view my flow charts as a different, more visual, method of learning that meets the changing needs of students. This suggests some new and exciting directions to focus on in my teaching of critical thinking.*

Vince Luizzi, Chair of the SWT Department, also shared with the ISSA conference the progress the department is making in our efforts to better integrate theoretical and applied knowledge in his paper, "Debut of a Critical Thinking Complex." Luizzi introduced the concept of a critical thinking complex and discussed the way this concept has been brought to life at SWT: in the form of a Computer Room designed for technical study of the principles of argumentation and good thinking and a Dialogue Room in which students can actually participate in the dialectical method by applying these principles to philosophical problems concerning knowledge, value, and reality. He also reviewed the underlying theories which lend pedagogical support to the operation of such a complex and reported the results of our initial experimentation with this unique facility at SWT.

Both Gil and Lynne Fulmer will present papers to the Society for Utopian Studies in Montreal on October 14-19. Gil Fulmer's paper "Give Me That New-Time Religion!" addresses the question: can the genuine accomplishments of religious thought be preserved, even though these accomplishments were presented in a conceptual framework which may now be unacceptable? He attempts to suggest some guidelines for a "new-time religion" which would preserve the positive aspects of a religious worldview while rejecting its accompanying supernaturalism. He writes:

*Belief in a transcendent, supernatural God has been central and formational in the thinking of the Western world. Art, science, literature and philosophy as we know them have all developed largely under theistic assumptions. Yet many contemporary thinkers, myself included, cannot accept traditional theological dogmas as literally true world views. Can those of us who reject the supernaturalistic underpinnings still salvage that which is of value in those traditional ways of thinking? This paper attempts to outline such an ideal—Utopian—view of religion. Such a view should try to achieve at least three goals: first, it must be rational; second, it must achieve the ethical values of religion; third, it must preserve the social values of religion.*

Lynne Fulmer's paper "Utopian Shift: From Rights to Responsibilities" examines difficulties which arise for forms of liberalism which focus exclusively on rights. While defending a form of liberal legalism, she observes that other views may suggest some fruitful avenues of pursuit for Utopian visions as well as serving as a valuable counterpoint to the conservatism that threatens modern liberal traditions and institutions. Agreeing with feminist jurisprudence writer Robin West, Fulmer argues that the Western reliance on rights has produced a concomitant failure to develop an understanding of the individual responsibility necessary for the maintenance of a liberal society. As a consequence, our sense of community, our obligations to others, and our conviction that others are deserving of respect and dignity are being threatened.

(Continued on page 5)

("Faculty Notes" Continued from page 4)

In July and August Professor Jo Ann Carson attended a seminar, "Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty," sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Under the guidance of Avrum Stroll fifteen undergraduate philosophy teachers spent an intense and stimulating five weeks at the University of California San Diego examining primary works by Moore and Wittgenstein as well as recent secondary literature on skepticism. Moore and Wittgenstein are unusual in contemporary philosophy in defending, though in different ways, the existence of certitude against various forms of skepticism, relativism, probabilism, and scientism. Further, they engaged in a dialogue on the questions of knowledge and certainty which spanned several decades of this century and is encapsulated in Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, his last written work. *On Certainty* is a running commentary on several of Moore's more important epistemology essays ("A Defence of Common Sense," "Proof of an External World," "Certainty," and "Four Forms of Scepticism"). This dialogue continues at SWT this fall in two weeks of discussion about skepticism and related topics.

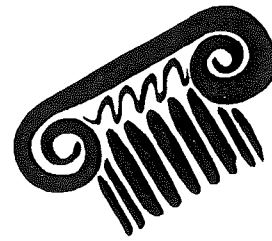
Avrum Stroll is the author of twelve books and more than 100 articles, including *Surfaces* (1988); *Moore and Wittgenstein on Certainty* (1994); and *Sketches of Landscapes: Philosophy by Example* (1997).

## John B. Cobb, Jr.

**Emeritus Professor, Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Graduate School and well-known process theologian**

will be the guest speaker at an Environmental Issues Forum at Texas Lutheran University this fall. On **Thursday, October 8** he will speak on "**God, Wealth, and the Earth**" at 7:30 p.m. in **Jackson Auditorium** on the TLU campus.

# Call for Papers



**Southwest Texas State University  
Second Annual Philosophy Symposium**

**March 6, 1999**

Sponsored by *Phi Sigma Tau*,  
Texas Delta Chapter

Papers on any philosophical topic are welcome. Submissions should be suitable for a 20-minute presentation (approximately 12 pages). Application is open to undergraduate and graduate students and to SWT Philosophy Alumni.

**Deadline for submissions: January 15, 1999**

**Notification of acceptance: February 5, 1999**

Send two copies of your paper to:

Jo Ann Carson

Department of Philosophy

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San Marcos, TX 78666

Phone: (512)245-3143 Fax: (512)245-8335

E-mail: jc28@swt.edu

A cover page should include: title of paper, author's name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and classification (undergraduate or graduate). For video or multimedia, please submit a detailed description of the presentation and a list of any equipment which will be needed.

# News From the Delta...

## Phi Sigma Tau (Delta) Officers

President:

**Dan Bisett**

Vice-President:

**James Hulgan**

Secretary-Treasurer:

**Michael Arfken**

*Liberal Arts Council*

*Representatives:*

**Sawndra Jones**

**James Hulgan**

*Spring Initiates:*

**Robert Erickson**

**Sawndra Jones**

**Jody Parente**

**Michael Munoz**

*Check out our web site for local by-laws, a Fall Dialogue Series calendar, and other Phi Sigma Tau information:*

[http://www.swt.edu/acad\\_depts/philos/](http://www.swt.edu/acad_depts/philos/)

## Fall Initiation Set for October 16

A fall initiation for *Delta* Chapter has been set for October 16 at 6:00 p.m. in the Dialogue Room, USC 231. Eligibility requirements for membership are:

- 9 hrs. of philosophy courses with at least a B average
- An overall GPA of 2.75

There is a one-time national initiation fee of \$15.00. Local dues are \$10.00/year.

If you qualify for membership and would like to become active in *Phi Sigma Tau*, please contact one of the officers by e-mail or call the department office at (512) 245-2285.

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Dan Bisett           dbisett@questtours.com

James Hulgan       jh35463@swt.edu

Jo Ann Carson       jc28@swt.edu

## Minutes of the September 18<sup>th</sup> meeting:

Fall initiation for new members was set for October 16, 1998. Topics for SWT's dialogue series were discussed and members were assigned to visit philosophy classes and recruit new *Phi Sigma Tau* members as well as invite students to participate in the Dialogue Series. Two student presentations were proposed:

*Pain, Pleasure, Sex, and Childbirth* (by Dan Bisett)

*A Critique of Compatibilism in Free-Will* (by Michael Arfken)

Membership dues were discussed and a list of individuals who qualify for the honor society is being compiled.

The Ethics Bowl at St. Mary's University was discussed and a team is being formed to represent SWT.

Michael Arfken, Sec.-Treas.

*Delta* Chapter

## Alumni News:

Congratulations to our spring/summer graduates and newest alumni:

**Francisco Gomez**

**Roel Trevino**

**Sean LeBeau**

**Elizabeth Renfro**

**James Love**

**Stephanie Reyes**

**Carlos Armentor** is in his second year of a graduate program in social/political philosophy at American University... We have two alumni and past presidents of *Delta* chapter who are currently teaching English in Poland: **Shane Denson** and **Ryan Kane**... **Francisco Gomez** is in Vancouver fulfilling his dream of attending film school... **Brad Jurica** is working on a cruise ship off the coast of Alaska. He plans to go to graduate school in California... **Sean LeBeau** graduated this summer and is currently working for Tangram Rehabilitation Center while **Melissa** finishes school... **Ginger Knight Maness** reports that she is taking some courses at Lamar University in Beaumont. She and **Tommy** plan to visit in October... **Steve McGovern** is back in Massachusetts, working in a paint store (that aesthetic influence) and preparing for graduate school... **Stephanie Reyes** graduated in August and is now teaching Spanish at Waco High School, where she also works with the debate team... Former SWT philosophy student **Randy Taylor** e-mailed us from St. Petersburg, Florida (as Hurricane Georges cavorted outside) that he will be returning to SWT in the spring and wants to be involved in *Phi Sigma Tau*... Hope you stayed dry, Randy, and we'll look forward to seeing you soon... **Roel Trevino** is in El Salvadore teaching English, but is coming back to Texas in December to take the GRE... **Jeremy Serrata** is a Border Patrol Agent for the U. S. Immigration Service. He surprised us all by visiting the department last week and came to one of our dialogues... **Charles Wilkins** is a research assistant for the National Defense Industrial Association in the Washington area. Thanks to all of you who have communicated with us. Keep those cards and letters (and e-mails) rolling in! Please let us know about address changes or information you may have about SWT philosophy alumni.

# Spring 1999 Classes

## **Philosophy 2312-History of Philosophy**

*Professor C.L. Fulmer*  
MW 3:30-4:45

Modern philosophical thought through the 19th century

## **Philosophy 3314-American Philosophy**

*Professor V.L. Luizzi*  
MW 11:00-12:15

Examination of contributions of Americans to perennial philosophical issues

## **Philosophy 3317-Science and Religion**

*Professor G.C. Joy*  
TTH 12:30-1:45

An examination of the nature and scope of science and scientific method as well as the nature of religion. An explanation of the relationship between religion and science and the study of the effects they have had on each other

## **Philosophy 3340-Symbolic Logic**

*Professor M.S. Kalsi*  
TTH 11:00-12:15

A study of the logic of propositions through propositional calculi, formal proofs, and first-order functional calculi. Also included is an investigation into the axiomatic methods used in logic and mathematics, including completeness and consistency

## **Philosophy 4356-Philosophical Theory of Knowledge**

*Professor P.W. Hutcheson*  
MWF 1:00-1:50

A study of the major theories concerning knowledge, belief, certainty, and perception. Topics covered will include empiricism, rationalism, and idealism

## **Religion 2310-Survey of the Old Testament**

A critical, historical, and interpretive study of the literature of Israel, covering the entire Old Testament

## **Philosophy 2330-Elementary Logic**

*Professor P.W. Hutcheson*  
MWF 11:00-11:50

A study of the nature and forms of correct reasoning, both deductive and inductive

*Professor G.C. Joy*  
TTH 9:30-10:45

## **Philosophy 3315-Contemporary Philosophy**

*Professor D.J. Geuras*  
MWF 10:00-10:50

Selected readings in late 19th and 20th century philosophy: existentialism, positivism, analytic philosophy, phenomenology and pragmatism

## **Philosophy 3318-Reason, God and Nature**

*Professor G.E. Fulmer*  
MW 2:00-3:15

An analysis of the concept of God, terms predicated of God, and theological propositions. An attempt to determine the nature of religious utterances in comparison with those of everyday life, scientific discovery, morality, and imaginative expression (Capstone)

## **Philosophy 4351-Philosophy of Education**

*Professor J.A. Carson*  
TTH 2:00-3:15

An investigation of the major ideas on educational theory and practice put forth by both classical and contemporary philosophers. Some topics to be explored are: the nature of education, meaning and the learning process, moral education, ideology and educational institutions, the philosophy of teaching

## **Philosophy 4388/5388 Problems in Philosophy: Independent study**

See department for details

## **Religion 3360-Comparative Religion**

An interpretation of the fundamental insights, concepts, ideas, and customs of the major living religions of the world

# *Phi Sigma Tau*

The *Phi Sigma Tau* Bulletin  
Department of Philosophy  
Southwest Texas State University  
San Marcos, Texas 78666

## *WORDS FROM THE CHAIR*

### The Old and the New

This fall at SWT we begin a year of centennial celebrations. No doubt we'll be getting a lot of invitations to consider how far we've come from our beginnings as a 2-year normal (teacher training) school in the spring of 1899 to a comprehensive university with over 21,000 students. Not a single course in philosophy was around in those early days, but SWT has today a department of 14 faculty members and philosophy is a required part of the curriculum.

Now philosophy didn't emerge *ex nihilo* at SWT; indeed, there are some deeply philosophical traditions involved in the founding of this institution. The beautiful hillside terrain on which Old Main now sits includes land purchased by some San Marcos citizens in the mid-1800s as the site for a Chautauqua. The Chautauqua movement, a late nineteenth century intellectual and cultural renaissance which began in upstate New York, had found its way to Texas by that time, and the trees, hills, and crystal clear water must have formed an idyllic setting for the intellectual stimulation and philosophical reflection it encouraged. During this period many people from surrounding areas traveled to the San Marcos Chautauqua for days or even weeks to partake of lectures, concerts, and other cultural events and to discuss important issues of the day.

So perhaps things are not so different after all, and in an important sense, philosophy has always been part of SWT's essence. We are now beginning the fourth year of our dialogue series. Many notable speakers have visited SWT at our invitation, and in the spring we brought town and gown together by organizing (with the help of the Texas Council for the Humanities) a reading group for the citizens of San Marcos. A glance at the current calendar with weekly dialogue topics such as the meaning of life, skepticism, and punishment theory, shows that, at least in the department of philosophy, the Chautauqua tradition is very much alive and flourishing at SWT.

Vince Luizzi, Chair, Department of Philosophy

*A man who reviews the old so as to find out the new is qualified to teach others.*

*Confucius 2:11*