

The Phi Sigma Tau

Bulletin

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

Fall 2002

Philóúnton Sophían Timé

Issue 16

Philosophers as Poets or
Poets as Philosophers?
Offerings from our alumni

THROBBING CROSS THE PRAIRIE

*Throbbing 'cross the prairie,
Hereford calf in sight,
Frozen air burns the skin.
Pounding, crunching, spraying-snow hooves,
And the murmur of the cottonwood tree.*

*Plodding through the heat wave dust,
Cicadas screaming, squeaking leather,
Numb to thirst and a spooked horse.
Oh, but that's only a rattlesnake.
(Modern cowboys can use good English.)
Quick! Toss the reins over that branch.
Twist off the one right below it.
Coil up and rattle at me?
Come here!
Pressing into algarita thistles,
Dried berries scatter at the flail.
Come on...
Ah, there you are on bare ground.
Now what?
Whack.
Whack, you writhing flesh!*

*Find a big rock and put it on his head—
Mother swears that pulpy stub can still strike,
But I don't believe her—
And use two other rocks to get the rattle.
(Modern cowboys are educated late in life.)*

—Rick Chaffey

WHAT IF THALES WAS RIGHT?

*What if Thales was right —
that all is water?*

*Would requited gazes
blind us from knowing who is who?*

*What if we identified our own image in those
depths?*

Would it tell of egotism or empathy?

*Would we see clearer by closing our eyes
to feel the intersection of our flowing streams?*

*Would we swirl as lucent pools of aqua, turquoise,
and azure?*

*Would we slosh and spill over into sedate, opaque
puddles?*

*Would puddles then boil,
spewing hot vapors outward and upward?*

*Would we return as cool droplets sprinkling
everywhere?*

— Charles Hinkley

News from the Delta

Phi Sigma Tau officers
(elected September 13, 2002)

Taj Watkins, President
Jackson Schwartz, V-President, Business Affairs
Vanessa Voss, V-President, Public Relations
Justin Bell, Secretary-Treasurer
Tracie Mahaffey, Parliamentarian/Historian
Chris Ferguson, Events Coordinator

For the fifth year *Delta* chapter of *Phi Sigma Tau* will participate in the Ethics Bowl at St. Mary's University. This event, scheduled this year for Saturday, November 16, gives students an opportunity to apply their moral reasoning skills to a set of real-life cases in areas such as classroom behavior, business and professional ethics, personal relationships, and medical and legal ethics. This year's Ethics Bowl will be coordinated by Professor Robert Skipper, a former SWT professor who now teaches at St. Mary's University. Team members are:

Paideia I: Jake Holt, Kelly Nelson, Team Captain: Jackson Schwartz

Paideia II: Tracie Mahaffey, Vanessa Voss, Team Captain: Taj Watkins

Coach: Professor Lynne Fulmer

Notes on *Throbbing Cross the Prairie* (pg 1)

I wrote this poem some time in my twenties. It is based on a real event that happened when I was about 13 years old. One of the sheep ranchers around San Angelo decided to have a coyote "roundup" and invited all his neighbors to come out. We loaded up a bunch of horses; one fellow brought his helicopter, and a few brought rifles. The riders and fliers started at the top of a pasture and pushed down, hoping to flush out some coyotes. Marksmen waited at the bottom of the pasture, near where the varmints were known to duck under the fence and leave their hairs snagged in the barbs of the bottom strand of wire. As I rode along, tired of whooping at the coyotes and lost in thought, I happened upon a rattlesnake. I wasn't armed, so I broke a branch off a tree and... well, you read the poem.

West Texas isn't exactly Walden Pond, I know, and the poetics are probably pretty bad, but I like this one because it illustrates both my early and middle experiences as a naturalist. As a child, I spent most of my time in nature, observing, analyzing, collecting and dissecting the native flora and fauna. As a young adult, I got philosophical and felt a heavy burden of guilt about the way people treat animals and the environment. Now, in middle age, I try to find and broaden the point of balance between those two extremes by bringing others toward it.

Since I've been in central Austin for the last three years, I've created a registered Wildscape at my house that includes sustainable living elements such as laying hens (great composters—they eat weeds!) and a vegetable garden. I oversee the wildscape at Becker Elementary School. I started and maintain the Freedom Community Garden in my neighborhood where I teach inner-city residents and children about nature. I sit on the Board of the Capital Area Master Naturalists as Chair of the Volunteer Opportunities Committee. I teach fourth grade, serve at my church where I'm launching an oral history ministry documenting experiences of our elder African-American parishioners during the time of desegregation and the inclusion of women in the Episcopal Church, support causes from public radio to Second Amendment rights, and try to get around as often as I can to visit my many friends and few relatives, scattered from Pecos to Houston. This makes for a hectic schedule, but every day I see some small miracle of nature, and I take the time to stop and smell the dirt, the pond, and the henhouse, and remember what it all means, ultimately.

The ultimate meaning is, and I know you've been wondering about this for quite some time: relating to each other. That's right, we're all connected to each other and part of the same thing. From the atomic plenum that gives us our physical bodies, to the mental being arising from the physical, to the spiritual being that draws us to whatever that is, out there, that everyone feels but no one can adequately explain, we are in relationship with other beings, with all other beings, simultaneously and permanently.

Whether you personally prefer the scientific explanation of evolution's blind urge toward higher life forms or the teleological explanation of God's plan for creation, we naturalists share a reverence for the natural world and its miraculous processes and outcomes. I think we also share a deep concern that as human society becomes ever more urbanized and technological, we might lose the natural world altogether. But, really, I just don't think we're going to let that happen.

—Rick Chaffey, SWT Philosophy Alumni

The *Phi Sigma Tau* Bulletin

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Call for Papers

Southwest Texas State University
6th Annual Philosophy Symposium
April 4, 2003 (Friday)

Papers will be presented throughout the day in our Philosophy Dialogue Room, PSY 132.

Submissions should be suitable for a 20-minute presentation. The symposium is open to undergraduate and graduate students as well as SWT philosophy alumni.

Deadline for submissions: February 3, 2003 (Monday)
Notification by: March 3, 2003 (Monday)

Send two copies of your paper to:

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Alumni News

Shane Denson, a former president of *Phi Sigma Tau*, sends word that he became the father of Ari Seth Denson on May 10. He and his wife currently live in Germany.

Michael Vaclav was recently married, as was James Love III. Both are former SWT philosophy students and *Phi Sigma Tau* members.

Brad Jurica began work this fall on a Master's degree in counseling psychology with an emphasis on sports at San Diego State University. Brad is a former *Phi Sigma Tau* officer who double majored in philosophy and psychology.

Paul Wilson, a member of the program faculty, is beginning his second year of graduate study in philosophy at Texas A & M University, College Station.

Rebekah Ross-Fountain is working on a Master's in counseling at SWT.

Lab Report

Welcome to another academic year! As usual, the Critical Thinking Complex is bustling with activity. We would like to welcome Rajaneesh Rajamanuri, who

is our new lab technician. "Raj" stepped in to replace long-time technician Matt Stone, who began graduate school this year.

The Dialogue Series continues to live up to and supercede its reputation as the epicenter of intellectual activity at SWT. Our topics and discussions continue to draw large audiences of faculty, staff and students alike. Many students who attend are former philosophy students who continue to participate in dialogues out of sheer enjoyment and interest.

This semester's Dialogue Series topics include Education and Indoctrination, Nudity and Clothing, The Spiritual and the Physical, Money, Imagination, Genius, Nutrition and Starvation, and Home.

We were also privileged to host a symposium early in the semester commemorating the events of 9/11, which included SWT faculty Waymen Mullins, Randall Osborne, Rebecca Raphael, John Davis and Jean Brender. David Hoekema, a philosopher from Calvin College, was the keynote speaker for these events.

If you have any questions regarding the Critical Thinking Complex and its activities, please contact me by phone (245-2403) or by email (pw08@swt.edu).

Faculty Notes

Gil and Lynne Fulmer presented papers at the ISSA (International Society for the Study of Argumentation) conference in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in June, 2002. Both papers have been accepted for publication in the Society's journal.

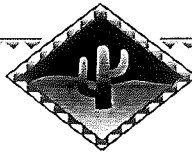
Jeffrey Gordon has been appointed NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Humanities at Southwest Texas State University. This position has a 3-year tenure.

Craig Hanks is author of the book *Refiguring Critical Theory* (University Press of America, 2002). Professor Hanks also received special recognition for Teaching (2001) and Research (2002) from the College of Liberal Arts.

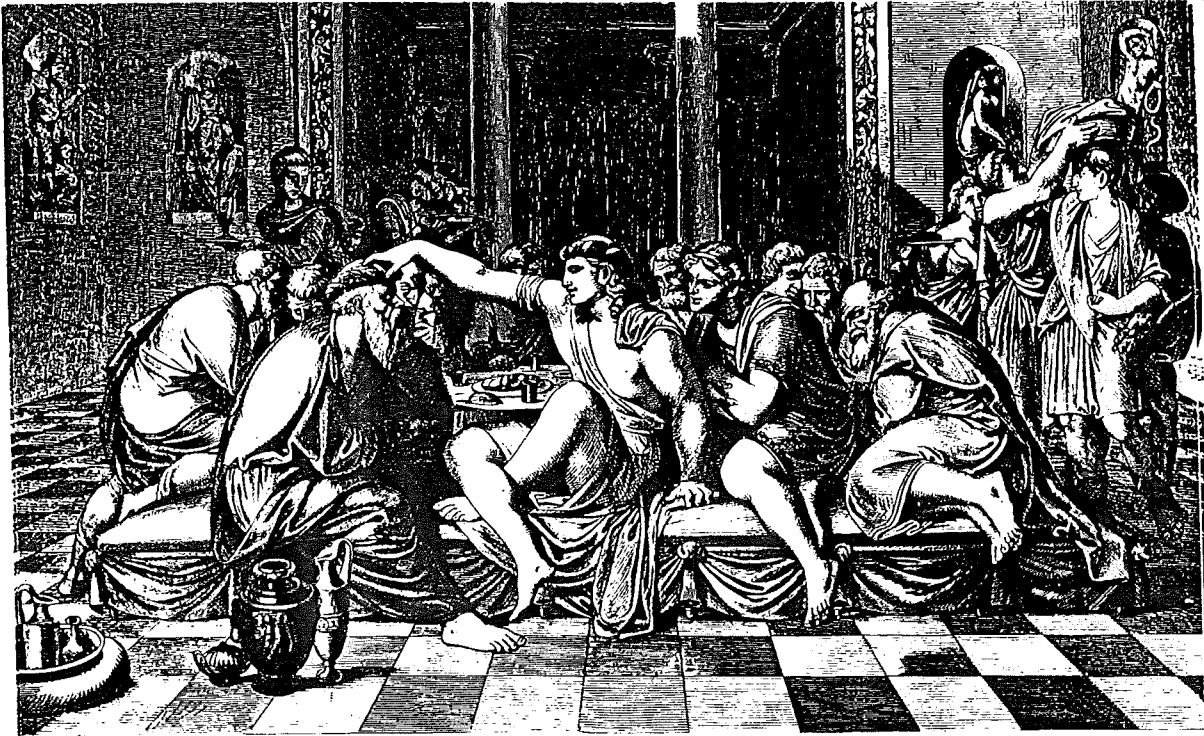
Charles Hinkley, an SWT alumnus, will be joining the faculty for the year as Assistant Professor. Professor Hinkley's book *The Moral Conflicts of Organ Retrieval; A Case for Constructive Pluralism* is to be published Spring, 2003. He also authored the poem *What If Thales Was Right?* included in this newsletter.

Rebecca Raphael has published *That's No Literature, That's My Bible: On James Kugel's Objections to the Idea of Biblical Poetry* in Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Sept. 2002 and Religion from the Point of View of the Damned in Religious Studies News AAR Edition, March 2002.

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PHI SIGMA TAU INITIATION AND PHILOSOPHY BANQUET



One of the Famous Platonic Banquets

The annual Philosophy Alumni Banquet/*Phi Sigma Tau* Initiation was held Friday, October 18 at 7:00 at Crystal River Inn, 326 West Hopkins Street. The following students were initiated: Trey Brant, Carrie Crisp, Jake Holt, David Ivy, Cherish Landes, Nina Lester, Benjamin Lourence, Justin Morley, Kelly Nelson, Rayven Sipes, Armando Valtierra, and Lee Wiley.