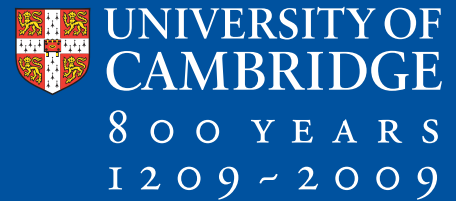


# Philosophy at Cambridge

Newsletter of the Faculty of Philosophy



Issue 6  
May 2009

## From the Chairman

When I came up to Clare, there were 70 applicants to read Philosophy. 34 were accepted. That was 1985. This year 308 applied, but just 56 were successful. This is not a blip. Since 2002 Philosophy's application/acceptance ratio has been way above the overall University average, and higher still than the average in the Arts.

Why is Philosophy so popular? One explanation is that the subject is now firmly on the map in schools, as a GCSE and A-level option, often as a substantial element in the teaching of Religious Studies. Over 23,000 UK students took Religious Studies or Philosophy A-level last year, more than French and German combined. This is reflected in the changing intellectual formation of our undergraduates: 2/3 of our current freshers have studied Philosophy in some form at A-level.

But why Philosophy at Cambridge? It doesn't take much investigation to discover that we offer a Rolls-Royce education. Nowhere in the world can match it. And it will be even stronger this coming year when Tim Crane and Fraser MacBride join the Faculty. I know first-hand that they are inspirational teachers.

Mastering facts and figures is one of the first chores for an incoming Chairman, but the principal pleasure is sustaining and developing our dynamic community. The Faculty simply couldn't operate without the goodwill and superb work of its extended network of philosophers – Junior and Senior Research Fellows, College Teaching Officers, Affiliated Lecturers, Directors of Studies, not to mention our army of top graduate students. I'll end this note with a tribute to all of them.

Alex Oliver  
Chairman, Philosophy Faculty Board

## D.H. Mellor

Tim Crane



D.H. Mellor

Emeritus Professor D.H. (Hugh) Mellor, who in 2008 celebrated his 70th birthday, originally studied chemical engineering at Pembroke College. Although he had developed an interest in philosophy at school in Manchester, Hugh did not formally study the subject until he visited the University of Minnesota as a Harkness Fellow. There he took a course on the philosophy of science taught by the great Vienna Circle empiricist Herbert Feigl. Feigl began his course by announcing that there are three kinds of philosophy: 'the philosophy of nothing but' (needless reductionism), 'the philosophy of something more' (mysticism and spirituality) and Feigl's own preferred middle way, 'the philosophy of what's what'.

'The philosophy of what's what' might make a good subtitle for Hugh's collected papers. It nicely captures both his unpretentious, down-to-earth attitude towards the subject, and his respect for the facts revealed to us by common sense and by science. Although Hugh started off as a philosopher of science, leaving his

job at ICI to work on his PhD on probability with Mary Hesse in HPS, most of his work (and certainly his best work) has been in metaphysics.

When I wrote something for the excellent *Festschrift* edited by Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra and Hallvard Lillehammer in 2003 (*Real Metaphysics*), I commented that a dominant theme of Hugh's work is what I called his 'objectivism' about metaphysics. This is his view that the subject-matter of metaphysics is the way it is regardless of what anyone thinks about it. In the philosophy of probability, Hugh defended single-case objective chances or propensities; in the philosophy of time he defended the reality of the temporal series ordered in terms of earlier and later, and argued that the 'now' is a kind of illusion. In the philosophy of mind, Hugh argued against those like Thomas Nagel who think that the self is something outside the objective order of the world. Our metaphysics should not mix facts about the way we represent the phenomena with the phenomena themselves.

This is perhaps more of a 'philosophy of philosophy' than you would get from Hugh himself. Hugh tended to be impatient with people who speculated about the essence of philosophy, thinking this a question of as little interest as the question of the essence of science. "I'm not interested in *philosophy*" he would sometimes say "I'm interested in time, causation, probability, the mind ...". Philosophy is its own thing: there is truth and falsehood in philosophy; the truth can be attained; and our philosophical questions are, on the whole, about exactly what they seem to be about: time, causation, probability, the mind and so on.

When I was a research student in the 1980s, Hugh was one of the dominant figures in the Cambridge scene. Tireless, tough and energetic as a graduate supervisor, he also gave inspiring undergraduate lectures and he was a formidable opponent at the Moral Sciences Club. Many visiting speakers came away from meetings with their papers in severe need of reconstruction (I know that mine did). We coined the *Philosophers' Lexicon*-style definition: *hughmellorate* (verb, transitive) = to show a visiting speaker that their paper is completely worthless. But Hugh did not do this to score points; he wanted to get to the heart of the matter, without any waffle and without affectation.

Some found Hugh just too dogmatic in those days, and even those who didn't would sometimes poke fun at him affectionately. I remember Jeremy Butterfield in a lecture describing a view about time as what Hugh believes, and adding: "He won't tell you he believes it. He'll tell you it's true. That's his way of saying he believes it". And a friend summed up Hugh's inaugural lecture, *The Warrant of Induction* in two sentences: "How do we know the future will be like the past? Because it will!".

It was odd, in a way, that Hugh should give his inaugural lecture on

epistemology, which is not an area of philosophy in which he had much interest. The inaugural is a fine piece, but his greatest achievements have been in metaphysics: in particular in the philosophy of time (*Real Time* was published in 1980, and the heavily revised version *Real Time II* in 1998) and in causation, where his dense and condensed book *The Facts of Causation* (1995) argued for some very radical doctrines, for example the view that causation is not a relation. These works surely belong among the best works of metaphysics of the late twentieth century.

Hugh's work in metaphysics fits squarely into a Cambridge tradition which is hard to define but easy to recognise – a tradition which in the 20th century included Bertrand Russell, F.P. Ramsey, C.D. Broad and R.B. Braithwaite. Hugh has always said how much he owed to Ramsey, but he also owed a lot to Ramsey's friend Braithwaite, who would also become a friend of Hugh's. He also claims as his other influences Hans Reichenbach, and the Australian metaphysics of J.J.C. Smart, D.M. Armstrong, Frank Jackson and David Lewis.

Hugh's substantial achievements in philosophy should not over-shadow

the enormous amount he has also done for the Faculty and the University. He was the prime mover in the ambitious redesign of the Raised Faculty Building, and he also served as Pro-Vice Chancellor, managing to do at least three times as many things in a day than most academics. Since he retired, Hugh has taken a well-earned break from all this kind of thing (though not from philosophy, publishing his philosophical introduction to probability a few years ago) and has been spending more and more time on his other great passion, the theatre.

To his students, Hugh is a model of how to take philosophy seriously without being solemn about it; how to have high standards in the subject without being crippled by the enormity of the problems or the weight of the tradition; how to take account of the known facts without slavish devotion to science; and how the first and guiding aim of philosophers should be to aim to say what is true, without fuss and without obscurity. The philosophy of what's what, in other words.

Tim Crane (PhD 1989), Professor of Philosophy, UCL. He joins the Faculty as Knightbridge Professor in September 2009

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# An Oxford Lad at Cambridge

Sidney A. Josephs

I came up to Trinity in 1957, on a Cambridge Bursary for Adult students, to read Moral Sciences (Neither moral nor scientific!). I was 24 years old and had been working on the production line in one of the Oxford car factories.

I had become interested in philosophy at the age of 16, when I started seeking logical arguments to support my empirical atheism.

I was fortunate, from 1954–56, to attend, in Oxford, a Workers' Education Association evening class in philosophy tutored by Thomas Hodgkin (husband of the more famous Dorothy), and it was he who persuaded me to compete for the Cambridge Bursary.

From my limited, untutored outside view, Oxford philosophy in the early and mid 1950s appeared to be exclusively linguistic analysis, with bits of Wittgenstein grafted on, and I was surprised when I arrived in Cambridge to discover that Wittgenstein was talked about, but not obviously taught, and that metaphysics and objective values still lived through A.C. Ewing.

My supervisor for two of my years was Casimir Lewy, very strong on symbolic logic, less persuasive on linguistic analysis, but always enjoyable and productive, and a truly lovely man. For a couple of terms I was supervised firstly by Ewing (I don't think either of us much enjoyed the experience!), and another term by a graduate student named Ian Hacking, who if I remember correctly, brewed beer in his sink, which he shared with his supervisees (the beer, not the sink).

Moral Sciences was a small faculty then: in 1958 only 19 students sat the five papers that constituted the Preliminary Examination for Part I of the Moral Sciences Tripos. I was awarded the only First, and there were eight 2.1s, ten 2.2s, and no Thirds.

As a consequence of my Part I performance, Trinity elected me to a Senior Scholarship, and (I suspect it was at the instigation of Lewy) I was elected as Honorary Secretary of the Moral Sciences Club (the first undergraduate to be elected to this post for many, many years, so I was told).

I persuaded a number of then well-known philosophers to speak, (including Saw, Mrs Warnock, Peters, Winch, Findlay, Montefiore, and Flew) but my biggest coup was to get A.J. Ayer for 3rd March 1960. Normally, meetings were held in Professor Braithwaite's rooms in King's, but for Freddie's visit the meeting was held in Trinity Junior Parlour, to

accommodate the expected larger than usual audience.

My third year was a shambles. Lacking a classical background I had to take the History of Modern Philosophy option for Part II, which, with the exception of David Hume, held little interest for me. This lack of interest and motivation, allied to a delightful, but time-consuming and emotionally demanding love affair with an undergraduate from Newnham (no, reader, I did not marry her), denied me my hat-trick of Firsts.

When I left, the number of students was gradually increasing in the faculty, but not the staff, and for two academic years I was Moral Sciences Supervisor for Jesus and Caius. During term,

I drove down from London early on Saturday mornings, and spent the day in supervisions with my students, before driving back to my pad in the then poorest part of Chelsea (aptly named 'The World's End'!). I'm sure that such a situation would not be tolerated today!

For more than ten years after I left Cambridge, in addition to my full-time job in publishing, I taught evening classes in philosophy for the Extra-Mural Boards of Cambridge, London and, subsequently, Oxford Universities. The wheel had turned full circle and my debt had been repaid.

Sidney A. (Joe) Josephs (1933–2008) read Moral Sciences at Trinity 1957–1960.

## Bertrand Russell at Routledge

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# G.E. Moore and Cambridge Philosophy

Thomas Baldwin



G. E. Moore

In 2008, the 50th anniversary of his death, the Philosophy Faculty celebrated the life and achievements of G. E. Moore (1873–1958). Moore came to Cambridge, to Trinity College, in 1892 to study classics, but philosophy soon became his main interest and in 1896 he achieved a first class result in Part II of the Moral Sciences Tripos. Moore's interest in philosophy had been stimulated by new friends such as Bertrand Russell who later wrote: 'In my third year I met G. E. Moore, who was then a freshman, and for some years he fulfilled my ideal of genius. He was in those days beautiful and slim, with a look almost of inspiration, and with an intellect as deeply passionate as Spinoza's' (*Autobiography*, Routledge 1998 p. 61).

In 1898 Moore won a Prize Fellowship at Trinity College and his next six years there were the most productive period of his life. His main achievements were his 'refutation of idealism' and, especially, his ethical treatise *Principia Ethica*. Moore argues here that ethics, the study of the good, is an autonomous discipline, separate from both idealist metaphysics and natural science. Goodness is a *sui generis* property; it is neither a fundamental metaphysical or natural property, nor definable in terms of them. Many different kinds of thing are good, but, Moore famously affirms, by far the most valuable things which we know or can imagine are love and the

appreciation of beauty. This thesis ensured that, unlike the writings of most moral philosophers, Moore's work had an impact which reached beyond the academic world into the broader culture of writers and artists, most notably the members of the Bloomsbury Group, many of whom had been friends with Moore at Cambridge.

Moore left Cambridge in 1904, but returned in 1911 to a University lectureship in Moral Sciences and then stayed on in Cambridge for most of the rest of his life. In 1925 he was appointed Professor of Mental Philosophy and Logic and elected to a Fellowship at Trinity College. The main field of Moore's work lay in the development of a new conception of philosophy as the analysis of common sense. Moore had been one of the first to recognise that Russell's logical theory transformed the possibilities for philosophical analysis. But Moore also recognised the importance of respecting the distinctions which we find in ordinary language, and this chimed with the thesis of his famous paper 'A Defence of Common Sense' (1925) that our common sense view of the world is largely right. Moore does not attempt to justify this thesis; what he emphasizes instead is that it remains to be determined by analysis just what it involves. Similarly Moore holds that we have no grounds to doubt our common sense belief that we know such things as 'This is a hand'; but, he accepts, it remains to be determined just how sceptical arguments which question our claims to this knowledge are to be countered.

Moore retired in 1939 and spent the war years in the USA where he made a considerable impact. He died on October 24th 1958, and his ashes are buried in what used to be known as St. Giles cemetery but is now known as Ascension Parish Burial Ground. While his influence on academic philosophy continues in contemporary debates which involve 'Moorean' positions, through the impact of his personality he also left an enduring legacy in the way in which philosophical discussion is conducted. Here is Gilbert Ryle describing his experience of meeting Moore, the eminent

professor of philosophy, when he, Ryle, was starting his career:

*For some of us there still lives the Moore whose voice is never quite resuscitated by his printed words. ... He gave us courage not by making concessions, but by making no concessions to our youth or to our shyness. He would explode at our mistakes and muddles with just that genial ferocity with which he would explode at the mistakes and muddles of philosophical high-ups, and with just the genial ferocity with which he would explode at mistakes and muddles of his own. He would listen with minute attention to what we said, and then, without a trace of discourtesy or courtesy, treat our remarks simply on their merits ... sometimes, without a trace of politeness or patronage, crediting them with whatever positive utility he thought they possessed.*

(from 'G. E. Moore' *Collected Papers* Vol. I., Hutchinson, 1971 p. 270).

Thomas Baldwin is Professor of Philosophy, University of York. He read Moral Sciences at Trinity (1965–8) and was University Lecturer in Philosophy at Cambridge (1984–94).



Thomas Baldwin speaking at the Alumni Weekend, 2008



# Faculty events

## Festival of Ideas

### Onora O'Neill on Press Freedom

Xiaoxu Chen

On October 22nd 2008, Professor Onora O'Neill gave a public lecture on Press Freedom as part of the Festival of Ideas. Professor O'Neill asked: Why has the concept of 'press freedom' seen so little criticism since the European enlightenment? What kind of justification can we provide for a conception of press freedom?

She started by clarifying some conceptual confusions. The terms 'press freedom', 'freedom of speech' and 'freedom of expression' are frequently misused, and often conflated. Although these concepts are related, they are not one and the same thing, as people often assume.

Having done this, Professor O'Neill argued that history has shown the classic justifications for press freedom provided by Milton and Mill to be inadequate. We cannot agree with Milton that individual freedom of expression is the key to truth. Nor, in light of the pervasive market power of the press, can we endorse Mill's optimistic view that press freedom is always the best guarantee of individuals' interests, both in free expression and in more substantive goods.

In light of that deep connection between press institutions and market power, what can best justify press freedom? Professor O'Neill suggested that the best justification is probably that a free press contributes to democracy. This justification does not mandate a complete *laissez-faire* attitude, since it fails unless we put in place measures to resist monopolies and the concentration of ownership. Professor O'Neill concluded by discussing the difficulties of using both statutory and non-statutory regulation to guarantee this precarious balance.

### Third Routledge Lecture: Iris Murdoch and the Rejection of Existentialism

Laura Biron

In this year's Routledge lecture on 30th October 2008, Professor Richard Moran (Harvard) argued that the standard account of Iris Murdoch's battle with existentialism — a simple tale of youthful embrace followed by mature rejection — was wrong both about existentialism and about the direction of Murdoch's thought. It was wrong about existentialism, he suggested, because the passion and breadth of her polemical critique in *The Sovereignty of Good* led her to caricature and distort the theory. And it was wrong about Murdoch's thought because, he conjectured, a greater appreciation of her (downplayed) existentialist inheritance could illuminate our understanding of some characteristic themes in her moral philosophy.

To illustrate his second thesis, Moran asked us to revisit Murdoch's famous example of a change of vision in *Sovereignty* (the mother-in-law case) and interpret it using some existentialist tools of analysis, aiming to show that Murdoch's metaphor of vision — a corrective to the 'giddy, empty' will of existentialist man — was in fact a crucial part of existentialism's positive account of moral growth and responsibility. It was a subtle and insightful hypothesis. But those in the audience resistant to it felt that it did not accommodate Murdoch's famous insistence, against the existentialists, that moral growth requires an orientation of will towards the Real outside the self, which is an important part of her own interpretation of the case at hand. Regardless of this concern, Moran certainly convinced us of his first thesis, arguing persuasively that Murdoch's less than charitable depiction of existentialism was overly harsh and often misrepresented its target. After all, as he noted, great critics are often prone inadvertently to distort what they attack. It is the task of contemporary interpreters to piece together the parts of the attack more carefully, revealing, as Moran did, more complexity than initially meets the eye.

## Cambridge Graduate Conference

On the weekend of the 17th/18th January 2009, St John's College was home to the second edition of the Cambridge Graduate Conference in the Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics. The conference offers a forum — the only of its kind in the UK — in which postgraduate students working in the areas of logic and the philosophy of mathematics can present their research to a specialist audience. The conference attracted delegates from all over Europe and saw a number of stimulating papers on topics ranging from the logic of counterfactuals and nominalism in the philosophy of mathematics to questions of ontological commitment. In the ensuing, often lively discussions, the speakers benefited from the comments and criticisms of their respondents, of the audience (including a number of Faculty members) and of our two extremely engaged and engaging keynote speakers, Professor Hannes Leitgeb (Bristol) and Professor Timothy Williamson (Oxford).

Both days culminated in a keynote address. Professor Leitgeb presented a thought-provoking paper laying down the prolegomena to a serious study of the notion of informal provability in mathematics. In the final talk, Professor Williamson drew a number of intriguing metaphysical conclusions from a study of the semantics of second-order modal logic.

Apart from the many interesting contributions, there was also plenty of opportunity to mingle and exchange ideas over coffee or red wine. We hope the Cambridge Graduate Conference in the Philosophy of Logic and Mathematics will be firmly established in the years to come.

Luca Incurvati and Florian Steinberger, Graduate Students

# The Cambridge Apostles

Peter Marris



Peter Marris in 1949

One day, out of the blue, I received an invitation to a cocktail party in King's College. King's, at that time, was known for its self-consciously gay culture, affected by a clique of dons and students. The party included some of these, but the guests came from all over the university, and its tone was different. Some of the guests were famous. I spent ten or fifteen minutes outlining my theory of the novel to E.M. Forster, who listened politely, and when I had come to an end, said only "I must think about that." Despite this, or perhaps even because of it, a few days later I was invited to join the Apostles. The party, it turned out, had been an interview in disguise.

Formally, the society was called the 'Cambridge Conversazione Society', and under this name it booked its annual dinners at Kettner's restaurant in Soho. But it was known as the Apostles, because at any one time there could only be twelve undergraduate members. Any member who had graduated could attend its meetings. Noel Annan, who later became master of King's, came regularly, Eric Hobsbawm, the historian, sometimes, E.M. Forster occasionally. We met to discuss ideas, and always began with a bit of Hegelian play acting, dating I guess, from the previous century, in which the phenomenal world was dismissed, and the real world of pure reason reinstated. This was symbolized by eating anchovies on toast, and calling them 'whales'. Then someone would read a paper,

undergraduate or senior member, and we would sit in a circle around the fireplace and discuss it.

Occasionally we would read a famous paper from the past, preserved in the society's archives. The topics ranged from ethical and philosophical dilemmas to questions of etiquette, and the papers could be serious or playful. The essential criterion was that they not be academic, but written to raise questions that the members from many different disciplines would be interested to discuss. For this reason, the society did not necessarily recruit the most brilliant undergraduates, but those who seemed to fit best the ideal of an intellectually curious thinker, happy to take up all sorts of ideas and discuss them for the pleasure of it. If the society had a larger purpose, it was to foster a broad intellectual culture, overriding academic specialization. But it would have been against the spirit of the meetings to be solemn about it.

The society was secret. Since membership was so restricted, it did not want potential recruits lobbying to join, especially as its criteria for membership were hard to define and selection intuitive. Nor, I think, did it want membership to become a matter of prestige amongst the undergraduates. It turned its back, idealistically, on the phenomenal world of intellectual and career ambitions. Unlike the secret societies of Yale, for instance, it was not intended to create a mutually supportive network to advance careers. I never thought to use it in that way and I do not know of anyone who did. Its unworldliness was genuine, if somewhat precious.

But because it was secret, and because, at one time or another, it has included many famous or notorious members, the Apostles have been mythologized as a vaguely sinister elite. They play a leading part, for instance, in Tony Cape's ingenious spy thriller, *The Cambridge Theorem*, and at least one of the Apostles was, indeed, a spy. The society was founded in 1820 by a Reverend Tomlinson, who became Bishop of Gibraltar, and he intended it, I think, to promote earnest discussion of moral questions, such as would strengthen the spiritual life of serious-minded undergraduates.

The minutes, kept, as I remember, in a big black tin box, were full of curious information about famous and infamous members. Both Tennyson and his friend Arthur Hallam belonged. The minutes record that, when his turn came to make a presentation, Tennyson was overcome with a fit of nerves, and threw his paper in the fire. Later that summer, they also record, he and Hallam went off to France to join a revolution. An Irish member was hanged by the British as a traitor. G.E. Moore, whose book on ethics was a revered classic at Cambridge, and Bertrand Russell were members (Alfred North Whitehead, with whom Russell wrote *Principia Mathematica*, the work which radically reformulated logic, declined to join because the society was secret). But public curiosity about the Apostles stems from its association with the group of writers and painters who came to be known as the Bloomsbury set — Lytton Strachey, his brother John, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, J.M. Keynes, and Leonard Woolf had all belonged. In my day, E.M. Forster apart, there were no such famous figures at our meetings. Eric Hobsbawm, the historian, was the best known of the older members who sometimes attended.

I attended only one of the society's annual dinners. I sat next to Leonard Woolf, and as the youngest member present, was required to make a speech. I do not remember what I said, but it was well received.

As the party broke up, I was offered a lift home by Guy Burgess, who was, as I understood, connected to the Foreign Office. Something about him, at once aggressive and insinuating, made me uneasy. When we reached the horse pond at the top of Hampstead Hill, I asked him to let me out, pretending that I was only a few steps from my house. Some years later, he was discovered to have spied for the Soviet government, and fled to Moscow. How was someone who seemed so obviously untrustworthy, even on first acquaintance, ever let near an official secret?

Peter Marris, (1927–2007) read Moral Sciences at Clare 1948–1951. He became a sociologist and the author of nine books.

# Faculty News

## Awards

One of the world's most prestigious academic societies has elected **Professor Simon Blackburn** to its membership in its latest round of appointments. He has been made a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

## Departures

**Professor Quassim Cassam** took up a professorship at the University of Warwick on 1st January 2009.

Temporary lecturer **Dr Karen Nielsen** returned to her post at the University of Western Ontario, Canada.

## Arrivals

This year the Faculty welcomed **Professor Bob Hanna** from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and **Dr Sophia Connell**, from Newnham College, Cambridge, as temporary lecturers.

**Professor Tim Crane** (philosophy of mind, metaphysics, philosophy of psychology), who has taught at University College London since 1990, and where he is currently Head of Department, has accepted the Knightbridge Professorship with effect from 1st September 2009. Established in 1683, this is one of the oldest professorships at the University of Cambridge.

**Dr Fraser MacBride**, Reader in Philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London, has accepted a permanent post to commence in October 2009. His interests are metaphysics, philosophy of mathematics, philosophical logic and the history of analytic philosophy.

## JRF Elections

Among our current research students, **Luca Incurvati** was elected to a Junior Research Fellowship at Magdalene College, Cambridge. **Charlotte Werndl** has accepted a Research Fellowship at Queen's College, Oxford.

## Lectures

The Faculty participated in the **Festival of Ideas** by putting on two enormously successful lectures (reviewed on page 5). This was the first ever festival of its kind to celebrate the arts, humanities and

social sciences, both at the university and in the UK.

**Professor Jane Heal** visited Japan in 2008 and was invited to lecture at the Philosophy Departments at Keio University, Tokyo and Kyoto University.

## Student Prizes

The new Craig Taylor prize fund is for best performance in part IB and Part II of the Philosophy tripos. The Part IB prize was awarded to **Konstancja Duff** (Fitzwilliam). **Andreas Morgensen** (Fitzwilliam) was awarded the Part II prize.

The Matthew Buncombe prize for the best overall performance in the MPhil degree was awarded to **Emily Caddick** (Newnham).



*Jonathon Brown's gift of a painting was unveiled at the Alumni Weekend, 2008*

## Recent Major Publications by Members of the Faculty

Simon Blackburn  
*How to Read Hume*. London: Granta, 2008.

Raymond Geuss  
*Philosophy and Real Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Robert Hanna & Michelle Maiese  
*Embodied Minds in Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Michael Potter  
*Wittgenstein's notes on logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

## Faculty Appeal

The Faculty has now raised over £1.4 million of the £2 million it needs to provide a Trust Fund. If it is successful, the Faculty expects to guarantee that the Professorship of

Philosophy (1896), the Chair held by Wittgenstein among others, is filled in perpetuity. The Faculty is also keen to undertake new initiatives, such as offering studentships, or supporting distinguished visitors. Your support would be warmly appreciated. More information about the appeal and a donation form is available from the Faculty website [www.phil.cam.ac.uk](http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk).

## Future Faculty Events Alumni Weekend 2009

### The Meaning of Music

Saturday 26 September

**Professor Roger Scruton**

Why do we think that music has meaning, and how does this bear on the value of music and its place in our lives?

### Exhibition: 800 years of Philosophy at Cambridge

25–26 September

Casimir Lewy Library

Exhibition to celebrate the history of Philosophy at Cambridge.

Please see *Alumni Weekend 2009* booklet for further details.

## Festival Of Ideas

21 October–1 November 2009

### The Philosophy of Wine – From Science to Subjectivity

**Professor Barry Smith**, Director of the Institute of Philosophy, University of London.

Can our taste experiences reveal the objective qualities of a wine, or do they just confirm our individual preferences?

### Routledge Lecture: The Open-Doors Model of Freedom

30 October

**Professor Philip Pettit**, the Laurance S. Rockefeller University Professor of Politics and Human Values at Princeton University, will deliver the fourth Routledge Lecture.

Please see the Festival of Ideas brochure for further details.



# Logic Matters

Peter Smith

British philosophy departments have changed. For the last twenty years, the pressures have been to give increasing priority to research and to expand the numbers of research students. There's a temptation to devalue other teaching as a result. But we like to think that in Cambridge, at any rate, we've managed to balance the competing demands. Despite a radical growth in student numbers, we maintain a gold-standard undergraduate education. And while we've certainly gone for quality rather than quantity, our graduate school is expanding and impressively flourishing.

How do we continue to maintain research quality and attract the best graduate students, despite being a relatively small department? By developing strengths in particular areas, by having a number of 'research clusters' (in the jargon of the age). This focus is good for our research — as there is the ongoing stimulation from advanced seminars, reading-groups, and innumerable conversations. And it is even better for our graduate students — for just the same reasons.

One cluster that's emerged is in logic and the philosophy of mathematics. Michael Potter has produced important books on the philosophy of arithmetic, *Reason's Nearest Kin*, and *Set Theory and Its Philosophy*. Alex Oliver and Timothy Smiley have written a whole series of influential articles on the logic of plurals (which covers, *inter alia*, the logic of expressions like 'Alex Oliver and Timothy Smiley'), and they have recently applied that work in arguing for a rather deflationary position about set theory.

I have a book out on Gödel's Theorems, and am working on another on the consistency of arithmetic. (Yes, of course it is

consistent! But how do we know . . . ?) Arif Ahmed, an ex-mathematician, like Michael and myself, is seriously interested in issues like the supposed necessity of logic and mathematics. Bob Hanna, who is temporarily with us this year, also has equally strong interests in the philosophy of mathematics. And then Fraser MacBride, who is joining us in October, has written a number of major articles in the area. Those who like to see continuities will think that it entirely appropriate that the Cambridge of Russell and Whitehead, of Ramsey and Turing, and of Wittgenstein, should still care a very great deal about the foundations of logic and mathematics.

This cluster attracts an impressive bunch of enthusiastic graduate students interested in the philosophy of mathematics (who have done exceptionally well in competitions for Junior Research Fellowships).

For some reason, these students have tended to be more inclined than others to spend their days working together in the graduate centre, which has made for a terrific atmosphere of co-operative endeavour. The Thursday Logic Seminar, followed by the pub, has become something of an institution (if mathematicians are engines for turning coffee into theorems, philosophers of mathematics do seem to flourish more on beer). Many of us get together another day as well — sometimes to teach ourselves more logic by working through some advanced text, but this year (at Bob Hanna's instigation) it's been to discuss recent major books on the philosophy of mathematics. It is not just all very productive, but also a good deal of *fun!*

Will it continue? The collapse of serious logic teaching in many British universities (partly because of the dire state of school mathematics?) means that the number of students enthused to go on to do graduate work in related areas of philosophy is in serious decline. Even our own undergraduates seem less logic-minded than their predecessors. Worrying for us who think that logic matters. But for the moment, it is good to report that an area of philosophy at the very heart of the Cambridge tradition does continue to flourish here.

Dr Peter Smith, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy. He blogs at [logicmatters.blogspot.com](http://logicmatters.blogspot.com)

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## From the Editor

Your comments and contributions are always welcome. Please send them to the Editor at:

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