

# AGORA

NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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“[Philosophical] questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation...”—Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*

Greetings and welcome to the sixth edition of *Agora*, the Philosophy Department's Annual Newsletter!

## Growth

For many of you, this is your sixth visit to the Department of Philosophy's *Agora* -- its gathering place for an annual exchange of news and ideas. As the Department welcomes your return, it also welcomes to *Agora* our recent graduates whose accomplishments are many. I thank Norvin Richards and Dorothy Bazemore who continue to serve, respectively, as the editor and designer of *Agora*; and, I thank the College of Arts and Sciences for its support for the distribution of this newsletter.

The past academic year has been an eventful year both for the Department and for me personally -- the sort of year that reminds one of Aristotle's words (in the *Physics*) that “time [does not] exist without change.” James Otteson resigned the chairmanship in August, 2007; he then resigned his faculty position last January 1 to accept the directorship of an honors program at Yeshiva College in New York City. In losing Professor Otteson, the Department lost its chair, its political philosopher, and its historian of philosophy. The Department was also without its philosopher of science and aesthetician while Richard Richards made productive use of a year-long sabbatical leave. Fortunately, however, the strong, resilient, and cooperative philosophy faculty conquered these hardships, fulfilling wonderfully the Department's commitment to teaching, research, and service.

For me, the end of 2007-2008 marked the end of my thirtieth year with The University of Alabama, but I had not expected (nor had I hoped!) to celebrate my thirtieth year by serving as chair. I thank my colleagues for their solid support throughout this difficult first year as chair; without it, the year would have been horrendous.

The changes within the Department have just begun, and they include both personnel changes and changes in the Department's teaching commitments. Though the Dean and Provost have made no promises, the Department hopes to search during 2008-2009 for at least one tenure track faculty member to replace Professor Otteson. The Department has also petitioned to conduct a second search that would expand the faculty from seven to eight tenure track positions, a pressing need created by UA's rapidly growing enrollment that has produced an unprecedented demand for courses.

When I joined the faculty in 1978, UA's enrollment was 15,000. Twenty five years later, President Witt announced in 2003 that UA would increase its enrollment to 28,000 by 2013. The enrollment climbed to 21,750 in 2005 and to 25,580 in 2007. At the projected growth rate, enrollment will top 28,000 by 2010 -- three years ahead of schedule. To help accommodate the increasing number of freshmen, the Department increased enrollment in Introduction to Philosophy and Introduction to Ethics from thirty five to fifty. Every semester, with the help of computers and undergraduate teaching assistants, the Department offers a section of Introduction to Deductive Logic to ninety students who fill a computer lab. (The instructors' use of computers and TAs has not only allowed the Department to teach logic to a larger number of students, but it has increased the success rate in PHL 101 from well below 50% to more than 90%!)

In 2007-2008, even with Professor Otteson's departure and Professor Richards' year-long leave, the Department served a record number of students. Next year, two full-time temporary instructors will help the Department meet its teaching commitments while Norvin Richards and

# News Of Philosophy Department

Chase Wrenn each take semester long sabbatical leaves. With the two instructors and by adding each semester a 200 student section of Introduction to Philosophy, the Department will likely increase students served by 12%! Though UA's enrollment will continue to grow over the next two years, the Department has reached its limit: it simply can't teach more students and meet the needs of its majors without expanding the number of faculty positions.

Regrettably, helping the University meet the increased demand for courses comes with a cost. Most who are reading this issue of *Agora* remember relatively small sections of introductory

## Growth

philosophy and introductory ethics -- sections of a comfortable size in which philosophical exchange among the students and professors was not only feasible but encouraged. In today's 50-student and 200-student sections, philosophical discussion and debate is much more restricted. I can tolerate such changes only as long as I can believe that the changes *will* lead to a larger Department of Philosophy at UA and that, throughout such changes, our upper level seminars *will* remain venues for serious philosophical discussion among small groups of majors and minors -- some of the finest students on campus.

In summer, 2007, Robert Olin, Dean of the College, offered to fund something major for the Department of Philosophy to mark the change in departmental leadership. With much assistance from colleagues, Scott Hestevold quickly organized the *Philosophy Today* speaker series, which brought to campus six prominent philosophers representing six different specialties. Each distinguished visitor offered both a colloquium for faculty and majors *and* a public address on the state of contemporary research in his specialty: a survey of the hot problems and some of the proposed solutions. The series was a great treat for the philosophy faculty, philosophy majors, and other members of the university community.

Loren Lomasky (University of Virginia) opened the series last October 16 with a public address on the state of political philosophy. His award winning book, *Persons, Rights, and the Moral Community* (Oxford, 1987), established his reputation as a leading advocate of a rights-based approach to moral and social issues. On October 30, Tyler Burge (UCLA) offered an ambitious public address on contemporary work in philosophy of mind. Burge was honored in 2003 with a festschrift devoted to his landmark work. The final speaker last fall was distinguished ethicist Geoffrey Sayre McCord, from the University of North Carolina. SayreMcCord has won several teaching awards and enjoys an international reputation for his research that ranges over not only ethics, but epistemology and modern philosophy as well.

The series continued in the spring with Ted Sider's talk on contemporary metaphysics. Now at New York University, Sider is best known for his book, *Four-Dimensionalism* (Oxford), which received

## OUR NEW SPEAKER SERIES



the 2003 prize from the American Philosophical Association. (Some of you may have heard Sider's first talk at UA in 2002; he then argued that a certain conception of Hell is inconsistent with the existence of God -- an argument that brought great relief to several of us in the Philosophy Department!)

In late February, Jonathan Kvanvig offered his audience an overview of contemporary work in philosophy of religion. Holding the rank of Distinguished Professor at Baylor, Kvanvig is the author of six books, including *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God* (Macmillan, 1986) and *The Problem of Hell* (Oxford, 1993). (Kvanvig also served as the Department's first Annual Philosophy Alumni Lecturer, mentioned elsewhere in *Agora*.) Bringing the series to a close was distinguished epistemologist Ernest Sosa. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Sosa is editor of two of the most prestigious philosophy journals, and his John Locke Lectures at Oxford University have just appeared as *A Virtue*

*Epistemology* (Oxford, 2007).

Plans for the 2008-2009 *Philosophy Today* series are already underway: public addresses on controversial topics will be given by Douglas Husak (Rutgers) on Thursday, October 2 and by Stephen Yablo (MIT) on Tuesday, October 28. Husak's talk may involve his provocative defense of legalizing drugs. The series will include two speakers in spring, 2009. For the latest *Philosophy Today* information, visit the Department's website.

# FACULTY ACTIVITIES

**Torin Alter** was promoted to full professor. He co-wrote (with Robert Howell) *A Dialogue on Consciousness*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press (due out in December 2008). He also wrote a few articles, including one for *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. His twins, Irving and Dora, are over a year old and cuter than which cannot be conceived.



**Scott Hestevold** published the entry on epistemologist and metaphysician Roderick M. Chisholm for the *American Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and his paper on the nature of the present and temporal passage was accepted for publication.



**Max Hocutt** (emeritus) was an invited speaker in Guadalajara in February at a symposium on Brain and Behavior; the proceedings of the symposium will be published by the University of Guadalajara. He has also published an essay in the Spring issue of *Behavior and Philosophy*, and will present an essay on Natural Rights at the University of Virginia in the fall.



**Stuart Rachels** delivered the 2007-2008 Edwards Lecture at Emory University on October 25, 2007, a lecture series he went to several times as an undergraduate. His was called, "One Person Doesn't Make a Difference," about whether we have a duty to contribute to good causes when our contribution doesn't seem to make a difference. He also published second editions of his father's intro books,



*Problems from Philosophy* (the textbook) and *The Truth about the World* (the reader), saw *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 5th edition (James Rachels / Stuart Rachels) published in Norwegian (!), and had his paper "On Three Alleged Theories of Rational Behavior" accepted by *Utilitas*.

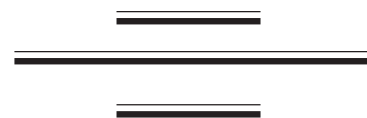
**Norvin Richards** joined Sydney Cook in giving a Winternitz Lecture at the College of Community Health Sciences; their title was "Legal and Moral Questions about End of Life Decisions." He also presented a paper at a conference held at the University of Cape Town, titled "Lives No One Should Have To Live" (I'm pretty sure his life isn't one of those but to learn the rest you'd have to read the paper.)



**Richard Richards** spent the year on research sabbatical. While in Argentina for the fall semester, he wrote "The Philosophical Challenges in Teaching Evolution," since published in the journal *Evolution and Outreach*. He also wrote and submitted a chapter on Darwin for the *Routledge Companion to the Nineteenth Century* and a chapter on Taxonomy for the *Cambridge Companion to Darwin's Origin of Species*. He is currently working on a book "The Species Problem: A Philosophical Analysis."



**Chase Wrenn** completed editing a volume of original essays, *Naturalism, Reference, and Ontology: Essays in Honor of Roger F. Gibson* due out in winter 2009 from Peter Lang. It includes 12 essays by 15 philosophers on such topics as naturalized epistemology, the relationship between linguistics and philosophy, the philosophy of logic, and the aesthetics of baseball. Chase has a sabbatical in the fall 2008, during which he will work on the manuscript of a monograph on truth and its value.





# News Of Philosophy Alums

**Carl Sosnin (MA Program) and Margie Brooke (MA 1977)** attended Ted Sider's contribution to the department's *Philosophy Today* speaker series, and enjoyed hearing some first-class philosophy. Afterwards we got to catch up. Details include that Margie's son is living in Princeton and working in Philly, and that Carl's son Carl is contemplating which college to attend year after next.

**Craig Alexander (1977)** appeared twice in my Phil Issues in Civil Law course, to the great benefit of both the students and the professor. His daughter Emily has completed her freshman year at Alabama, and his son Alan is doing very well on his high school jayvee basketball team -- I know, I got to see him play! Craig also attended Ernest Sosa's contribution to our *Philosophy Today* speaker series, and enjoyed it thoroughly.

**Breet (Chuck) Bangle (MA program)** spent 26 years after grad school as a systems engineer with Electronic Data Systems in Dallas. He and his family now live just west of Denver, where Chuck works from his home as a systems software designer with IBM's Hursley Research Labs in Hursley, England. He and his wife Sharon have a daughter Katrina who is majoring in music education and recently discovered a budding interest in philosophy (this is not our fault, y'all.)

**Kelly Cloud (1983)** is now the C.O.O. of EPL, Inc. She reports that she is "still learning every day and beginning to think about a second career after this one... I think I might like to work for a nonprofit that promotes healthier choices for the ways we use our land and structure our roads and communities."

**Ann Coyle (1988)** works in Birmingham and also co-authors TV scripts. She is the fond mother of 14-year-old Dylan, who is currently greatly interested in philosophy. I was glad to recommend Jim Rachels'

work to Dylan, and reports are that it has served as kindling to the flame. Also got to see Ann and Dylan at Ernest Sosa's contribution to our *Philosophy Today* speaker series, and am very glad to be back in touch.

**Nancy Davis Bolyard (1988)** is Senior Managing Attorney for Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Alabama, "where I get to spend my time doing what I love to do -- helping to design and maintain our individual and group health benefits for our customers, as well as assisting with compliance with a host of other federal and state regulations. . . I am happily married to Gary Bolyard (thankfully a non-lawyer) who is kind enough to put up with me on a daily basis. My wonderful son is 15 years old and while all mothers say this, he is the best person I have ever met."

**Amy McManus (1993)** and her husband Andrew Odewan are the very proud parents of a son, Wil, born 10/20/07, weighing in at 8 lbs. 10 oz., and measuring 21.5" long.



Amy with son Wil



Wil, "Pondering like a Philosopher"

**Glenn Fidler (1995)** "Where to begin? I have three children Maeve 12 was born in Ireland, Eoin (Owen) 6 and Lily 4 were both born in Massachusetts. I teach high school social studies... I started a club called the Peace and Justice Club and we are working on bringing a Nobel prize winner along with the man who helped build the Vietnam war memorial to our school. The administration of course is very nervous and wants more information. At this point I remember Socrates was a gadfly and enjoy my status as such... My children are a joy, I find myself amazed at their capacity to learn and be curious. My students are often lazy, however, I enjoy

the battle for the souls that I fight with culture, music, video games, and whatever else keeps them from their studies".

**Brian Carver (1996)** is leaving the litigation group at Fenwick & West after two highly enjoyable years in the practice of intellectual property law. He will be an Assistant Professor on tenure-track at U.C. Berkeley's School of Information. It took a great offer: part of the deal is that Brian's wife, Jac Asher, "will be able to design her own courses in Berkeley's LGBT Program, part of the Department of Gender & Women's Studies. Additionally, once the law faculty has an opportunity to vote on it this fall, it is expected that my title will be Assistant Professor of Information and Law. I will teach law and policy courses, some of which will be cross-listed at the law school." He's going to be a terrific professor!



Brian, daughter Cora & wife Jac, Below, Cora & baby brother Freal



This just in! Freal Wesley Carver arrived by natural childbirth on June 19, weighing 8lbs 8oz and measuring 21 1/4." Named for Jac and Brian's maternal grandfather's, Freal is the brother of Cora Carver, now 3.

# News Of Philosophy Alums

**Amy Henry Denger (1998)** will return to Tuscaloosa in the fall to enter the PhD program in Management, with the goal of becoming a professor of Organizational Management. I ran into Jim Cashman, who will be her professor, and he was understandably delighted at the prospect of having Amy as his student again.

**Brian Landry (1998)** is the chef at Galatoires in New Orleans! See next page from *Dining with Bacchus*.

**Lee Goswick (2001)** defended his dissertation in Mathematics at UAB this past October, and presumably now has his PhD.

**Monica Free Meilke (2002)** and her husband Falko spent the year in New York while Falko pursued an LLM at NYU. Monica had an office job there with a German-owned construction firm and had "good hours (once I learned to say the sentence 'It's 5 p.m. I'll do it tomorrow.')" She sang second soprano in a choir, an independent, small group of about 14 singers. She and Falko returned to Germany permanently in early June, where he will do doctoral studies in law and she will return to both performing and teaching clarinet.

**Robin Preussel (2003)** clerked with Judge Proctor of the Northern District of Alabama and then with Judge William Pryor of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals.

**Brett Smith (2003)** has joined the staff of the Geological Survey of Alabama as a biologist in the Biological Systems section of the Water Investigations Program. "Our studies of fishes, mollusks, and crustaceans

take us to almost every corner of the State -- from caves in the Tennessee Valley, to streams and rivers of all sizes, to the marine and estuarine habitats of the Gulf Coast. It is an almost perfect combination of hands-on field experience, lab work, and writing."

**Josh Bell (2004)** has been awarded the 2008 Student Achievement Award offered by the National Rural Health Association in conjunction with John Snow Inc. This is a very competitive national award, granted Josh on the basis of the significance of his work to rural health and innovation and originality in his scholarly efforts. Josh says "My philosophy degree is still the hottest topic of my education background to other medical folks," but it's clear he is also giving them plenty to admire.

**Justin Peake (2004)** travels to New York for a few shows in June along with putting the finishing touches on an album, producing another, and planning yet another couple to be recorded as soon as is prudent. He has also "just finished a series of drawings, several of which are to be hung in a gallery here in New Orleans in June." He's looking into grad work in music at the Gallatin School, which would include a chance to "study composition with a class or two at Tisch and throughout the rest of the NYU graduate departments." He adds that "As a human being, I am learning to better practice patience and discipline." Don't know about patience, but it's hard to see how anyone short on discipline could accomplish so much.

**Gabriel Walvatne (2003)** has spent his first year after law school at Maryland with Miles & Stockbridge in Baltimore, representing banks and financial institutions in real estate finance. "I get a lot of client interaction and I handle a lot of things on my own, which is scary as hell but it's still a great learning experience. I still love the people I work with too."

**Annie Donaldson (2004)** served as Special Assistant to Mitt Romney and Assistant Director of Operations in Governor Romney's campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. She is still working for the Governor, helping to start his PAC, but is

leaving in August to begin law school at Harvard in the fall.

**Parker Sweet (2004)** has spent his first year after law school at Alabama practicing law with his father in Daphne, at Crabtree & Sweet, P.C. "They have mostly treated me just like another colleague in the practice, which has distinct upsides and downsides. I'm flattered by the confidence they place in me and the respect it shows, but I've also had a lot of moments of feeling entirely overwhelmed, especially with the practical aspects of managing my workload. I'm still learning the fine art of recognizing when I need more supervision and asking for it. My workload consists mostly of criminal, bankruptcy, and real estate law. Outside of work, I've become a pretty avid kayaker this past year, and I get out on the water as much as the weather and my schedule allow. This past weekend I paddled 13+ miles through the delta and had a great time (despite the sunburn)."

**Brett Talley (2004)** has spent his first year after Harvard Law working in DC for Gibson Dunn & Crutcher. He will be back in Tuscaloosa starting in August for a clerkship with U.S. District Judge Scott Coogler.

**Gaines Johnston (2005)** has completed his second year of law school at Alabama, where he has served as an Associate Justice on the Honor Court and will now serve as its Prosecutor. A summer working with the DA in Mobile has led him to focus his career plans on the criminal law.

**Rob Andrews (2006)** transferred from Ole Miss to UA law school, and is currently working for the Tuscaloosa DA and writing for the *Journal of the Legal Profession*.

**Matthew Satcher (2006)** reports that medical school has just as high a workload as reported, but that he's enjoying it. Great to see him when he was able to attend Jonathan Kvanvig's contribution to our *Philosophy Today* speaker series.



# News Of Philosophy Alums

**Chase Espy (2007)** served as an Associate Justice on UA law school's Honor Court this past year, and has been re-elected to serve a second year. He also won Best Paper in Civil Procedure. This summer, he will first work for the Attorney General in Montgomery and later for Lloyd, Gray and Whitehead in Birmingham.

**Nick Gajewski (2007)** will be an Associate Justice on the Honor Court at UA law school next year, and will work this summer for Turner and Turner in Tuscaloosa. His interview for the summer job was with Rob Norton, a history major who also took several courses in the Prelaw Package, and included an exchange of reminiscences

about those courses -- note that Nick got the job anyway...

**Mark Manuel (2007)** is doing graduate work in the Department of Cinema and Television at Regent University. He reports greatly enjoying his studies, and taking special pleasure in a trip to shoot documentary footage of the Washington D. C. "March for Justice" rally, which involved interviewing figures including Martin Luther King III and Al Sharpton.

**Karissa Rinas (2007)** is doing web design in Tuscaloosa.



## Dining With Bacchus



"**Brian Landry** of Galatoire's may just be the boldest chef in America. I don't mean bold in the sense that he challenges his diners to eat unconventional dishes like butterscotch-coated bacon or passion fruit sponge between swirls of dehydrated prosciutto. Those foods have actually been served at American restaurants, but they won't be found on the menu at Galatoire's, the famous New Orleans establishment that first opened its doors on Bourbon Street over 100 years ago.

In 2006, the not yet thirty-year-old Landry took up the reins as Executive Chef at this venerable institution with its established menu and many long-time patrons whose expectations were set long before Landry even began cooking. That's a pretty bold career move. There is no sign that the young chef feels any pressure, however, as I pepper him with questions from my perch in one of the better people-watching seats in Galatoire's main dining room. He clearly knows his stuff and has confidence in the support he gets from his colleagues and staff.



I ask him if this is a job he always aspired to. Not at all, he tells me. After graduating from Jesuit High School in New Orleans, he accepted a full scholarship to the University of Alabama where he earned degrees in biology and philosophy. The biology courses were part of his pre-med curriculum, and he got interested in

deductive logic and then in more advanced subfields like the philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, and neurophilosophy.

Landry trained with highly-regarded chefs in New Orleans, including René Bajeaux, Gerard Maras, and Kevin Vizard, and he worked under Bob Waggoner at the famous Charleston Grill. He also earned an associate's degree in culinary arts from Johnson & Wales University. I ask him what he learned in school that he wasn't learning on the job. He says he had picked up great cooking techniques from very talented chefs, but that the great value in culinary school was learning *why* things happened to food when it was subjected to different processes. The chef's experience with Galatoire's *a la minute* cooking served him well at the recent Louisiana Seafood Cook-Off. Landry and sous chef Heather Young took the first place prize for their Sautéed Cobia with Louisiana Crab Butter. Contestants had to use Louisiana seafood, and they had only one hour to do all preparations.

As reigning King of Louisiana Seafood, Landry will represent the state at the Great American Seafood Cook-Off (GASCO) in August. He tells me he might again cook the dish that won the Louisiana Seafood Cook-Off. (Why mess with success?)"

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# Graduations and Awards

## THIS YEAR'S GRADS

**Joseph Cox** graduated magna cum laude, and will attend UA Law School in the fall with the support of an Academic Excellence Scholarship.



**Nicholas Gunn** will attend the University of Pacific McGeorge School of Law, supported by a scholarship covering half the tuition.

**Matt Hudgens-Haney** will pursue the study of neurophilosophy in the

Masters program at Georgia State next year, where he has been awarded a handsome two year fellowship (\$16,000 over two years) and full tuition waiver.

**Will Joyner** will attend law school at the University of Alabama this fall, supported by a handsome law school fellowship of \$7,500 for each of the three years.

**Sarah Simpler** graduated summa cum laude, and will attend law school at the University of Alabama this fall under a full three-year scholarship.

**Tommy Sinowski** has been accepted at Faulkner Law School and John Marshall Law School, and is awaiting word from Alabama.

The following also graduated this May, but we do not know their plans: **Davis Friday**, **Lucy LeMaster**, **Russell Platt (cum laude)**, **Matthew Price (cum laude)**, **Mark Reese** and **James Stuckey**.

## PRIZES AND AWARDS

**Kyle Driggers** took third placed for his poster presentation in the Humanities/Fine Arts Division of the University's First Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Competition. His presentation, *Thank Goodness, That's Over!*, included formulations of two competing views about the nature of time and a defense of one of them against a famous objection.



**Bradford Patterson** was nominated by the University for a Rhodes Scholarship, and made it to the semi-finalist round. Good for him!

**Beverly Davis** has been named Girls Golf Coach of the year for 2007 by the National Federation of State High School Associations. "Golf is the perfect sport for a philosopher," says Beverly. Certainly golfers have lots of opportunities to "be philosophical -- act like it don't matter."

## Departmental Awards

### The Iredell Jenkins Endowed Memorial Scholarship

#### Co-winners

Matthew Haney and Sarah Simpler

#### Second Place

Kyle Driggers  
Chris Nicholson  
Matthew Price

### The Marten & Marie Ten Hoor Prize

#### Winner

Matthew Haney

### The Norvin Richards Award in Philosophy and the Law

#### Winner

Sarah Simpler



# The First Annual Alumni Lecturer

## Prof. Jonathan Kvanvig With UA Students

Philosopher-of-religion Jonathan Kvanvig served not only as the fifth Philosophy Today speaker but as the first Annual Philosophy Alumni Lecturer: a visiting speaker who also teaches a class while on campus. The first Annual Philosophy Alumni Lecturer was made possible by donations from several of our alumni and by a generous gift from a friend of the Department, Louis W. Perry. (There is more about Mr. Perry elsewhere in *Agora*.)

Before the spring semester began, Kvanvig sent Scott Hestevold a copy of a paper in progress to be added to the syllabus of Hestevold's seminar

on philosophy of religion. The paper addressed the problem of reconciling divine foreknowledge and free will: if an omniscient God knows beforehand all that one will do, then one can never do other than what God knew that one would do; thus, it seems to follow that, if an omniscient God exists, one could not have free will. One could never perform any action freely given that an omniscient God always knows what one will do. The week before Kvanvig arrived, Hestevold introduced the foreknowledge problem, offering an overview of various solutions. Then, on February 25, Kvanvig himself taught the seminar, leading students through his paper,

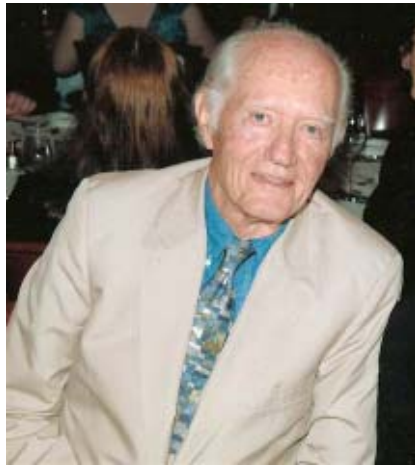
answering questions, and fielding objections. When the seminar ended, students were invited to continue the discussion over supper with Kvanvig.

With continuing support from alumni, the Department anticipates that several 2008-2009 *Philosophy Today* speakers will also serve as Philosophy Alumni Lecturers. In early October, Douglas Husak (Rutgers) will meet with the students in Norvin Richards' seminar on Philosophy of Law, and Stephen Yablo (MIT) will later conduct a class for those in Torin Alter's seminar on Mind, Language, and Reality.





# Louis Perry & Jefferson's Scissors



Though he now resides in LaJolla, California, Louis W. Perry graduated from UA many years ago with a degree in physics. After a successful career as a physicist (at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory and with General Atomic Company) and after founding two consulting firms, Mr. Perry “retired” and began teaching classes at the University of California San Diego. His UCSD classes focused on the conflicts among religion, science, and democracy; and from this classroom work grew a book on these conflicts, *Jefferson’s Scissors*, which Mr. Perry published in 2006. During the writing of this volume, Mr. Perry made several trips to Tuscaloosa, and it was during these visits that he met with several members of the philosophy faculty to discuss his work in progress.

Last summer, when Mr. Perry heard about the *Philosophy Today* series and the plan to institute an annual Philosophy Alumni Lectureship, he sent a large check that enabled the Department to add a sixth speaker to the series: a speaker who could also serve as the first Philosophy Alumni Lecturer. Given his interest in the interface of religion, science, and democracy, it was appropriate to invite philosopher of religion Jonathan Kvanvig who (as reported elsewhere in *Agora*) offered not only a colloquium and public address, but

conducted a class for Scott Hestevold’s seminar students.

The Department is grateful for Mr. Perry’s support, which is ongoing. He has doubled his pledge for 2008-2009, which once again allows the Department to add to the schedule an additional *Philosophy Today* speaker. Moreover, Mr. Perry and his friend, Frank Peters, are joining forces to sponsor a website named after Mr. Perry’s book. Once established, the *Jefferson’s Scissors* website will host *Philosophy Today* webcasts, digital recordings of the controversial public addresses of our distinguished *Philosophy Today* speakers. The website will also host webcasts of the ALLELE series “Alabama Lectures on Life’s Evolution” sponsored by UA’s Evolution Working Group. The website is motivated, in part, by Mr. Perry and Mr. Peters’ commitment to the view that there should be public discussion of the complex issues involving philosophy, science, religion, and politics: issues that should be addressed critically, dispassionately, and openly.

Watch the Department’s website for an announcement regarding the inauguration of (and link to) *Jefferson’s Scissors*. The first webcast will be the recording of Ernest Sosa’s public address given at UA last April 29.

*Jefferson's Scissors Jefferson's Scissors*