

AGORA

NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The University of Alabama College of Arts & Sciences Fall 2007 Issue 5

"It is the habit alone of reasoning which can make a reasoner."—Shaftesbury (1671-1716)



James R. Otteson
Chairman

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

Let me begin by thanking Norvin Richards for his hard work once again in producing a fine newsletter. *Agora* provides a forum for maintaining the ties that bind us as a community, both intellectual and social. Professor Richards's editing of *Agora* is one of the many tasks that this year earned him the Morris Mayer Award, which recognizes "selfless and significant service and leadership for the U of A community, significant contributions to student life, and integrity." Congratulations, Professor Richards!

The Philosophy Department has once again been a busy place this past year, as you will see herein. One member of our department got tenure and promotion this past year, which means that as of now all permanent members of the department are tenured. A second member of our department was promoted to full professor, and a third is applying for promotion to full professor this fall. We also had a number of papers published, and had several books published with several more in the works. We are also traveling to give papers, we are being invited to contribute to prestigious projects, we are conducting research in areas outside of philosophy.

We are even doing our part to expand the ranks of future philosophers: three babies were born to faculty members this past year. Welcome to the world, George, Dora, and Irving!

You will also find inside updates on what many of your fellow students and graduates

are doing. That is one of the most important parts of this newsletter, so be sure to send us your own updates for next time—the "inquiring minds" of your fellow students, not to mention your former professors, want to know what great things you're doing.

Finally, it is with a heavy heart that I report that I am resigning the departmental chairmanship at the end of the summer, and then resigning my faculty position at UA altogether as of January 2008. I will be heading off to new adventures in New York, after ten great years in Alabama. I would like to publicly thank my colleagues and my students for challenging me to become the best teacher, researcher, and colleague I could. I will miss Alabama.

I look forward to continuing to find out about your exploits, and to informing you of mine, in future editions of *Agora*.

Respectfully yours,
James Otteson



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News Of The Department

Change In Leadership

With the unanimous support of the Department, Scott Hestevold has been appointed its Interim Chair in place of the departing James Otteson.

Not without sadness do I wish Jim Otteson and his family the very best as Professor Otteson pursues a wonderful opportunity at Yeshiva University. On behalf of my colleagues, I thank Professor Otteson for having enriched our Department with his teaching and research *and* for his having served an all-too-short term as our tireless chair. I also thank the Otteson family—Katie, Victoria, James, Joseph, and year-old George—for sharing their husband/father with the Department of Philosophy.

Regarding the Department, Professor Otteson's departure marks not only the loss of a fine colleague but the loss of our historian of philosophy *and* our political philosopher. Thus, as I begin several years as Interim Chair, the pressing concern for the Department is to find new philosophers with these areas of expertise. (Yes, the Department will need *two* philosophers to replace *one* Jim Otteson!) The Department is grateful to Dean Robert Olin for approving a search for one new philosopher to join us in Fall 2008. As I write, the Department remains optimistic that the Provost and Dean will create for us an eighth tenure-track faculty line, allowing a second new philosopher to join us within the next two years.

The eighth faculty line is especially important for moving the Department forward. As you know from previous newsletters, the Department features three specialty tracks: Mind and Brain, PreLaw, and Philosophical Foundations of Civil Society. Adding an eighth philosopher with expertise in philosophy of law and political philosophy would not only allow the PreLaw Track to continue while Professor Richards is on sabbatical leave, but it would enhance what we can offer our Civil Society majors—approximately one-third of our majors. I hope to be able to report to you next year that this eighth position did indeed

materialize. (Of course, every department chair fantasizes that an alumnus will solve a personnel crisis by funding an endowed chair. Alas, such a solution remains for now but a fantasy.)



Prof. H Scott Hestevold

As we search for new philosophers, I hope to begin planning the first Annual Philosophy Alumni Lecture. Over the past several years, several of our prominent guest colloquium speakers have not only addressed the faculty and majors, but have conducted a seminar session for some of our advanced students or given a lively public lecture. Beginning in Spring 2008 with help from philosophy alumni, I hope to make these sorts of opportunities for our faculty, students, and university community an annual event that will also entice philosophy alumni back to campus. The Department will invite our alumni to renew their love of philosophy by meeting some of our majors, auditing a favorite professor's class, attending the guest's public lecture, and chatting with our faculty.

Thanks to the many years of dedicated leadership that Max Hocutt and then Norvin Richards provided and to the course that Jim Otteson has been setting for the Department, the University's philosophy faculty is strong indeed: every philosopher is actively engaged in research *and* remains committed to teaching. Arguably, person for person, the Department is among the strongest in the College of Arts and Sciences. We now have between forty and sixty majors that include some of the finest students at the University. Serving as the Interim Chair of such a department is most certainly an honor; and I take this opportunity to thank publicly my colleagues for their vote of confidence in my serving in this capacity.

I hope that you will stay in touch with the Philosophy Department—through email, our website, or with a visit to the third floor of ten Hoor Hall when you are next in Tuscaloosa!

H. Scott Hestevold

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Torin Alter: This was an eventful year for me. On February 27th, my wife Elizabeth gave birth to the world's cutest twins: Dora



consciousness. A new "Torin Alter & the Lying Angels" CD was released. And my USATT table tennis rating rose to 1596.

Scott Hestevold gave presentations on the nature of the present and temporal passage at annual meetings of the Alabama



Philosophical Society and the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology. He published an essay on "God and Morality" in physicist Louis W. Perry's *Jefferson's Scissors: Conflicts of Religion with Science and Democracy*. [Perry, an alumnus of the University of Alabama, enjoyed a distinguished career in nuclear energy and is now a passionate advocate for the separation of church and state, both as an author and teacher.] In Bar Harbor in 2007, Scott taught for the American Academy of Judicial Education, conducting for judges the logic/judicial-reasoning seminar.

Max Hocutt (Emeritus) had to have operations on one of his eyes, but still wrote a handful of essays for a forthcoming encyclopedia



of American philosophy and a piece on Herbert Spencer for *Independent Review*. He has also been invited to speak at an international conference on mind/brain at the University of Guadalajara in Spring 2008.

James Otteson: The last academic year was a busy one for me. My book *Actual Ethics* was published by Cambridge University



Press in 2006, at very nearly the same time as our fourth child, George Dennis, was born. Both were most welcome events! I also managed to find time to give talks in several places: here at UA; at UAB; in Washington, DC (twice); in Ft. Lauderdale; in Bowling Green, Ohio; in Louisville; in New York; and in St. Louis. I am now finishing up a new book, entitled simply *Adam Smith*, which will be published by Continuum Press. For the fall, I will once again be doing a lot of traveling, including giving papers in Beijing, China and in Israel. I was also promoted to full professor in the department. Finally, I will, alas, be leaving The University of Alabama as of January 2008, to take up a position as Professor of Philosophy and Economics and Director of the Honors Program at Yeshiva University in New York.

Stuart Rachels reports the publication of the 5th edition of *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (previous editions by James Rachels)

and the 4th edition of *The Right Thing To Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy* (previous editions by James Rachels). *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* will be published in Norwegian in 2008, and was probably the best-selling philosophy book in 2006. In addition, Columbia University Press has published *The Legacy of Socrates: Essays in Moral Philosophy* (written by James Rachels, edited by Stuart.) He also presented "How to Make Group Progress" to a values conference in Syracuse, published a book review in *Phil Review*, and became a Life Master at bridge. This October, he will deliver the 2007-2008 Edwards Lecture at Emory University.

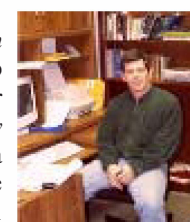


Norvin Richards spent his writing time this year revising and resubmitting a book-length manuscript. In the fall he co-directed the College's Freshman Learning Center for Pre-Law, and in the spring he was honored to receive the Morris Mayer Award. He is now figuring out how to teach Intro to Philosophy this fall, having discovered that he hasn't done so in 25 years and that some of those notes are showing their age just a bit—the examples involving Gerald Ford will probably have to go!



Richard Richards wrote two essays: "Solving the Species Problem: Kitcher and Hull on Sets and Individuals" for a Prometheus textbook

on the philosophy of Biology; and "Linnaeus' Systema Naturae" for the *Harvard Companion to Evolution*. He is currently working on two papers: "Darwin's Philosophical Impact" for the *Routledge Companion to the 19th Century* and "Taxonomy in Darwin's Origin" for a Cambridge University volume celebrating the 200th Anniversary of Darwin's Birth. He will be on sabbatical next year working on a book on philosophical issues related to species and taxonomy. In March, he and his wife, Rita Snyder, traveled to Buenos Aires for an Argentine Tango Congress.



Chase Wrenn has had a very good year. Along with Dr. Alter, he spent 6 weeks in St. Louis at an NEH-sponsored seminar, "Mind and Metaphysics." He completed his service as President of the Alabama Philosophical Society, and he organized the program for the 2007 meeting of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology. Two of his articles have recently been published. "Epistemology as Engineering?" appeared in *Theoria*, and "Why there are No Epistemic Duties" appeared in *Dialogue*. The biggest news for Dr. Wrenn, though, is his promotion to the rank of Associate Professor and his receipt of tenure, both of which take effect this August.



News Of Philosophy Alums

Robert Bland (MA, 1969) is a librarian and information specialist at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. He emailed Max Hocutt to mention that "some of your students who are no longer in philosophy still read and admire your work."

Craig Alexander (1977) made two stellar appearances in my course, Phil Issues in Civil law. Craig and Elsie are sending their daughter Emily to Alabama this coming fall; we hope to see her in some philosophy classes.

Jeff Tilden (1977) was a wonderful host and tour guide when Janet and I visited Seattle and environs in summer of 2006. He is clearly doing splendidly and enjoying life. What a great guy!

Martin McDowell (1992) emailed this information: "I'm on my third tour as State Dept.



Foreign Service Officer now (was previously in Slovakia and El Salvador), and am currently serving as the Political-Economic Section Chief at our Embassy in Chisinau, Moldova. I'll have been here two years in August and we've extended for a third year. I think you might

remember my wife Marie (Maruska), we have two girls now, Olivia (age 6) and Evelyn (16 mo.), they're both great and having a lot of fun."



Chase Wrenn (1996) was awarded tenure and promotion to Associate Professor this year. Great to have him as a colleague.

Michael Casiday (1997) emailed an announcement of the birth of Alexander Casiday (October 11, 2006), in Durham, England, approx. 8 lbs 10 oz. He joins Michael and Rachel and siblings Helen (7 ½), Bea (5 ½), and Anthony (3).

Jason Gray (2002) completed his M.A. in philosophy at Georgia State and is now pursuing a PhD in the subject at the University of California-Riverside.

Monica Free (2002) and Falko Mielke were married July 14 in Guntersville. They will spend a year in New York while Falko pursues an LLM at NYU, then return to Germany and Monica's life in music. She reports that "I passed my final recital last June with a mark of 1.7 (on a scale of 1-5 where 5 is bad and one is good), so I was very pleased. I teach a million students and my favorite project, the wind band, is growing."

Cole Mitchell (2002) is now ABD at Arizona, where he is starting his dissertation. We hear through the professorial grapevine that the faculty at Arizona regard him as brilliant, just as we do.

Ron Andress (2003) and Susan Martin were married in August 2006. Ron and Greg Vaughan have started in Mobile the Vaughan Andress Law Firm, "focusing on estate planning and small business law."

Zac Dover (2003) is in the second year of an MA program in German, here at UA. For the past year he has been studying at the Free University of Berlin, with a comfortable living stipend from the Federation of German-American Clubs. In addition to his courses there in German literature and intellectual history, he reports that he is playing piano and reading a great deal. Tom Fox, his main professor here, tells me Zac also enjoys finding the personal websites of professors of critical theory, of which Zac has a low opinion, then contacting them to ask if he can ask a few questions...they are always glad to agree, having no inkling they are about to be deconstructed themselves.

Jessica Kesler (2003) finished law school at LSU and has joined the New Orleans firm of Chaffe McCall, where she will work in the business/real estate section. This August, she will be married in New Orleans to Ben Woodruff, a fellow law student at LSU who has joined the New Orleans firm of Jones Walker.

Robin Preusell (2003) graduated from Yale Law School last year and has been working as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable R. David Proctor, U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Alabama in Birmingham. Next year she will clerk with the Honorable William

H. Pryor, U.S. Circuit Court Judge for the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, also in Birmingham. Robin passed the Texas State Bar Exam in 2006 and recently passed the Alabama State Bar as well. Although she is currently applying to the Justices of the United States Supreme Court for the term following her Circuit Court clerkship, she says she is also entertaining the idea of actually being a (gasp!) lawyer in either Houston, Atlanta, or Birmingham after her federal clerkships. Robin also serves as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) in Birmingham representing abused and neglected children.

Katie Terry (2003) finished law school at Virginia last year and is an associate at Freeman Mathis and Gary in Atlanta, where she works in the corporate and government liability section, representing corporate and governmental entities in civil rights, torts and general litigation matters. She is also a mentor with the SafeHouse Outreach Mentoring program in Atlanta, which provides support and mentoring for children with an incarcerated parent.

Gabriel Walvatne (2003) has just finished law school at Maryland. He will work for Miles & Stockbridge of Baltimore, in the Real Estate and Commercial Finance Practice Groups doing mostly real estate and secured lending. "My general responsibilities are document drafting and research, but I have been intimately involved in some really exciting projects including reporting my research to a panel of senior partners on various

News Of Philosophy Alums

issues relating to a 600 million dollar deal one of our clients was engaging in.”

Annie Donaldson (2004) reports that she has survived her third winter in Boston, Massachusetts and now serves as Assistant Director of Operations for the Mitt Romney for President Campaign.

Justin Peake (2004) has been performing as a musician for the past three years, sometimes in Tuscaloosa but more commonly in New Orleans and in New York City. His music is improvisational and very cutting edge, featuring interactive software that involves both the other musicians and the audience in the show. He is now applying to do a Masters either at the University of Edinburgh (digital composition and performance) or at NYU's Tisch School (Interactive Telecommunications.)

Parker Sweet (2004) was awarded Best Paper in his jurisprudence seminar for his application of Dworkinian interpretive theory to the bankruptcy code. He says this accomplishment is “directly attributable to my undergraduate training, in no small degree,” but we have enough on our consciences as it is. Good for Parker! He finishes law school at Alabama this year, and plans to do bankruptcy law as close as possible to Boston & his fiancée Lisa if an opportunity arises, and otherwise to work for Crabtree and Sweet in Mobile.

Brett Talley (2004) finished his final year at Harvard Law School. After taking the Alabama bar this summer, Brett plans to move to Washington, D.C. where he will become an associate with the law firm of Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher.



Andy Todd (2004) began in June as an associate editor for coal publications for Platts, a division of The McGraw-Hill Companies. “I will edit and write copy germane to the global coal, coke, and steel markets. The post is in London, based in Canary Wharf. This follows eighteen months as an editorial manager for the Oxford Business Group. There, I was responsible for in-country project management and copywriting for our Emerging Markets series of publications. During my tenure, I was based in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Kiev in succession.”

Gaines Johnston (2005) completed his first year of law school at Alabama this spring.

Jonathan Murray (2005) will begin an M.A. in political theory in the fall of 2007 at the University of Chicago. He has spent the last two years working as a think tank researcher.

Robert Davis (2006) has completed his first year of law school at Ole Miss.

In Memoriam

Michael Mabry a senior double majoring in philosophy and finance, died June 9 in an automobile accident in Georgia. In addition to his work in philosophy, Michael was active in Big Brothers Big Sisters and was the resident manager at UA Baptist Student Ministries. His early death is a terrible loss.

CLASS OF 2007

Chase Espy graduated *magna cum laude* and with Honors in philosophy. He will attend law school at Alabama next year, with a full scholarship.

Nick Gajewski graduated *magna cum laude*. He will attend law school at Alabama next year, with a full scholarship.

Mark Manuel graduated and will begin graduate work in the fall at Regents University, in their School of Communications. He will be in the Department of Cinema and Television, in a track focusing on screen and script writing and on producing and directing television and film.

Kathryn Picard graduated *magna cum laude* with a double major in philosophy and biology. She plans graduate work in biology, and may also do a Masters in philosophy. “For the next year, I’ll be finishing my Master’s degree in Molecular Phylogenetics and Systematics and preparing applications to various doctoral programs in evolutionary psychology, behavioral ecology, and the history and philosophy of science. I’ll also be presenting my research at two international conferences and preparing two journal articles—one on postprandial metabolite circulation in three snake families and another on chytrid fungal diversity.”

John Richards graduated *summa cum laude* with a double major in philosophy and psychology. John will spend a year earning some money, then do graduate work in either philosophy or psychology.

Karissa Rinas graduated *magna cum laude*, with a second major in religious studies. She will work for that department this summer as a research assistant, while applying to law schools and graduate schools for a Master’s in philosophy.

Hugh Thompson graduated *magna cum laude* and with High Honors in philosophy, doing a double major in philosophy and history. Next year, Hugh will work toward a Masters in philosophy at Georgia State. His longer-range plan is to seek a PhD in economics.

Amanda Velke graduates this August and will attend law school at Alabama this fall.

Brad Watson graduated *summa cum laude* with a double major in philosophy and political science. He will attend law school at the Jones School of Law in Montgomery, on a full scholarship.

Gabriela Watson graduated with a double major in philosophy and political science. She will attend law school at the Jones School of Law in Montgomery.

Philosophy Awards & Honors

Student Honors and Awards

Jack Parker has been named a Humane Studies Fellow for 2007-08 by the Institute of Humane Studies. After another year with us he plans to attend medical school, currently with a plan to become an ophthalmologist for a for-profit medical provider in places like rural India. The award from the Institute carries a stipend of \$2000, which he will use to finance a trip to the Aaravind Eye Care System in India.

Kathryn Picard was one of six undergraduates honored this year with the Dean's Award of Merit. The Dean noted that "Kathryn has had substantial and important research experience here as a Howard Hughes Research Intern and she has received National Science Foundation funding. When she and I spoke last week, she spoke of the importance of Professors Martha Powell, Richard Richards and James Otteson to her career at the University. Kathryn also took advantage of the University's study abroad programs by studying at the University of Glasgow."

Nick Gajewski and **Karissa Rinas** were inducted into Phi Beta Kappa in fall of 2006. **Chase Espy** and **Sarah Simpler** received this same high honor in spring of 2007.

Hugh Thompson won the annual award offered by the state society for professors of philosophy for the single best paper submitted by an undergraduate, for his highly original piece on the *Kelo* decision and the state's power of eminent domain. Winning brought a cash stipend and a place on the society's program, where Hugh defended his paper very ably indeed in philosophers' version of hand-to-hand combat.

Department Awards

The Iredell Jenkins Endowed Memorial Scholarship:

Winner - Hugh Thompson

Second Place (tie) - Matthew Haney & Matthew Price

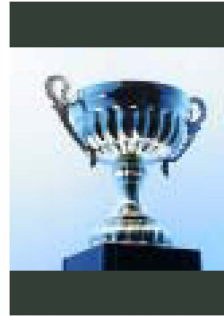
Honorable Mention - Nicholas Gajewski, Kathryn Picard & Karissa Rinas

The Marten & Marie ten Hoor Prize

Winner - Hugh Thompson

The Norvin Richards Award in Philosophy & Law

Winners - Chase Espy & Sarah Simpler



Faculty Honor and Award Morris L. Mayer Award

Prof. Norvin Richards is the 2007 winner of the Morris L. Mayer Award. The inscription reads as follows. "This honor recognizes one member of the teaching faculty who exemplifies the qualities governing the life of Morris L. Mayer: selfless service, integrity, leadership, and substantial contributions to student life." Norv especially cherishes the wonderful remarks made on his behalf in letters of support. A professor's life is a splendid opportunity to work with some great people, and he has enjoyed doing so more than he can say.



Prof. Norvin Richards & wife Janet Richards attending the Mayer Award Ceremony

News Of Philosophy's Future



Faculty Baby News



The "Twinkies," aren't we cute?



Twin babies Irving & Dora: DOB 2-27-07,
children of Prof. Torin Alter & wife
Elizabeth Alter

It's siesta time!



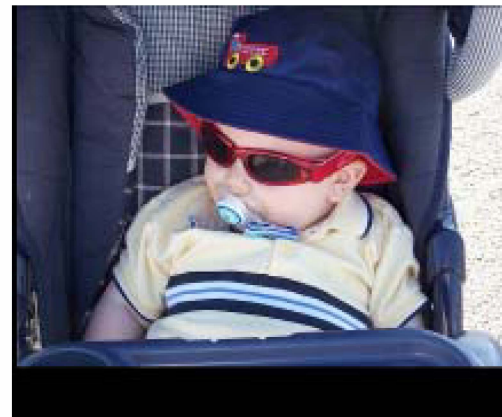
Dora & Irving Alter

Mr. personality, cute as a button!



Baby George: DOB 8-17-06, son of
Prof. James Otteson & wife Katie Otteson

George, chilling in the park!

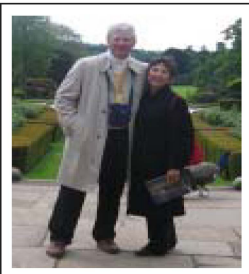


George Otteson

Financial Support

Our Generous Alums

Last year, **Beverly and Steve Davis** generously established a fund to support scholarly travel by our faculty. In our case, our travel is usually undertaken so as to present a paper to some learned society, where we benefit from the ensuing discussion of our work and from the other papers on the program. It is very valuable to us, and we are delighted to have the Davises' help.



Steve & Beverly

The first travel grant from the Davis Fund will help enable Professor James Otteson to be part of (quoting the letter of invitation) the “American delegation to the Sino-American Symposium on Philosophy and Religious Studies, to be held at Tsinghua University, October 15-17, 2007. Tsinghua University in Beijing is ‘the MIT of China.’

These Symposia, held annually since 1994, bring together 16-20 Chinese and American philosophers and religious scholars to discuss a wide range of issues involving both Chinese and Western philosophy and religion.” The theme this year is “Happiness: A Multidisciplinary, Cross-Cultural Dialogue,” and Professor Otteson’s paper will be on 18th-century conceptions of happiness and the role politics and economics play in making people happy.

The Philosophy Department is very grateful to **Amy McManus and Andrew Odewan**, who added \$500 to the principal of the Norvin Richards Award in Philosophy and the Law.

Your help would be more than welcome!

We would greatly appreciate donations

- to help fund the Annual Philosophy Alumni Lecture described on pp. 2 and 9
- to add to the principal of our named student awards, thereby increasing the stipends we are able to award for the ten Hoor Prize, or the Jenkins Scholarship, or the Richards Award
- to add to the principal of the Beverly and Stephen Davis Endowed Support Fund
- to help the Department in any way of your choosing
- to help with an unspecified need—or, for that matter, with an unspecified luxury!

The “Philosophy Today” Speaker Series



During 2007-2008, the Department of Philosophy and the College of Arts and Sciences will sponsor the “Philosophy Today” speaker series. Five or six philosophical luminaries will be invited to campus to give public talks (in addition to colloquia for faculty and majors) on some of the current problems in their specialties, sketching different approaches to solving these problems including their own. Loren Lomasky will launch the series on October 16, 2007 with a public address on “The State of Political Philosophy: 2008.” The author of *Persons, Rights, and the Moral Community* (Oxford, 1987), Lomasky is Cory Professor of Political Philosophy, Policy and Law at the University of Virginia.

Ernest Sosa’s public talk on “The State of Epistemology: 2008” will bring the series to a close on April 29, 2008. The author of *Knowledge in Perspective* (Cambridge, 1991) and *A Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford, 2007), Sosa taught at Brown University for more than forty years and is now on the Rutgers faculty. Other series speakers will address the state of ethics, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind.

“Philosophy Today” should enjoy communitywide appeal that will bring together students, faculty, alumni, and interested townsfolk for lively talks by some of the finest philosophers

at work today. Dr. Hestevold’s hope is that these occasions will afford both experts and nonexperts insight into the problems of a discipline that can appear as arcane as it is abstract.

Though the philosophy faculty are grateful to Dean Robert Olin who, on behalf of the College of Arts and Sciences, approved support for this series, Dr. Hestevold now asks philosophy alumni to help him add to the series a sixth speaker on the state of philosophy of religion. This speaker’s talk will be billed as the first Annual Philosophy Alumni Lecture (mentioned by elsewhere in this newsletter); programs will be printed with a listing of the contributors, and there will be a reception afterwards for the alumni who attend. If you would like to be a contributor--\$25, \$50, \$100, \$250 or more?--please send to Dr. Hestevold your check (made payable to the University of Alabama Philosophy Department). One local alumna has already pledged \$100 to the 2008 Annual Philosophy Alumni Lecture.