

REPORT ON THE MISSISSIPPI PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION MEETING OF APRIL 8, 1995

We held our 45th annual meeting at the University of Southern Mississippi--24 of us.

In the student essay contest, Laura Angstadt (USM) won third place for "Indirect Participation: Plato's 'Participation' Interpreted as Resemblance." Todd Long (USM) read the second-prize student paper on "Freedom and Responsibility: The Difficulties of a Sartrean Ethics," concluding that Sartre never could overcome the difficulties for ethics generated by the ontology of Being and Nothingness. Discussion revolved around the social conditions of morality and the human conditions of intelligible freedom. The first-prize student paper by Paul Pojman (UM), "Incomplete Theories," dealt with limits to the credibility of scientific theories, given that the incompleteness of observation always requires a hedged ontology of the object of scientific knowledge. Discussion brought out more of Pojman's worries about the excessive epistemic prestige of scientific claims and their metaphysical implications.

Michael Fitzgerald (USM), a visitor from the planet of Medieval Philosophy, suggested in "The Semantic and Epistemic Features of Mental Terms Having Material Suppositions" that 14th-century logicians were in pursuit of a grand unified theory of semantic and epistemic signification. Ockham made waves with his promising doctrine of non-depictional mental terms. A problem arose, however, in accounting for the suppositions of mental terms. In discussion we compared 14th-century views of mind-world relation with the views of Locke, Kant, and the early Wittgenstein.

We went to lunch at the Crescent City Grill. Some people had enormous salads.

Ronald Bishop, Bennie Crockett, Roy Davison, David Holley, Wallace Murphree, Steve Smith, Forrest Wood, Bill Yount, and perhaps others were present at the business meeting. Secretary-Treasurer Smith reported a bank balance of \$53.09 as compared with last year's \$88.65. The officers elected for 1995-96 were: Secretary-Treasurer, Steve Smith; Vice President and Program Chair, Bill Yount; and President, David Holley. Bill Yount invited the MPA to Jackson State on the second Saturday in April 1996. We responded favorably to Richard Hull's invitation to compile a volume of the history and addresses of the MPA for the HAPS series published by Rodopi. Bennie Crockett volunteered to edit and Steve Smith to help. Besides the Presidential Addresses, which go back to 1983, we thought it would be well to include Bob Bergmark's 1988 Dunbar Lectures, Tom Flynn's invited address of 1991, and perhaps other papers of comparable significance. It was suggested that we explore the possibility of support from the Mississippi Humanities Council for the project.

The afternoon program began with a demonstration by Wallace Murphree and Jonathan Jacobs (MSU) of "A System of Schematics for the Classical Syllogism." The schematic brings out the inherently numerical character of the basic Aristotelian propositions, which their classical form conceals. (Those interested can get a fuller treatment in Murphree's Numerically Exceptive Logic: A Reduction of the Classical Syllogism, Peter Lang, 1991.) The proposition schemas have easily remembered names based on their visual characteristics like "Dark Up Z." In discussion there was optimism that the Murphree system could be taught to pre-college students.

Paula Smithka (USM) spoke on "The Importance of Teleological Explanations for Constructing Darwinian Histories in Biology." Freeing the notion of final cause from the supposition of an external designer, and building on formulations by John Canfield and Larry Wright, Smithka argued for a genetically based immanent teleology of structures and behaviors beneficial for living things. Final causes are arrived at abductively not deductively. A response to those who would reduce biology to deductive physics might be that physics itself should be understood more abductively.

For our grand finale, Ron Bishop (Jones County J.C.) gave a Presidential Address entitled "Is This It? An Examination of Immortality in Charles Hartshorne's Neo-Classical Theology." Hartshorne's denial of continuing personal experience after death was found to rest on three main ideas, all of which are to be reconsidered. Bishop argued contra Hartshorne that (1) process theism allows for God to experience our experiences not only as fixed past contents but in their human subjectivity, (2) aesthetic requirements of freshness and definiteness of experience can in fact be met in endless personal lives, and (3) the great distinction between God and creatures is preserved if humans, unlike God, have beginnings, even if they have no ends. Discussion brought out the problem that on the process view of reality as dipolar (mental + physical), continuation of an individual's life would require some sort of bodily resurrection.

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Full-time employed philosophers (those who didn't pay at the meeting) are urged to send in their annual dues of \$10. PLEASE NOTE THAT WITHOUT YOUR DUES PAYMENTS WE CANNOT MAINTAIN OUR PROGRAM OF STUDENT PRIZES.

Respectfully submitted, Steven G. Smith, Secretary-Treasurer