

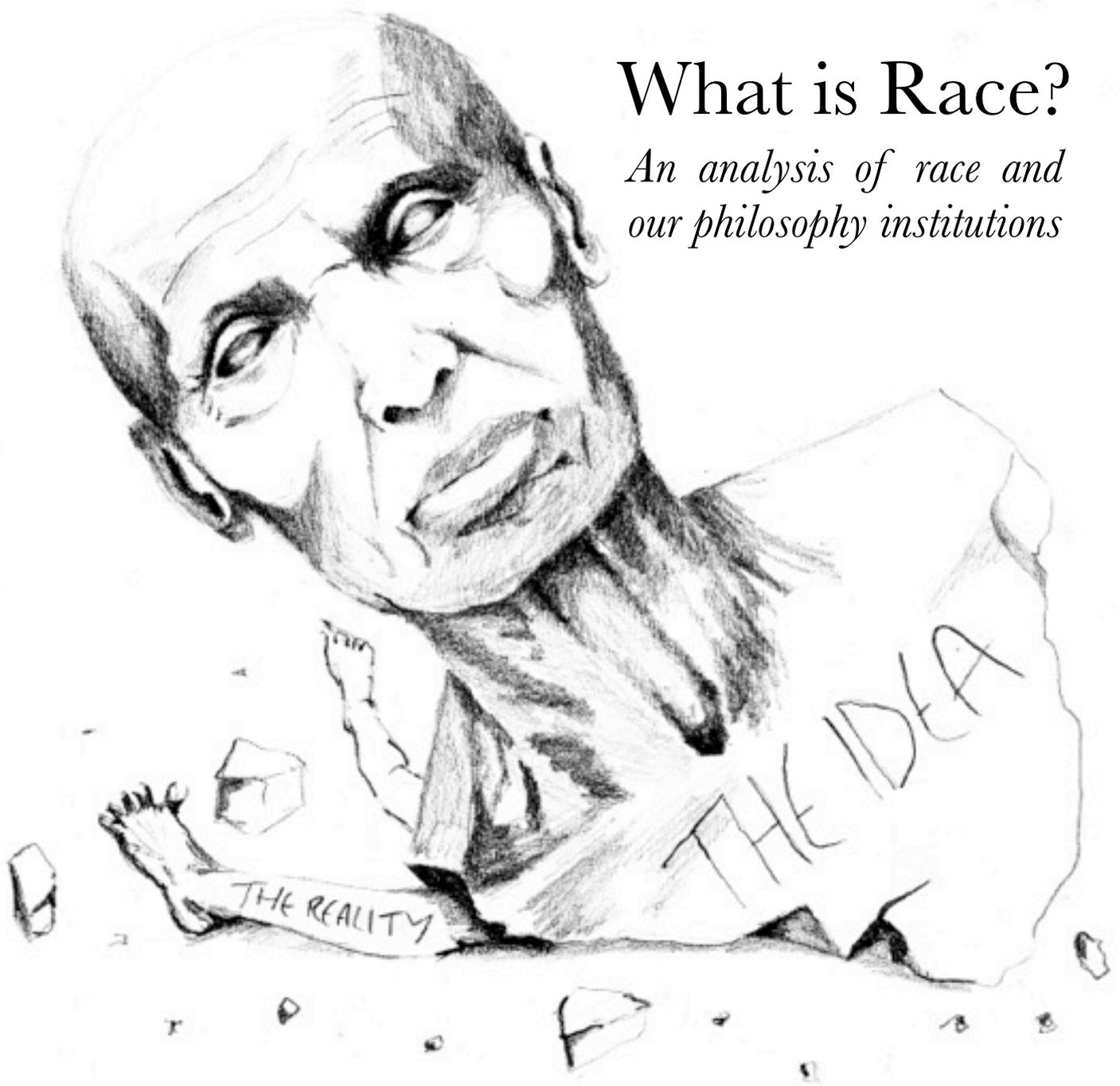
AD ABSURDUM

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL PHILOSOPHY MAGAZINE

Spring 2013 Edition

What is Race?

*An analysis of race and
our philosophy institutions*





AD ABSURDUM

SPRING 2013

Editor's Letter

As Spring rushes towards us, Ad Absurdum continues to expand the reach and variety of its output. The past two months have seen further developments in the material the publication prints, in the number and type of readers, and the ways in which the magazine encourages philosophical thought.

Around the University, Ad Absurdum can now be heard on the airwaves of BURST radio, where the publication is advertised and where members of the editorial team will chair a forthcoming panel debate on a philosophical topic – the first of many, we hope. An atmospheric vignette on death written by our literary editor Christopher Ivins, is to be found in the 18th February edition of Epigram. Ad Absurdum will also be hosting a debate in the ‘continental’ vein at the philosophy department Easter weekend away at Cumberland Lodge, and the publication has made links with a local philosophy group, Café Philo, with whom we hope to hold events in an effort to bridge the gap between the academic and non-academic philosophers.

This edition boasts a rich mixture of contributions which span the different tiers of the University of Bristol, its alumni and universities elsewhere in the UK. Our lead article is a pertinent and Kantian exposition of the problems of discrimination within philosophy departments by Stella Sandford, reader at Kingston University. The article is the basis for this edition’s cover image, which depicts a bust of Immanuel Kant, representing the “regulative idea”, crushing the reality the idea reflects. The founder of Ad Absurdum and former Bristol philosophy student, Vanessa Lucas, rescues the pragmatist Ferdinand Schiller from obscurity, and Bristol’s own Richard Pettigrew, gives us an insight into the new Foundation Year in Arts and Humanities. Our literary section has once again met with a popular response: this edition hosts the poetry of Freya Young, alongside a curious cautionary tale by Anna Symington.

We hope that Ad Absurdum serves to inspire members of the University of Bristol and universities elsewhere to publish with us. This particularly applies to younger students and we would like to invite first-year students to submit their philosophical ideas, questions or quarrels to our ‘Fresher’s Forum’. Here short pieces of writing of between 100 and 300 words, which can be printed anonymously, give students the chance to get discussions going on the issues they are grappling with.

All of the content of the Spring edition, and that of the previous editions, will shortly be available on our website at www.adabsurdum.co.uk.

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Letters

Back To School

Paul Ross's article ("Less Painful Thinking about Mathematics," Autumn '12) presented the broad problem that non-mathematicians are prone to anxiety when trying to think about mathematical ideas. He suggests that this problem is a result of the abstract way such ideas are presented in education. This abstract approach can leave students without a proper sense of mathematical ideas as a reflection of the real world, nor of mathematical ideas as existing independently in their own right.

Ross comes to the conclusion that to de-mystify mathematics, formal logic should be taught to show that mathematical reasoning can be done in the most general of contexts. This is so that students will stop worrying what a number 'is'; they will realise that an answer to that question is not necessary to use numbers in a mathematical context: they are just part of a structure applied to a system of logic which isn't tied to mathematics (or any of its branches). Whilst a sound understanding of logic can undoubtedly help with the development of an understanding of mathematics, I disagree with this approach, and propose an alternative: rather than beginning with the most abstract expression of these ideas and working our way up to show its relevance, we could start by teaching abstraction and the motivation behind mathematical ideas.

While Ross's approach might help philosophers currently losing sleep over the nature of mathematics, I feel that it does little for the GCSE Mathematics students whose (literal) pain he cites in his opening paragraph. For students in this position, I suggest that a more common cause of anxiety than 'what is a point (or line, plane, number, or holomorphic function)?' is 'what is the point?' By exploring the motivation behind the development of mathematical theory, we get a neat answer to that question whilst also developing our understanding of mathematics in a theoretical sense. By teaching the art of abstracting a problem to its essential elements, we give students the power to make use of mathematics in novel ways, as well as the ability to use mathematics for the purposes for which it was developed. When a firm grounding in basic applied mathematics has been

established, we find ourselves encountering reasons to develop purer elements of mathematics, and, from there, we may arrive at formal logic. This is the way the theory was developed historically: it was mathematics that led Frege to lay the foundations of formal logic.

Once a student understands the inspiration behind a piece of mathematical theory, they have a perspective from which to get their head around the theory itself.

An advantage to Ross's approach is that it gives students flexibility in what they do with their new-found logical reasoning abilities and knowledge. They can use it to understand mathematics, but likewise they might use it to get to grips with areas of computer science, or any number of other fields with a basis in logical reasoning. However, I believe that my approach grants a similar flexibility. Once a student is comfortable with extracting the most important aspects of a real-world problem and abstracting these to a mathematical structure they can reason with, they can follow similar procedures in other contexts. For instance, they will be able to use similar ideas to reduce a group of people to a binary tree of floating point numbers (an application of abstraction one might encounter in computer science), or any other theoretical work across the fields of science.

Tracing the historical top-down development of mathematics and mathematical logic in the classroom demonstrates the motivation behind the ideas to new mathematicians. This gives an alternative perspective which is easier to understand than the current presentation in the classroom, while also providing a route to an understanding of purer logic and the processes of abstraction which makes it useful in applied contexts. I feel this achieves Ross's goal whilst maintaining (and augmenting) the structure of the existing mathematics curriculum and extending the skills acquired to areas far beyond mathematics and logic.

Jimi Cullen
2nd Year Mathematics and Computer Science
Exeter College, University of Oxford

Like A Rolling Stone

I was thrilled to come across Jessica Piette's account of her struggle to form an identity in a roving and rootless existence, ("On Being a Mongrel," Autumn '12) but the nature of contemporary existence suggests that problems of the self are more widespread than she recognises. As Piette points out, being a 'mongrel' has an important impact on one's sense of self, which is difficult to resolve. I was born in France to English and Irish parents, and have never fully felt I belonged to any of the three countries. A longstanding preoccupation of mine has been trying to pinpoint who exactly I am - my identity, my values and perspectives on life.

This is not an easy question to answer but it is one we all face, not only multi-lingual ex-patriots. 'Being oneself' is an exhausting ordeal all of us struggle to carry off without self-doubt or confusion. I suggest that the absence of community in an atomised Western society is at the root of the problem of self-identity. How can individuals have a stable sense of self without the mechanisms that once provided shared and substantial values and perspectives? With the increased lack of human contact, and, for instance, more communication being mediated by screens, I strongly believe people cannot hope to formulate firm and meaningful values. It now appears we are reduced to adopting individual lifestyles. Any identity gained from them is temporary and becomes quickly obsolete as, to put it crudely, the next fashion trend comes in.

While the absence of a mother-tongue and country contribute to identity crises, their prevalence suggests that their causes go beyond problems of language and nationality. While the freedom to choose who we are may be a luxury denied to our parents' generation, it comes at a price of constantly searching for ourselves.

Jack Loxham
1st Year Psychology and Philosophy
University of Bristol

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If you would like to respond to an article in AdAbsurdum, email bris.adabsurdum@gmail.com. Please include your name, year and programme of study. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

PHILOSOPHY

and

RACE

Stella Sandford draws out the Kantian roots of the concept of race and racial homogeneity in today's philosophy institutes

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY? Philosophy, we might say, is a mode of enquiry that includes fundamental conceptual analysis, questioning both the assumptions of everyday beliefs and discourses, and enquiring into the foundations of the sciences and other disciplines. This is the ideal of philosophy – rational enquiry unencumbered by personal or political agendas, in principle available to everyone with any intellectual thirst. But when we speak of ‘philosophy’ we also refer to an institutional practice and its institutional practitioners, to what counts as philosophy in university departments (including what counts as legitimate syllabus material) and what counts as philosophy for other academic bodies, for example funding bodies. The public face and reputation of philosophy is linked more to its institutional existence than to its ideal. And UK philosophy in this second ‘institutional’ sense is still, today, predominantly male and overwhelmingly white.

Some of those who have tried to understand the skewed face that philosophy presents in comparison with the composition of the UK population have recently turned to empirical research in psychology that claims to demonstrate the operation of unconscious bias in decision-making and social judgement. It is likely that – despite our best intentions – unconscious bias is a factor in hiring of staff, recruitment of students and grading of papers. The British Philosophical Association has recommended to all philosophy departments in the UK that they take steps to reduce the opportunities for unconscious bias to influence decision-making in these areas, and that they also reflect on such phenomena as ‘stereotype threat’ and the various ways in which we may, unwittingly, be making our

philosophy departments inhospitable to women and other under-represented groups.

Concerning the under-representation of black and other ethnic minority groups in philosophy, the kinds of things that philosophers are being asked to do to reduce discrimination within the discipline are the same as the kinds of things that scientists and engineers, for example, are being asked to do to make their disciplines more hospitable. Professionals everywhere are being asked to think explicitly about race in an effort to counter the implicit bias that is the ‘soft’ face of racism. But practitioners of the theoretical humanities and social sciences can also think about ‘race’ in the ways that are specific to their own disciplines. Given philosophy’s much-trumpeted love of fundamental conceptual enquiry, it is then perhaps surprising that it was probably the last of the disciplines in the humanities and social sciences in the UK to give the concept of race itself any significant thought in the 20th century. (The work of thinking through the concept of race was left to sociologists and cultural theorists in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s; although in the US philosophers were at the forefront of the debates by then.) Philosophy’s belated relation to the analysis of race in the 20th century is also odd in light of the argument – which Robert Bernasconi has made most persuasively – that the modern scientific concept of race was ‘invented’ by a philosopher: Immanuel Kant.

Kant’s hugely influential discussions of race are mostly to be found in his anthropological and geographical writings, but Bernasconi has shown how they are indebted to the epistemology of the Critique of Pure Reason, specifically

to the role of the ‘ideas’ of pure reason or the ‘transcendental ideas’. Let me briefly recall what Kant says about these ‘ideas’, in order to show how it influenced his notion of race, and to see how it remains relevant to thinking about race today.

In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant is largely concerned with the a priori contribution to experience of the faculties of sensibility and understanding and the legitimate employment of the concepts of the understanding (limited to the realm of possible experience). But he also argues that the faculty of reason itself generates, a priori, certain concepts (that he calls ‘ideas’) and principles that guide the use of the understanding according to reason’s demand that the understanding be brought into ‘thoroughgoing connection with itself’, that all aspects of knowledge be unified. All knowledge can only be knowledge of the series of conditioned appearances, but with its pure ideas reason points the understanding towards the absolute totality of the series of conditioned appearances, its unconditioned ground. The idea of ‘freedom’ is, according to Kant, an idea in this sense. The idea has no possible congruent object in experience, it does not determine any object for cognition (it has no ‘objective validity’, in Kant’s specific sense of being valid for the determination of empirical objects of experience), but it serves the understanding in allowing it to become completely consistent with itself, guiding its use beyond possible experience. This is for Kant the legitimate or proper ‘regulative’ use of the ideas of pure reason.

But the ideas of reason are also misused, or misapplied, in illegitimate ‘constitutive’ uses; that is, by mistaking their subjective necessity for objective validity, giving a purported objective

reality to the object of the idea. This gives rise to what Kant calls ‘dialectical’ or ‘transcendental’ illusion, which is distinguished from both error and empirical and logical illusion in being ‘natural’, unavoidable and incorrigible – ‘irremediably attached to human reason’. For even when the being-illusory of the transcendental illusion is revealed it does not cease to deceive us. The unavoidable tendency to understand the necessity of the ‘constant logical subject of thinking’ (my being the ‘absolute subject of all my possible judgements’) as ‘a real subject of inherence’, that is, a substance in the ontological sense, is just such a dialectical illusion, according to Kant. Calling it a ‘dialectical illusion’ is not at all to dismiss it out of hand, though. And in fact, Kant writes, the dialectical illusion of the substantiality of the soul, for example, expresses a proposition (‘the soul is

substance’) that is perfectly valid so long as we keep in mind that nothing further can be deduced or inferred from this, ‘that it signifies a substance only in the idea but not in reality.’

Kant calls the regulative principles of pure reason ‘transcendental principles’ to the extent that they must be presupposed for a coherent use of the understanding. For example, ‘we simply have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary’, according to Kant, in order to determine within the ‘manifoldness of individual things’ in nature the identity of species, genera, and families. The mistake is to suppose that this unity, which is a mere idea, is to be encountered in nature itself. For Kant, the concept of race is like this too:

‘What is a race? The word does not figure in a system of the description of

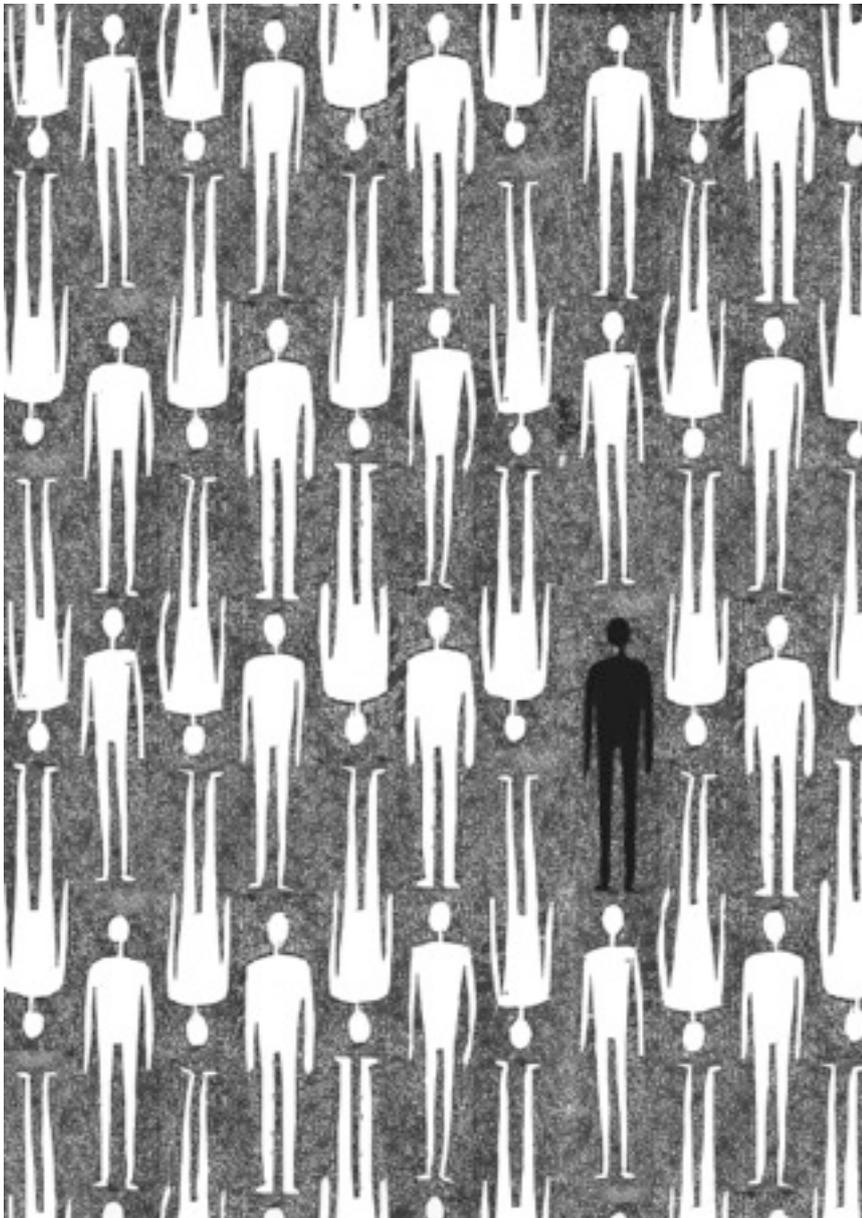
nature, therefore presumably the thing itself is nowhere in nature either. Yet the concept designated by this expression is well grounded in the reason of each observer of nature who infers from a hereditary particularity of different interbreeding animals that does not at all lie in the concept of their species a common cause, namely a cause that lies originally in the phylum of the species.’

Here Kant suggests that the concept of race is not derived from nature; rather it is explicitly posited as a conceptual necessity for natural history. The idea of race imposes itself as regulative idea, there being no other way, as Kant sees it, for us to account for the empirical diversity of human beings while insisting on their shared origin (the thesis of monogenesis).

Unfortunately, the history of the deployment of the concept of race, including by Kant himself, is one in which this regulative ‘idea’ was taken to refer to a substantive reality, from which could be ‘deduced’ all that was necessary to justify the transatlantic slave trade and the centuries of oppression and discrimination that followed on from it. The same ‘substantialisation’ was arguably still at work in Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray’s controversial book *The Bell Curve* (1994), which claimed to be able to demonstrate racial differences in intelligence. But if we accept that the intellectual origins of the scientific concept of race demonstrate something to us about its regulative (rather than purely descriptive) function, what does this mean for how we should understand its use today?

How much of a ‘substantialist’ residue does the everyday use of the concept of race carry with it? Does the idea of race give rise to what Kant calls a ‘transcendental illusion’? If so, do we have to argue, contra Kant, that transcendental illusions have to be understood according to their historical and social conditions of possibility, and that they carry an ideological and not merely rational force?

Kant thought that a regulative idea imposed itself as a rational (and therefore ahistorical) necessity, but recognising the ideological force of the idea of race we could say, instead, that it now imposes itself on us differently, as a political or ethical necessity in the effort to eliminate racism. Philosophy – in both its ideal intellectual and its institutional practice – can no longer ignore race once we have acknowledged that it is surreptitiously gate-crashing many of our discussions anyway.



In conversation with...

Havi Carel

Bringing Heidegger, the philosophy of medicine and her experience of illness to the Philosophy Department, recent arrival Dr Havi Carel talks to AD ABSURDUM about her research and the projects she hopes to pursue at the University of Bristol



Dr Havi Carel is the newly appointed Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and Officer for Students in the philosophy department; her research interests include phenomenology, philosophy of medicine, death and Heidegger.

Welcome to the department Havi; how have you found working at the University of Bristol so far?

I started on the 1st of February, so I've only been here for a couple of weeks. But I have been teaching in the medical school for four years and I always found it very rewarding to teach the students here.

Could you take us through your academic journey up to this point?

I started doing a joint honours degree at Tel Aviv University in 1990 - I was doing politics and philosophy. After about three months into the first semester I really fell in love with philosophy and I really felt that it was a subject that, unlike other subjects that give you empirical knowledge or teach you methodologies, philosophy stood out to me as something that actually makes you grow as a person. That has been continuously really important to me. So at the end of my first year I applied to swap from joint honours to single honours philosophy, which I did, and I have been doing philosophy ever since. I finished my undergraduate study at Tel Aviv and went on to do an MA. This was in the Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science because at the time I was very interested in psychoanalysis and I really wanted to engage with the literature around whether psychoanalysis was a science, and in what

sense its theories did or did not lead to falsifiable claims. I spent a long time studying the history and philosophy of science, which I found absolutely fascinating. Then I wrote a dissertation, (under the Israeli system the dissertation is actually a bigger project - more like an MPhil). At that point I was interested in psychoanalysis but especially in psychoanalytic feminist theory. I wrote my dissertation on psychoanalysis and feminism, and I guess then I knew that I wanted to go abroad to do a PhD. I eventually decided to go to the University of Essex, where I worked with Simon Critchley on death.

My PhD thesis talks about the ways in which we can understand death and primarily is engaged with the question of whether death is something that is external to life, and therefore is of little interest or relevance to our everyday life in the present; or, whether death has a bigger metaphysical and practical role to play in human life. And in the PhD I came to argue the latter: that we really need to be more Heideggerian in thinking about human life as being towards death, which can be seen as quite a distressing thought. You might think "Well, every day I live actually brings me one step closer to my death, even if I don't know when or where that would happen". But Heidegger uses that in quite a productive and positive way to discuss ways in which that awareness of our mortality might bring us to live better in the present. So he thinks that understanding our finitude and understanding that each day is lived uniquely and irreversibly, actually might lead us to be authentic. By 'authenticity' he means several things, but one of these is being able to embrace the understanding that what grounds all of our projects and engagements in life is a groundlessness. So, say you are engaged in

the project of being a student, and you study hard because you want to know more philosophy and because you want to get a first; and you want to get a first because you want to get into graduate school, and you want to get into graduate school because you want to train as a philosopher as well, and you want to train as a philosopher because you want to have an academic career. But eventually, Heidegger says, all of these 'for the sakes of', all of these nested projects, are ultimately ungrounded in the sense that at the end of each project you might ask yourself, "Why do I do that?" and the answer might lead you to another, broader project. But the broadest project of all, namely life itself, is ungrounded - there is no positive reason why one ought to exist, rather than not exist. I was quite convinced that this understanding is something that has been really overlooked, or repressed, by Western culture, and I started thinking of ways in which that understanding could be incorporated into, firstly, everyday life, but also in thinking about other philosophical issues that might appear unrelated.

Can you give an example of the kind of philosophical issues you mean?

One example would be the ways in which one uses and thinks about time. Another example would be the understanding of our bodies as stable or unstable. Another domain might be a moral domain where you might ask yourself whether a finite life entails certain moral commitments which immortality wouldn't.

Your book 'Illness and the Art of Living' came out in 2008; what was the aim of the book?

I was diagnosed with a lung condition in 2006 and that was a huge philosophical shift for me; because for a period, when things were medically uncertain, I felt that philosophy was of no use to me, and for obvious reasons I wasn't able to work very much. But then, as things settled into a more stable pattern, I became very convinced that I ought to draw on philosophy and ought to draw in particular on people like Heidegger, Epicurus, the Stoics, to have a better understanding of what was happening to me and to my body. And I think, in some ways, my interest in phenomenology was really developed through that period because the thing that happens in illness is that your body changes in really quite unprecedented and radical ways. So I was looking for a philosophical framework through which you could account for that transition, for that change, and I found that Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment – also, to an extent, Husserl, on whom Merleau-Ponty draws – was absolutely crucial for me to make sense of the changes in my life – not just on a personal level but on a philosophical level. The book is an attempt to draw together these two seemingly disparate aspects of my life and my work – to try and think about the first person experience of illness as philosophically meaningful and philosophically productive. The book weaves together some of the stories of what happened to me - not because they are particularly interesting but because they exemplify the fact that there is more to illness than the medical viewpoint is capable of containing within it, and that we need to develop another language and another way through which to engage with the existential changes that illness brings about for the ill person and their family.

You have worked with the NHS and other medical organisations to begin developing a new approach to illness; can you tell me about that?

I think it is practically important to begin incorporating some of the ideas from phenomenology and the lived experience of illness into medical teaching and training. So I have spent a lot of time and effort trying to set up contexts within which medical students and medical and health practitioners can engage with these ideas. But that is not an easy task because it's very difficult to find the places within institutions of healthcare, that are very practical and very constrained by resources, to sit down and talk about philosophy for a couple of hours. I have

put a lot of effort into that and I think, happily, it has paid off very nicely in that through the growth of fields such as medical humanities and philosophy of medicine there is the increased understanding that the medical profession, the healthcare professions, can benefit from having an exposure to these ideas - that their practice will be enhanced, that their interactions with patients will be deeper and more appropriate, and more meaningful to both sides.

Would you consider yourself a 'continental' philosopher?

I suppose that as time passes the sense that there are two distinct traditions has been replaced by an understanding that people have approached similar problems from different perspectives; so I don't really use the label much as such. I am interested in and I work a lot within the phenomenological tradition, which started on the continent with Husserl, but I don't have a sense that it is important to think through the continental/analytic dichotomy.

You are interested in how film can be used to teach philosophy; how exactly do think this should be done?

The first thing that comes to mind is to think of films as opportunities to illustrate philosophical points. So *High Noon* might illustrate the Kantian Categorical Imperative; *The Bicycle Thieves* might illustrate the morality of breaking the law under extreme circumstances. I think that is something film theorists really resist, they want to actually take philosophy beyond its limit, as it were, or to urge philosophers trying to engage with film to think beyond the written or spoken word, beyond the concept: to think about why films portray particular realities in certain ways: why did the director, or cinematographer, choose a particular angle, a particular lighting, a particular tone in the dialogue; why are people dressed the way they are dressed, why are they moving the way they are moving. A lot of films have explicit philosophical content and I am more interested in the tacit philosophical content that comes from observing these aspects of film that go beyond the plot and the spoken dialogue.

What do you hope to be able to bring to the department?

I'm hoping to offer teaching and research in areas that aren't so much covered by the department currently - mainly in phenomenology and philosophy of medicine. These are areas that are linked with current work in the department; for example Alexander Bird's work in philosophy of medicine and Seiriol Morgan's interest in Heidegger, but it would also bring in new things.

One of the things I am really keen on is the ways in which philosophy might engage in a fruitful dialogue with other disciplines and two disciplines that I have always been interested in are literature and film. One of the things I did in my previous post was put together a unit for my students which combines film and philosophy, but it doesn't just approach film from a philosophical perspective; it also approaches philosophy from a film studies perspective. This unit was co-taught by me and a lecturer from film studies. I am hoping to put something similar together here at Bristol.

The other thing I am hoping to bring to the department is a contribution to the medical humanities program, which is taught across philosophy and English. The first thing I have done is put together a unit called 'Death, Dying and Disease', which will be open to philosophy students but also to medical humanities students - trying to give the students a flavour of what an embodied understanding of disease and dying consists of.

How do you see your role as Officer for Students?

I think that being a philosophy student, those three years are really unique and they are very special because they are also times of huge change for you as young adults. All of a sudden you are exposed to all these ideas and new ways of thinking that often change your worldview quite substantially. I think it's a real privilege to be not just a witness but also a contributor to that process. And I think philosophy students are really lucky to have that opportunity to sink their teeth into things that matter not just for what job they might have in the future but how they want to live and why they want to live in certain ways. I think the existential transitions that philosophy students undergo are enormous and I think that being there to support that process as much as I can is a huge part of my role.

The full interview will be available to watch online at www.adabsurdum.co.uk from the beginning of March.

The Other SCHILLER

(August 16, 1864 - August 9, 1937)

Philosophy student turned civil servant, *Vanessa Lucas*, resurrects the oeuvre of pragmatist Ferdinand Canning Schiller

CONTEMPORARY pragmatists Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam could be said to be largely responsible for rescuing the pragmatist tradition from obscurity. Thanks to their reinterpretations, the early 20th century authors of Anglo-Saxon pragmatism are being re-read and appreciated in the light of post modern and deconstructivist thought. However, whilst the authors William James, Charles Peirce and John Dewey may have enjoyed a contemporary re-examination, there is one name in the pragmatist tradition that has been consistently ignored for the last fifty years: the German born British philosopher and proponent of humanistic pragmatism, Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller.

Following Schiller's death in 1937, Ralph Flewelling wrote in *The Personalist*,

"The philosopher's voice is hushed in death but the meaning of his life cannot be entombed in glib words of appraisal - time alone will reveal his true stature."

Seventy-five years on, however, and despite the honourable Bertrand Russell deeming Schiller 'the literary founder of pragmatism', his contribution to the pragmatic tradition remains lost to all but a handful of literary scholars. Enter AD ABSURDUM, alone tasked with the resurrection of pragmatism's forgotten hero.

In his living days Schiller held positions at Cornell, Corpus Christi Oxford, and Southern California. During a prolific career he wrote 14 books and published hundreds of articles and book reviews. He was president of the British Society for Psychical Research, president of the Aristotelian Society and elected fellow of the British Academy. Schiller first met William James whilst teaching at Cornell in the late 1890s and there started a

lifelong collaboration and mutual appreciation. In James' final letter to Schiller he states:

"I leave the cause in your hands...Keep your health, your splendid health. It is better than all the truths under the firmament. Ever thy W.J."

James knew only too well that the 'cause' he was leaving to Schiller was already floundering, commenting in 1907 that 'the tower of Babel was monotony in comparison to the confusions over pragmatism.' It remains hard for people to agree on a set of shared values in the pragmatic tradition. Both Peirce and James conceived of pragmatism as aspiring to revitalise and renew philosophy whilst aligning with 'no dogmas, and no doctrines save its method'. The original pragmatists shared a fallibilistic position, and a naturalistic dislike of a priori philosophising. The early pragmatists rallied around Peirce's 'pragmatic maxim': the epistemic adage that the contents of hypotheses can and ought be retrieved by the investigation of their 'practical consequences'. Peirce, James, Dewey and Schiller were all to diverge in their own further extension of the maxim.

One of Schiller's projects is to deconstruct human logic, and particularly what its postulates imply about reality and the human mind. His conclusion is that logic can only tell us whether a statement is contradictory or incoherent. It may provide a useful framework for truth and validity within the human system of reference but it is false to claim that these truths are objective and a priori in the sense that they can be detached from subjective interpretation and application by individuals and from different situations, which will change the meaning and implications of logical coherence.

Schiller's attack is based on a disdain for the logician's claim to have abstracted thought from the desires and wills of the mind. If, he says, we follow the lead of Alfred Sedgwick and regard logic as, 'a treatment of our cognitive process which abstracts from the concrete application of our logical functions to actual cases of knowing' then the efforts of logic to further our understanding of the meaning of valid assertion are void; the meaning of any assertion cannot be determined without consideration of its actual application. The statements seen in logic, detached from their practical use cease to have meaning or value for Schiller, so a study of their formal features and interactions cannot tell us anything about 'reality' or 'truth'.

One example given by Schiller to highlight this inadequacy is the following inference:

- (1) All salt is soluble in water;
- (2) Cerebos is not soluble in water;
- (3) Therefore, Cerebos is not a salt.

It follows the pattern 'As are Bs; C is not a B; Therefore, C is not A', which is a valid logical inference. However Schiller rejects that this is concept of 'validity' based purely on formal characteristics is a useful criteria. He cites two contexts in which the success of the inference would be judged differently: in chemistry Cerebos is not referred to or believed to be a salt, however for culinary purposes it is. Schiller argues that the lack of contextual framework in which the postulate and the subsequent deduction were first made mean that logic is inadequate in its criteria of validity and therefore 'truth'. Similarly Schiller contends that though '1+1=2' is a formal truth in mathematics, this equation does not hold if one is discussing drops of water.

Pointing to anomalies such as Cerebos and water droplets may seem like obscurantist contentions, but Schiller is using them as important warnings that logic's attempt to transcend practical application leads to an inability to represent the full range of possibilities or contexts in which the reasoning could be applied. Is Schiller guilty of begging the question? In light of the contextual information surely the first premise would simply be rejected as false because, there is a context in which a salt (Cerebos) is not soluble in water; therefore not all salt is soluble - logic is perfectly able to make such adjustments. However, Schiller's point still stands that a logical claim can be perfectly valid whilst being a misleading representation of 'reality' through vague referents, and should not consequently be applauded as a pure representation of thought. Schiller states, 'logicians would protest against the contaminations of the question of 'truth' with questions of harmony and valuation'; this characterises his criticism of logic. This could however be a straw-man argument: nowhere does Schiller illustrate a case of logical postulates claiming to be fully independent from human 'knowing' and nowhere does he cite his logical opponents alleging to have expanded our knowledge in terms of correspondence between representations and reality. Yet, it is true to say that logic is seen as a system of a priori, deductive reason independent of the wills and desires of purposive human thought.

Schiller states that there is nothing inherent in human thought represented by logic which entitles its labelling as a construction independent of emotional wills. Logicians may be free to revel in their own self-regulating system and to be rewarded for their endeavours to formalise contradiction and invalidity, but the tendency to elevate logic to the abstract is reprehensible because it is impossible to transcend the psychology of human thought. The preoccupations and motivations of the human agent pervade any thought, however formulaic and objective it claims to be. Logic and mathematical proofs have come into and remained in existence so must serve some pragmatic purpose, but their conceit and cold indifference to the contingent and transformative nature of reality is flawed and based on the illusion of their abstraction.

Humanistic pragmatism proposes a 'reality' which exists in our designation of truth. Schiller recognizes 'nothing but continuous and fluid transitions from hypothesis to fact' with a focus on the

empiricism of these hypotheses in practice. The error of metaphysics, even in its most parsimonious form, is to assert some fundamental knowledge as determinate, firstly because we cannot make such objective generalisations which don't realise their transient nature as a product of the subjective psychological interest; and secondly because it has negative implications for human freedom and responsibility. Here it is necessary to defend Schiller against the waiting accusations that humanistic pragmatism is itself a mixture of metaphysical assertions. This criticism can only be levelled at a particularly reductive interpretation of Schiller. Although humanistic pragmatism could be seen to point to metaphysical conclusions such as the ultimate reality of human action and freedom, it crucially refrains from asserting such principles as superseding the fluidity and indeterminate nature of reality. Schiller maintains his integrity and the strength of this theory by refraining at all times from positing with the certainty of any metaphysical 'truth'. He stays true to his principles of fallibility and contingency despite the temptation of such a comforting synthesis. Underlying Schiller's critique on metaphysics is not outright condemnation but his maxim of pragmatic pluralism, a warning that metaphysics may be 'obstructed by temperamental and valuational disparities across humanity.'

Critics may argue that the dependence of humanistic pragmatism on contingency and fallibilism leads to an absence of real substance in the theory and that Schiller merely deconstructs rather than proposing anything. F.N. Hale, in his review of humanistic pragmatism, writes that the problem is 'pragmatism suggesting the practical need to believe, but providing no measure of what beliefs are or are not actual (in the present) or possible (in the future).' As Schiller outlines, his project is to 'describe' the continuous, cognitive process which produces our systems of truth and our acceptance of 'reality' and not to propose any fixed 'truth' of his own. The objection then, remains that this is philosophical cowardice and starves the intellects trying to consume it of any philosophical sustenance. All that remains is a skeletal deconstruction of 'reality' rather than a theory of practical substance. However, Schiller exulted in the open universe of genuine possibilities 'for personal evolution toward greater harmony within both the social world and the natural world.' The importance of fallibilism and contingency are key factors in the ability of humanistic pragmatism to

succeed in this aim where others have failed.

Accepting the premises of pragmatism and humanism leads to an immediate dismissal of the idea of any satisfactory metaphysic, because knowledge becomes inextricably linked with purposive thought. Schiller avoids the fall into solipsistic or despairing anti-realism by offering us a coherent and compelling explanation of the forming of reality in conjunction with the psychological will's application and verification of postulates in order to satisfy interests. It provides a view from nowhere that allows us to move somewhere and does not condemn us to paralysis. Schiller provides us with the tools of comprehension, responsibility and freedom which are far more sustaining than any deductive, a priori 'truths'. As previously pointed out, the absence of 'substance' by way of definitions of 'value' or 'utility' is consistent with the pragmatic principle of self-generating conception of applied beliefs which form reality. 'Value' will always be ascertained by the purposive, practical implementation of beliefs being verified by the projects of individual minds.

Regardless of whether one sympathises with the arguments of Schiller; roughly outlined above, he remains an influential figure in the history of pragmatism whose name is conspicuously absent in much of the surrounding literature.

Schiller was responsible for much of the development of early 20th century pragmatism and if nothing else he should enter into the literary-philosophy hall of fame for his magniloquent claims, misplaced witticisms and jibes, which may have been the reason for the lack of continued respect for his philosophical theories.

Pragmatists themselves do not have to support humanistic pragmatism in order to give him his rightful due, but his voice does, at the very least, help to express the diversity pragmatism professes to contain in an entertaining fashion. He is, after all, the great wisdom behind the following quote:

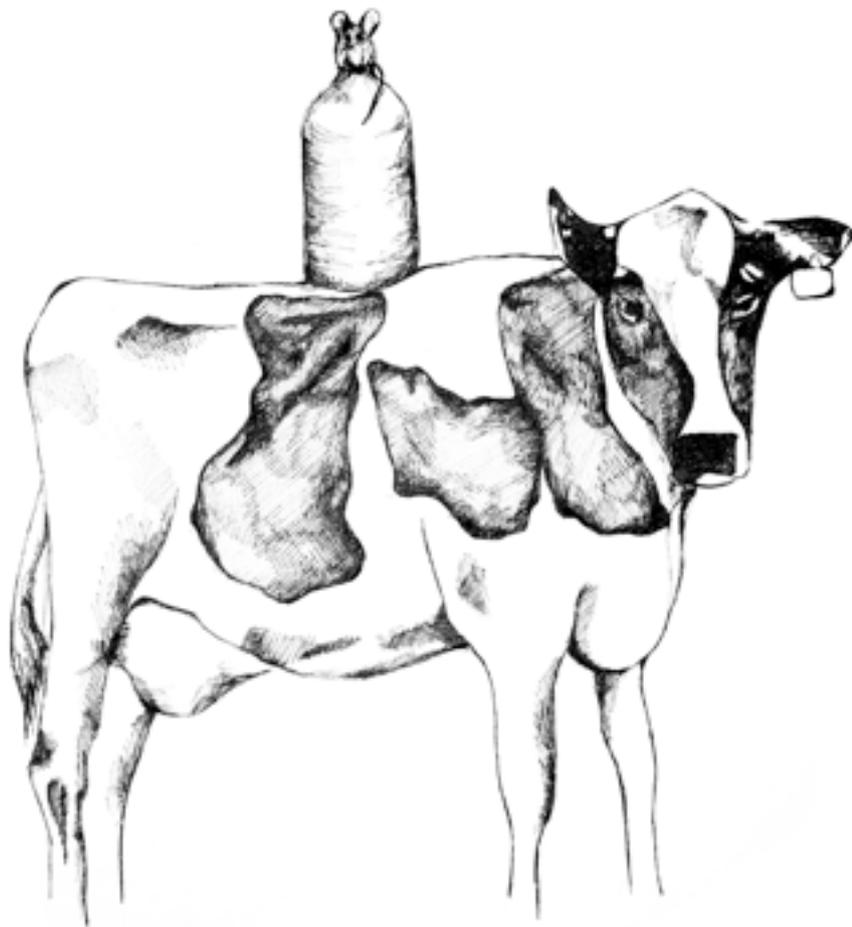
'The more pedestrian of philosophers wander about . . . with their heads in cul-de-sacs; the more dashing pursue dead issues into dead ends. . . . Hence they leave behind them litter, but not literature.'

Irrespective of whether the article before you is deemed an example of the latter, Schiller and his contribution to the early development deserve to be rescued from obscurity.

Fiction

The Ten Plagues

Anna Symington



THIS is a cautionary tale sent to the past from the future. Well actually it's the present here, so this is really a message sent from the present to the past. Well actually as you read it, it will be your present, so it is really a message from the future to the present. So actually, if we think about it logically, it is really a message from the present to the present; the first present being my present, at which time the second present is my past and your present; and the second present being your present, in which time the first present is your future and my present. Is that clear, Past-lings? No? Well I will being my tale anyway. It all started with the morals. Yes, yes, the morals. There were too many you see.

Too many morals - that is to say, there was a surplus of morals, more morals than the public demanded. There were morals everywhere, everywhere! There were morals in the schools, morals in the hospitals, morals in the law courts, morals on the beaches, morals in the brothels, morals everywhere! The plague of surplus morals was upon us (morals that is - not to be confused with health and safety or political correctness). When consulted the Prime Minister proposed to deal with the plague of surplus morals the same way we British deal with our surplus clothes - send them to *Oxfam*. But this was not done!

Of course the plague of surplus morals soon led to a much greater

problem, the plague of surplus vegetarians! The causal chain here is not difficult to discern. What with all those surplus morals floating around the schools and hospitals and whatnot, there was bound to be a knock on effect - cue the vegetarians. There were vegetarians everywhere, vegetarians in the schools, vegetarians in the hospitals, vegetarians in the law courts, vegetarians on the beaches, vegetarians in the brothels, vegetarians everywhere. Well not everywhere - they weren't in the butchers. When consulted the Prime Minister proposed to deal with the plague of surplus vegetarians the same way we British deal with the our surplus business men - send them to Hong Kong. But this was not done!

Oh no they're not! Oh yes they are! Oh no they're not in the butchers! Oh yes they... Oh no, they're actually not in the butchers. While the plague of the surplus vegetarians provided new and exciting realms of previously uncharted comedy, it also quickly led to the plague of the surplus cows. They were in the fields. When consulted the Prime Minister (being that day jazzed with an un-characteristic wit) proposed we "deal with this *udderly bull* plague with a *pat* on the back for the farmers to stop them *mooaning*." This was enthusiastically done!

Little did we know that greater terrors were yet in store. Untrue to form, God, for reasons best known to Himself, did not send flies as the fourth plague (thank God), nor did he, as we had hoped, skip ahead to the fifth plague - the death of all our livestock. No indeed, and this is not the only way my terrible tale differs from that of Moses'. The plague of the surplus cows, in fact, lead - possibly rather predictably, although we honestly didn't see it coming at the time - to the plague of surplus milk. It was in *some places*, mainly farms, supermarkets and village shops. "If only this had happened when Maggie T was Prime Minister," the people cried, somewhat indifferently. When consulted the Prime Minister proposed we deal with the plague of surplus milk the same way we British deal with our surplus sheep - send them to Wales. But this was not done! (Mainly because Wales was still suffering from the plague of surplus cows, they being always a little behind the times, and it was felt that this would be an unfair burden to their fields).

The plague of surplus milk was not left unaddressed though, oh no. We, having cottoned on by this point to the recurring theme of surpluses, resolved to combat

the pattern. However the action plan proposed by the public policy makers at *Thinkbox*, and implemented by a band of precocious four-year-olds that claimed they-could-do-it-too with *Kandoo*, soon led to the plague of surplus cheese. Like the surplus milk, the surplus cheese too was in the farms and the supermarkets and the village shops, but differed from its predecessor in that it was also in the sandwiches. When consulted the Prime Minister proposed we deal with the problem the same way we British deal with our surplus rain - send it to Bristol. But this was not done! (Mainly because Bristol, being so close to Wales, was still dealing with the plague of surplus milk, in accordance with the behind-the-timesness of things, but also being part of England, was dealing with the contemporary problem of surplus cheese, and it was felt that this would be an unfair burden on a city already heavily burdened with the West Country accent).

You will have begun to gauge by now, Past-landers, that Great Britain was in the clutches of a demonic demon, cursed with never ending plagues, each more terrible than the last. Things had got so bad in Great Britain that we were more commonly referred to as 'somewhat-less-than-great Britain', and this hurt our feelings - but what could we do in such a state of anti-shortages? And so it went on, and the plague of surplus cheese soon led to the plague of surplus mice. There were mice everywhere - mice in the school, mice in the hospitals, mice in the law courts, mice on the beaches, mice in the brothels, mice on the underground - well that wasn't new, the mice simply continued to be on the underground. When consulted the Prime Minister proposed we deal with the problem the same way we British deal with our surplus soldiers - send them to Afghanistan. But this was not done!

And so the unfortunate, the undeserved and unfortunate, the undeserved and unconquerable plagues continued, leading us ever closer to our fearful fate. Unsurprisingly, the plague of surplus mice soon led to the plague of surplus scientists. They were everywhere. There were scientists in the laboratories, scientists out of the laboratories, err yes, that is everywhere isn't it? Inside the laboratories *and* outside the laboratories - yes, everywhere. When consulted the Prime Minister proposed we deal with the plague of surplus scientists the same way we British deal with our surplus

diplomats - send them to any country we don't like. Or, more logically, any country that doesn't like us - so *any* country. But this was not done!

The problem of surplus scientists soon led to the problem of surplus knowledge. There was knowledge everywhere - knowledge in the schools (oh the horror of well educated children!), knowledge in the hospitals (oh the dismay of cured patients!), knowledge in the law courts (oh the disgust of honest justice), knowledge on the beaches (oh the impropriety of skilfully applied factor 50 sun block!), and even knowledge in the brothels (where appropriate levels of contraception were finally implemented - why, oh why?). When consulted the Prime Minister proposed we deal with the plague of surplus knowledge the same way we British deal with our surplus pregnancies - send them to an abortion clinic. But this was not done! (Mainly because the implementation of appropriate levels of contraception in the brothels and across the UK had caused the number of surplus pregnancies to fall dramatically in the last few days).

It is perhaps moderately ironic that despite the plague of surplus knowledge Britain's best and brightest, and her worst and weakest, just did not know what to do. Thus the plague of surplus knowledge soon led to the plague of surplus prosperity. There was prosperity everywhere, prosperity in the school, prosperity in the hospitals, prosperity in the law courts, prosperity on the beaches, prosperity in the brothels, prosperity everywhere. When consulted the Prime Minister proposed we deal with the problem the same way we British deal with any issue concerning prosperity - thank undeserving politicians and publicise it on the TV, on the Radio and through brain download (yes, Past-dwellers, brain downloads are coming, and soon). And this *was* done!

We are close to the end of our tale now, but I warn you, the tenth and final plague was to be the most devastating. It contradicted everything we British had been striving for for generations, that which teenagers across Britain had been most expert at, that which the middle aged, the old and the young alike could share in with confidence that all here at least were equals. And so it came to pass that the plague of surplus prosperity soon led to the plague of surplus happiness. It was everywhere, in the people, in the animals, in the vegetables, even in the most miserable of minerals,

Poetry What Is Sense?

Ideas appear ever so queer
 Before they are steered
 By the weird inner mechanism
 That helps to create
 An articulable message.
 Laid out on a plate
 This particular message
 That enables our brains
 To sort through its abstractions
 And finds fractions that contain
 Would-be messages,
 As yet unsaid,
 But something inside us
 Reminds us that instead
 Of staying silent
 In our abstract little heads,
 Try to let language guide us,
 Help us to make sense
 Of this mess that's inside us
 So that we can present
 A message that goes from the inside out
 To a world with a fetish
 For knowledge we can shout
 Hungrily consuming our feeble attempts
 To make sense of this immense
 Utter madness that pure perceptions
 present.

All this phenomena would be rather
 intense
 Without this method in all of us,
 That helps makes sense out of nonsense.
 So, to answer the question I asked at the
 start,
 Making sense is one of the most basic
 human arts,
 Cutting up and shaping the world that
 we see,
 Unknowingly creating our own reality.

—*Freya Young*

happiness everywhere! When consulted the Prime Minister simply smiled.

So there you have it inhabitants of the past: my cautionary tale. Heed every word. Get not too comfortable in your current state of austerity, for the morals are coming, and they will set in motion a most powerful mechanism, bent on creating prosperity and happiness for all of somewhat-less-than-great Britain. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED.

If Philosophy Legitimizes Science...

Who Legitimizes Philosophy?

Peter Sloane comments on the launch of the Centre for Science and Philosophy

“ [Science] then produces a discourse of legitimization with respect to its own status, a discourse called philosophy.

—Jean Francois Lyotard

As a student of literature – and only an amateur but passionate student of philosophy – I went along with my partner to the launch of the Centre for Philosophy and Science in the Great Hall of the Wills Memorial Building, at 6pm on Tuesday 4th December 2012. Oops, well, the Centre for Science and Philosophy, but my mistake was made by at least three of the four of the launch’s presenters, and it is not hard to see why: despite the apparent parity, equality and mutually respectful respective presence of both science and philosophy in the name of the centre, there was a notable absence of scientists contributing to the actual launch.

Professor James Ladyman, Director of the centre, gave a short speech, one rightly proud of and enthusiastic about the productive collaborative relationship between science and philosophy here at Bristol, and also of the new relationships that the centre will foster. This speech was followed by the main matter of the launch, and presumably an example of the kinds of things that the centre will hope to explore and develop. This matter was four short presentations, namely; 'Why Philosophy of Biology?: Beyond Stamp Collecting', by John Dupré, Professor of Philosophy of Science at the University of Exeter and President of the British Society for the Philosophy of Science; 'The Curious Case of the Vanishing Spacetime: philosophy and quantum gravity, by Eleanor Knox, Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow at King's College, London; 'Consciousness and the Brain', by David Papineau, Professor of Philosophy of Science at King's College, London, and: 'How Should We Think?', by Richard Pettigrew, who is a Reader in Philosophy here at the University of Bristol. A promising line-up.

However, the first thing that must strike one, particularly one coming to an event

which purports to be stressing the collaborative, binary ‘and’ of two disciplines, and not the usual derivative, supplementary ‘of’, is that these are all philosophers. They are all very eminent, intelligent (Knox radiated a dazzlingly complex field of barely-within-the-bounds-of-believable-but-awesome and staggeringly coherently presented theories of non-spacetime dependent quantum gravity. I think), respectable, competent and interesting philosophers. But philosophers nonetheless, and philosophers all. Where, one might ask, does the sequentially senior partner come in? Where are the scientists who will say: “yes, this institution, this interdisciplinary centre will enable those essential bonds between two mutually dependent, respectively respectable disciplines to be strengthened?” Because, at least for this passionate devotee of philosophy, the absence of this mutual, reciprocal support and validation left one impression: that the philosophy of science wanted, yearned, to be accorded the status of the empirical sciences, hence the substitution of ‘of’ for ‘and’. In using the word ‘and’ an implication of collaboration is given, a collaboration which was not evident at the launch. The only context in which the absence of scientists would have gone unnoticed, is if the centre was for the Philosophy of Science, a discipline which Bristol is rightly proud to be at the forefront of.

But philosophy is not science: it is the all-in-one-parent of the sciences. Philosophy gave birth to ‘science’, as an empirical, methodically epistemological practice, and the ‘sciences’ as disciplines; it spawned psychology, astronomy, neurology, physics, chemistry, biology and, to be fair, everything which we consider to be a science. The problem that philosophy faces is the same as any problem involving parents and children, particularly very old parents with very young children; philosophy is trying to show science that it is still relevant. Philosophy, we might say, has thrown a party here, a party at which it would show its child, science, how cool

and relevant it still is: philosophy was going to rap, to break-dance. Unfortunately, just as any child coming to define itself, science sees its parents as belonging to an older, less sophisticated, less technically competent generation, a generation that does not, cannot understand it. And it maybe decided not to come to the party, maybe decided to stay at home and play with its new, unfathomable technological toys, experimenting with stuff (I suppose, for the most part, taking things apart and putting things together). Maybe science was not invited after all, or maybe the invite was lost. Regardless of the reason, what we had at the launch of the Centre for Science and Philosophy, to my mind, was a group of talented thinkers legitimising a discourse and – to be a little polemical and not entirely, absolutely in earnest – de-legitimising the autonomy of their own. Collaborative relationships are about mutual validation, and any reader in either philosophy or science cannot help but see that the boundaries between the two are indistinct, porous, particularly in the areas of consciousness, quantum mechanics, and pretty much anywhere where the stakes are high; in those cases, not only can science not do without philosophy, but the two really are one. I mean, who’s to say, for example, whether the Churchlands are philosophers or scientists? Or Dennett and Damasio, Hawking and Dawkins, Penrose or Pinker? When it matters, there is no ‘and’ and no ‘of’, there is just humanity trying to find out what the hell is going on, where the hell it is going on, or whether or not it even matters that it is going on at all. Or, as Daniel Dennett would have it:

‘... philosophical investigations are not superior to, or prior to, investigations in the natural sciences, but in partnership with those truth-seeking enterprises ... the proper job for philosophers here is to clarify and unify the often warring perspectives into a single vision of the universe’.

Richard Pettigrew

ON

Widening Participation

Reader in Philosophy *Richard Pettigrew* talks of the recently-launched Foundation Year in Arts and Humanities

IN October 2013, the Faculty of Arts at the University of Bristol will welcome 30 students onto its newly-launched Foundation Year in Arts and Humanities. This is a year-long course taken before progressing onto an undergraduate degree. It is intended to provide an alternative route into study at Bristol for people who have been unable to engage with higher education so far not because of a lack of ability or enthusiasm, but because of obstacles they have faced in their family circumstances or their personal life or because of their educational background. For instance, these might include students whose family circumstances prevented them from engaging fully with formal education in the past: they may have suffered a bereavement at a crucial time; or they might have been forced to become a carer for a family member. They might include students from low-performing secondary schools whose qualifications do not reflect their ability to succeed on an undergraduate programme in the Arts and Humanities. Equally, they might include someone who wishes to return to education later in life, but who lacks the qualifications required to do so. For all of these people, the Foundation Year provides one of the very few routes into higher education.

The course itself is divided between studying a broad range of academic topics, on the one hand, and learning the sorts of skills required for study at university, on the other. The academic content will be structured as a single, year-long unit in the history of ideas. We will begin in the present day, studying our society and culture. Then we will work back through 2,500 years considering how historical events, artistic movements, literary works, philosophical ideas, and religious texts have shaped our world. Each week, a different lecturer from a different department will present a topic in this history; one that is close to their

research interests. And students will engage with primary and secondary material on that topic. In tandem with this rich intellectual content, students will be learning crucial skills, such as how to structure and write an academic essay, how to use libraries and the internet to mine for information and insight, and how to participate fruitfully in a seminar discussion. The year will culminate in a piece of independent study: a coursework dissertation in which students will bring together all of the skills they have developed and the intellectual content with which they have grappled. At this point, they will be prepared for study on an undergraduate course in the Arts and Humanities at Bristol. And, if they complete the course satisfactorily, they will be guaranteed a place on such a degree programme.

The arts and humanities faculties are currently in the process of setting up a new and exciting widening participation programme for talented individuals with academic potential who have not been able to access a university education via the conventional route.

AD ABSURDUM caught up with *Richard Pettigrew*, a key figure in getting the course up and running, to try and gain a sense of where the motivations for setting up such a course stem from.

What were the motivations for getting this course set up?

The course has both a personal and university wide motivation: on a personal level I have a commitment to widening participation because of the my own educational background. The school that I went to was one that had very few students go on to higher education, not because of a lack of ability but because of a variety of obstacles that simply meant that university wasn't a serious option for them at the time, and it is these kinds of

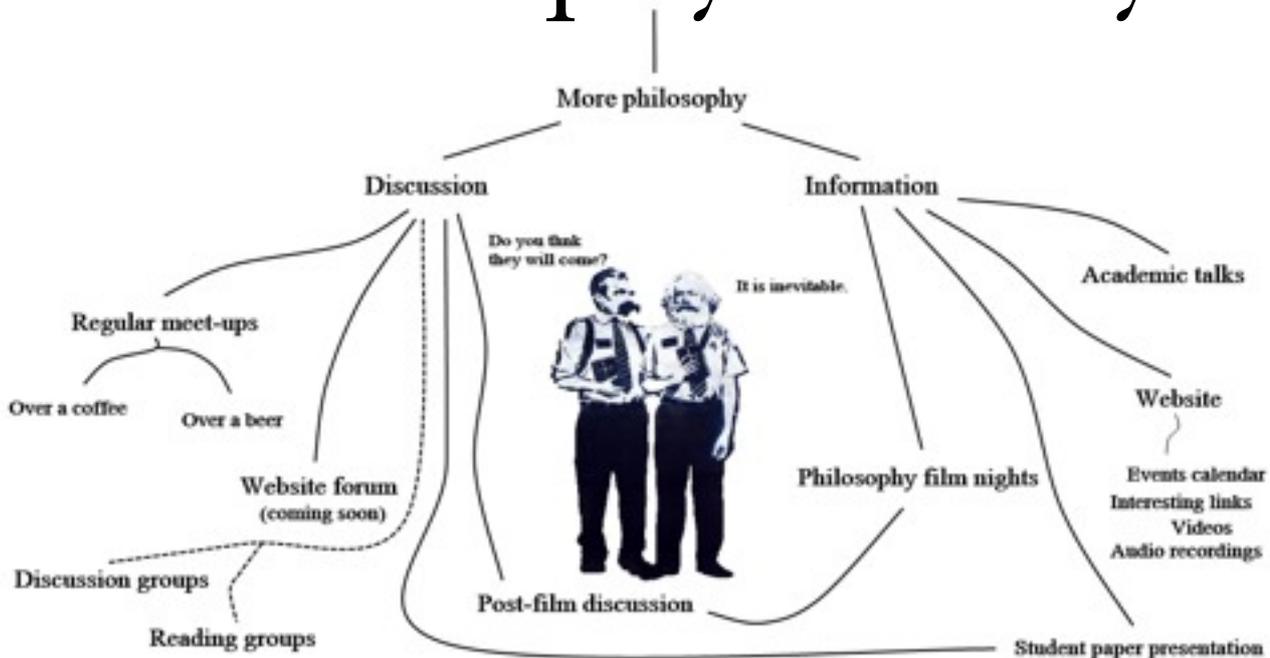
students that the course is hoping to attract.

A broader university wide motivation has arisen out of the recent hike in tuition fees: as a caveat of the increase the university must show a commitment to making sure an education at a place like Bristol is a genuine possibility for students that may be scared off by the headline £9000 fee, and feel as if they don't have the financial capabilities to embark on a higher education course. It is particularly important for Bristol to show a commitment to attract students from these types of background given the unrepresentative demographic make up of the student body, particularly in the Arts and Humanities. Whereas many of the other Russell Group universities attract a reasonably substantial number of students from the local areas from across income groups, Bristol has thus far failed to do this. The reasons behind this are difficult to identify and it thus remains an open question. One potential explanation is that people have a perception of the university and a perception of the kind of student that goes to Bristol that makes them think it's just not the place for people like them, the job of a course like this is to try and change that perception and to make people aware that if they have the ability, they can come and study at Bristol.

Successful completion of the course will provide a qualification at QCA Level 3, which is the same level as A-Levels or an Access to Higher Education Diploma, and will allow study for a degree. The first course starts in October 2013, and a full website with further information will launch at the end of February 2013.

In the meantime, if you are interested in finding out more about the course, email arts-fyah@bristol.ac.uk and we will send you information as soon as we've finalised the details.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL Philosophy Society



Who Are We?

Run by philosophy students (sufficiently but not necessarily), the Phil Soc exists to encourage and facilitate philosophical discourse amongst anyone and everyone at Bristol University who has a philosophical itch to scratch. We seek to incite philosophy at Bristol, by putting on events, bringing people together. If you would like to engage with and in more philosophy at Bristol, then come along to our events and meet like-minded, or satisfyingly non-like-minded people.

We look forward to meeting more of our 125+ members, bringing them together, and if you're not already a member, to see you at our events anyway. Everyone with a philosophical inclination is welcome.

If you would like to get involved or have any suggestions, either post on the Facebook group or email contact@bristolphilsoc.co.uk.

Details of events, dates, and speakers are updated frequently on our website. To keep up-to-date and find out more, check us out online:

BristolPhilSoc.co.uk
[Facebook.com/groups/uobphilsoc](https://www.facebook.com/groups/uobphilsoc)

Forthcoming Events

Celebrating Bristol Philosophy: Part Two

Last time, Antony Everett, Andrew Pyle, and Finn Spicer spoke on a range of philosophical interests. This time, speakers and dates are to be confirmed.

James Ladyman & Samir Okasha in discussion

Following their talk on whether science and religion are compatible, Professors Ladyman and Okasha will have a battle of wits again.

Various other speakers from the university

Havi Carel, Dagmar Wilhelm, Kathy Puddifoot, Richard Pettigrew hold 30-minute discussions across the precinct.

Pub Quiz (Date TBC)

The Arts Ball presents The Roaring Twenties

The arts-wide ball returns at the amazing new location of the Bristol Museum. It will be held the 16th of March.

Boat Party

The boat party is an annual tradition that leaves from the Harbourside and meanders around the waterways to a soundtrack of live music, and stops for a barbecue.

Contributors

Dr Stella Sandford (“Philosophy and Race”) is a Reader in Modern Continental Philosophy at Kingston University. The illustration was provided by **Rosanna Tasker**. **Vanessa Lucas** (“The Other Schiller”) is a graduate of Philosophy at the university. **Peter Sloane** (“If Philosophy Legitimizes Science, Who Legitimizes Philosophy?”) is a master’s student reading English.

Anna Symington (Fiction) is a first year undergraduate reading English and Philosophy. The illustration was provided by **Alice Money Penny**. **Freya Young** (Poem) is a final year undergraduate reading Philosophy.

Editorial photographs were provided by **Lydia Greenaway**, a final year undergraduate reading Philosophy. Photograph of Havi Carel was provided by **Chris Bertram**. The cover was designed by **Elizabeth Watkins**.

This edition of Ad Absurdum was made possible by the generous sponsorship of **O2 Think Big**.

To contact the team or submit your work, email us at **bris.adabsurdum@gmail.com**



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Puzzles

The Preface Paradox

Many authors introduce their books with a caution: it is inevitable that somewhere in this book there is an error. This is a common claim in prefaces. But do the authors that write these claims believe them or not?

If the author is asked of each specific claim in the book Is this an error? then he will say No. For each individual claim that the author makes, he believes that it is true.

If the author believes that each claim is true, though, then mustn't he believe that every claim is true? A collection of claims, none of which is an error, contains no errors. The author believes that his book is a collection of such claims; he believes that it contains no errors.

Yet the author also believes that somewhere in the book he will have made a mistake. Aware of his fallibility, he believes that not every claim in the book is true, that somewhere in the book there is an error.

What is really odd about this is not that authors have inconsistent beliefs, it is that the author is being perfectly rational in believing both that his book does and does not contain errors.

Find more paradoxes at **www.logicalparadoxes.info**

Editorial Team

Elizabeth Watkins is Editor-in-Chief. She is in her final year of undergraduate studies reading Philosophy and Politics, with interests in virtue ethics and ethical theory building, and in philosophy as a tool within local communities and within the justice system.



Thomas Galley is a Contributing Editor. He is a third year undergraduate reading Physics and Philosophy, whose interests include continental philosophy, in particular Camus, Nietzsche and Sartre, and the philosophy of science and foundations of physics.

Christopher Ivins is Literary Editor of the magazine. A final year undergraduate reading Philosophy, his interests include aesthetics and ancient philosophy, particularly the Stoics, and, in literature, Woolf, DH Lawrence, and the American short story.



Julie Lee is a Designer and Editor. She is a first year undergraduate reading psychology and philosophy, with interests in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of language, in particular the work of Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, and Noam Chomsky.

William Tuckwell is an Editor, and currently in his second year reading Philosophy and Politics. His interests include problems in the various conceptions of normative ethics and political philosophy.



James Wilson is an Editor and the Original Designer. He is a fourth year reading Physics and Philosophy. His interests include Philosophy and History of Science, Philosophy of Physics, and Epistemology.



AD ABSURDUM

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL PHILOSOPHY MAGAZINE

Spring 2013 Edition