

MICHIGAN PHILOSOPHY NEWS

for friends, alumni, and alumnae of the Department of Philosophy,
The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

June, 1986

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to send greetings to all of you. Most of you are alumni or alumnae, who spent part of your formative years in Ann Arbor, engaged in the enterprise of doing philosophy, trying to come to terms with puzzles and paradoxes and make some sense of how things fit in the large picture of the world and of our place in it. The philosophical enterprise goes on. But much has changed with our Department. I would like to use this occasion to try to keep you updated with the changes that have occurred in the last decade or so and how things are with us at present.

We are still located in Angell Hall. Our offices now occupy pretty much the whole of the northern half of the second floor, with a few additional offices and a newly furnished seminar room down at the southern end. There is a possibility of consolidating within the next few years all of our spaces in the northern end and possibly "turning the corner" into Mason. When this happens, there should finally be adequate office spaces for our graduate students as well as new lounges and a couple of seminar rooms.

Although our physical facilities have not changed very much, there have been big changes in other respects. You of course expect students to complete their programs and move on. In terms of faculty personnel, too, it is a very changed place, in comparison with what most of you are likely to remember. The retirement of our three distinguished moral theorists, William Frankena, Charles Stevenson, and Richard Brandt, was clearly the major turning point. All three retirements occurred within a few years of each other, during 1977-81. (Both Frankena and Brandt have continued to live

University), and in the late '70's Alvin Goldman (now at the University of Arizona) and Stephen Stich (now at the University of California at San Diego) resigned from senior ranks. Professor Arthur Burks retired in 1986.

While these losses were serious, we made some impressive gains. After many soul-searching discussions we decided that our first priority ought to be the continuation of our traditional prominence in ethics. In order to rebuild our seriously depleted ethics faculty, we made two outstanding appointments in this field: Allan Gibbard from Pittsburgh and Stephen Darwall from North Carolina. We also tenured Peter Railton, who divides his time between moral and social philosophy and philosophy of science. Donald Regan, professor at the Michigan Law School and winner of the prestigious Franklin J. Matchette Prize for his book Utilitarianism and Cooperation, has been appointed as professor of philosophy, and teaches for us when his law school duties permit it. I believe we can now claim to have one of the truly outstanding ethics programs in the country, if not the very best. The appointment of Kit Fine, an outstanding philosophical logician and metaphysician, was also a notable event. A number of our senior faculty have recently been awarded prestigious national fellowships: Allan Gibbard, a Rockefeller Humanities Fellowship for 1985-86; and Stephen Darwall and Kendall Walton, National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowships for 1986-87. We have continued to appoint junior faculty members as well in all fields, an essential source of fresh ideas and intellectual vigor for a department, and have done very well, I believe, in recruiting talented and promising young philosophers

managed to retain, and in some cases enhance, our strength in other areas, except perhaps in philosophy of language and epistemology in which we are seeking more senior faculty. There is no doubt that the Department suffered, perhaps more in visibility than in strength, because of the financial crisis of the State of Michigan in the past decade and the University's resultant inability to give us adequate funds to make up the losses due to retirements and resignations. But overall we have come out of the crisis years in remarkably good shape, and the Department remains as one of the premier philosophy departments in the country.

We have continued to improve our undergraduate curriculum. We have introduced a set of new courses introducing students to philosophy through a philosophical examination of their other intellectual or artistic interests and pursuits (e.g., "Philosophy and the Arts", "Law and Philosophy", and "Philosophy of Human Nature"). Undergraduate concentration requirements have been strengthened by the addition of a requirement of work in metaphysics-epistemology and ethics or Continental philosophy. The Undergraduate Seminar in Philosophy is offered at least once a year, and we now have an active Undergraduate Philosophy Club. At present there are approximately 90 philosophy concentrators. This represents a very substantial increase (about 100% increase, in fact) in comparison with, say, 1979-80.

The basic structure of our graduate program remains about the same. We have just added a "Candidacy Seminar" in which students writing doctoral dissertations present material from their work for discussion. We are also experimenting with "proseminars" for entering students. It's likely that our doctoral program will see some significant changes in the near future. We have been able to improve financial support for our graduate students substantially. The amount of teaching our

established new graduate fellowships ("Regents Fellowships") which are very generously funded. Our Department has been offering three or four of these fellowships each year to incoming graduate students, and this has had a visibly positive effect on our ability to recruit outstanding graduate students from across the country.

There are also new lecture and colloquium programs. As many of you will remember, the Department has been administering the Tanner Lectures on Human Values. Recent lecturers have included Nadine Gordimer, the South African writer, Herbert Simon, the Nobel laureate in economics, and Clifford Geertz, the cultural anthropologist. With the income from the Nelson Endowments, we have established two visiting philosopher programs: Nelson Philosopher in Residence and Nelson Visiting Professor. The former enables us to bring to campus for one week a distinguished philosopher for lectures, seminars, and workshops, some of which are reserved for students only. So far we have had Richard M. Hare of Oxford, David Kaplan of UCLA, and Jerry Fodor of M.I.T. as Nelson philosophers. The series has been extremely popular and successful. Professor Annette Baier, of University of Pittsburgh, will be with us for this Fall Term as our first Nelson Visiting Professor. She will teach a seminar on the topic of "Emotions" with special attention to Hume.

Since 1981 the Department has organized each spring a "Michigan Colloquium in Philosophy" (popularly referred to as "the Spring Colloquium"). We invite three guest speakers to present original papers on a single topic (the recent topics have included "Interpretation", "Ethics of Virtue", and "Causation and Explanation"), with comments by our faculty. The colloquia have featured such distinguished speakers as Donald Davidson, John Cooper, David Lewis, Gilbert Harman, Terence Irwin, and Jerome Schneewind.

We have also created "Thursday Brown Bags" and "Student-Faculty Colloquia" at

The discussion is often spirited, but the atmosphere remains informal and relaxed.

The Tanner Philosophical Library now occupies two rooms on the first floor of Angell, one for books and the other for bound volumes of periodicals. You will find at any time of the day (or night, usually) several graduate students studying intently in the periodicals room, and both graduate and undergraduate students working in the main room. Tanner has become the single most important educational resource for students and faculty, and is widely considered as a model for departmental libraries (we often receive inquiries from other departments and universities). The Library was established, about fifteen years ago, through the generosity of Professor Obert C. Tanner of the University of Utah, and his family. Although we receive a small yearly allowance from the College for operational expenses, much of the necessary fund for acquisition of books and periodicals, salaries for work-study students, and other necessary services must come from gifts and donations from the friends of the Department. This past spring we held a book sale to raise funds.

I am pleased to report that Professor Tanner himself, continuing his long tradition of generosity to the Department, has recently established the Obert C. Tanner Endowment for Philosophy. We are devoting the income to major acquisitions for the Tanner Library which would otherwise be well beyond our reach.

I do have one piece of sad news. Merlee Bartman, who served as Librarian for the Tanner Library for sixteen years, passed away in June, 1985. We miss her, and her service to the Department.

I hope these remarks will give you a good

I am very pleased that Bill Frankena has allowed us to include his article, "Ethics Today", in this newsletter. The article has not been previously published, and we are honored that it appears here. We hope that you will find it stimulating, and that (for those of you who are no longer active in philosophy) it might elicit some fond memories of, and renewed interest in, philosophical activity. I would like also to thank Louis Loeb, who has been the moving force behind the planning and production of this newsletter.

With best wishes to all of you,

Jaegwon Kim

CONTRIBUTIONS

The Department acknowledges with gratitude the following contributors during 1985-86.

Professor Frederick L. W. Bartman, for a contribution to the Tanner Philosophical Library, in memory of his wife, Merlee L. Bartman.

The Reverend Carolyn Tanner Irish and Professor L. E. Irish, for a contribution to the Tanner Philosophical Library.

Professor Obert C. Tanner, for the establishment of the Obert C. Tanner Endowment for Philosophy.

The following contributed books to the Tanner Philosophical Library:

Mr. Robert Batterman
 Professor Frithjof Bergmann
 Professor Stephen Darwall
 Professor Louis Loeb

Very roughly, there are now three sorts of positions in British and American moral philosophy (which is all I am going to talk about). a) There is Kantian ethics (plus allied kinds of deontological ethics). b) There is Utilitarianism (and allied kinds of consequentialists or teleological ethics). c) And lately there has arisen a third kind of position that is both anti-Kantian and anti-utilitarian (or anti-consequentialist). I shall refer to its proponents as the Antis or, for reasons that will become clearer, as the "partialists". There are, of course, some ethical theories that do not fit under these three headings: e.g. there is ethical egoism, about which I shall say only that all three of the above kinds are opposed to it. There is also Alasdair MacIntyre, who has recently set himself against Kantianism and utilitarianism of all kinds. He is therefore also an Anti, but one who is opposed to the Antis I shall be talking about. And there are other "strays", some of whom I shall refer to, e.g. Nozick, Gewirth, Anscombe, etc., maybe myself.

I shall mainly concern myself with the first three lines of thought, neglecting others, and I shall begin by giving you some names under each of them, again somewhat roughly. The Kantian position is represented in various ways by R.M. Hare, John Rawls, Alan Donagan, David Gauthier, T.E. Hill, Jr., Christine Korsgaard, and Barbara Herman. The utilitarian view is upheld or approximated by J.J.C. Smart, R.B. Brandt, G.J. Warnock, Kai Nielsen, Peter Singer, and again by R.M. Hare. Among the Antis there are Bernard Williams, S. Scheffler, L.A. Blum, N. Rescher, S.N. Hampshire, and others, perhaps Philippa Foot. I shall put the spotlight on recent Kantian ethics, and to save space, I shall not review the debate between the Antis and the utilitarians but only those between the Kantians and the utilitarians and between

and the basic principles of morality are principles of duty. b) A good or morally virtuous will is one that acts from a sense of duty, not from any "pathological" motive like sentimental love or natural benevolence. c) Such a good will is the only thing that is intrinsically and unconditionally good; it is the highest good, etc. d) moral duty is impartial and universal. e) The imperatives of moral duty are categorical, both the supreme principle of morality in each of its three forms and derivative ones like not lying or committing suicide. f) Prohibitions like those just mentioned are absolute, without exception. g) Moral duties and prohibitions are non-teleological: what is morally right or wrong is not to be determined, directly or indirectly, by the goodness or badness of the results of our conduct, either for ourselves or for the world. h) Instead, there are three (or more) equivalent ways of determining what is right or wrong, or three equivalent supreme principles of morality: the first, second, and third forms of the categorical imperative. i) All persons or rational beings as such, and only they, are or can be moral agents or patients.

Now let me say a little about the issues between the Kantian in ethics and the utilitarian consequentialists. To avoid complicating things, I shall here equate utilitarianism with act-utilitarianism.

a) Utilitarians can and sometimes do agree with Kant and Kantians about a number of the theses in my list (a) to (i), but there are others they reject. (1) They can agree that duty is the basic concept of morality and can state the principle of utility, as they call it, as a basic principle of duty, i.e. as saying that it is one's duty always to do what will produce the greatest balance of good over evil. (2) They can and do agree that morality is impartial, impersonal, and universal; indeed, this is a main reason why the Antis are against

utility as itself a categorical imperative, i.e. as binding on us what our ends are, binding on us even if we do not want to promote the greatest general good, e.g. Sidgwick and Moore took this view. (4) So too, they can agree that the principle of utility itself is absolute. They do usually, however, regard rules like not lying as not absolute, since they may not always be for the greatest general good. (5) In other words, utilitarians and Kantians at least can agree about the nature and status of the supreme principle of morality, and they do agree that there is one and only one. They differ only about what it is. The utilitarians insist that it is the principle of utility, i.e. the principle that we ought always to do what will promote the greatest balance of good over evil in the world; Kantians, of course, deny this (except in a sense Hare). By the way, utilitarians usually equate the good with happiness and evil with unhappiness. (6) Utilitarians can, though they may not, agree that the morally good or virtuous person is one who acts from a sense of duty, but for them this will mean that he or she acts to promote the greatest general good (or happiness), not what Kantians take it to mean. (7) But they will deny Kant's opening claim that a morally good will is the only thing that is intrinsically and unconditionally good -- the only thing that is good as an end. For them the highest good or end is happiness or a list of items that includes happiness. The good is not good will but what the good will, as they conceive it, aims or should aim at. (8) The main point at issue, however, is that the utilitarians insist that what is morally right or wrong is to be determined, directly or indirectly, wholly by looking to see what most promotes the general welfare, not by an appeal to the Kantian supreme principle of morality in any of its three forms. (a) About the first -- "Act only on maxims that you can will to be universal laws" -- they argue that since it is purely formal (as Kant himself said) it cannot provide any content for our duties. It really says only that, if I regard X as right for me to do in a certain situation, I must regard it as right for anyone else to do in that kind of situation. It doesn't say whether or not X is what we should do in such a situation. (Except see

below on Hare.) They also contend that Kant's arguments to show that one cannot will committing suicide or making a false promise to be a universal law do not actually come off -- with a good deal of plausibility, it seems to me. (b) Kant's second form of his principle is: "Act so that you treat any person involved as an end and not as a means only". This, utilitarians argue, is unclear and vague. Just when is and when isn't one treating a person as an end or as a means? The answer is not easy, and some utilitarians claim that the answer is to be found in their principle of utility: do good to people, do not harm them, and, if you are in a situation in which you must harm someone, do what will do the most good and the least harm. (c) Kant's other forms I won't take up here, because they are even more unclear to me, except in connection with Rawls in a moment.

Much more should be said about all of these points at issue between Kantians and utilitarians, but I shall only mention some lines of thought taken by recent Kantians and near-Kantians, to show you some ways in which Kantian ethics is still alive.

(1) The first is that of R.M. Hare. He takes as basic what he thinks is true in Kant's first form, viz. that if I judge X to be right for me to do in a certain situation, then I must judge it to be right for anyone else to do in the same situation, e.g. if I decide it is right for me to put Y in prison I must also think it is right for Y to put me in prison if our roles are reversed. So, to determine what I should do in a certain situation I must put myself in the places of each of the others my actions may affect and then ask myself if I am ready to have them do to me what I propose to do to them. But, Hare then goes on to contend, following this Kantian principle will lead me to come out with the same conclusions that using the principle of utility would. That is why I listed Hare both as Kantian and as utilitarian. As Samson might have put it, according to Hare out of the Kantian eater there comes forth utilitarian meat, and out of the strong sweetness. Unlike other utilitarians, then, Hare believes we can determine our duties by using Kant's first

somehow independent of and prior to the virtues. The basic instruction of morality, to generalize St. Augustine, is not "Do so-and-so!" but "Be V (loving, honest, etc.) and do as you then please". We are to do what the V-person would do and do it as the V-person would do it. Morality is primarily a matter of being, not of doing.

c) The second has to do with the Kantian view of moral motivation, in which acting from a sense of duty is necessary to having a good will or being morally virtuous. Kant did make some rather extreme statements about this, e.g. that one's action and character have moral worth if one's act is beneficent, say, "not from inclination, but from duty", and already long ago one of his readers, the poet Frederick Schiller, expressed his concern about Kant's view by writing,

Gladly I serve my friends, but alas
I do it with pleasure.

Hence I am plagued with doubt
that I am not a virtuous person.

Sure, your only resource is to try
to despise them entirely.

And then with aversion to do
what your duty enjoins you.

Similarly, the Antis contend that it cannot be right that one should do what one does for one's spouse, not from inclination but from duty. Imagine how he or she would feel if it came out that one's motive was not love but sense of duty! As the Antis see it, Kantianism identifies moral virtue with conscientiousness, a cold disposition, rather than with something

This too is part of the idea of an ethics of virtue as opposed to one of duty.

Recent Kantians have tried in reply to soften Kant's statements somewhat, without allowing that any moral virtue can be purely "pathological", e.g. by arguing that a person may be emotionally motivated as long as he or she does not act on any maxim one cannot will to be universal or does not treat anyone as a means only, while insisting that a person is morally good if and only if she or he is motivated in living thus by a recognition that doing otherwise would be wrong.

d) There has been a good deal of discussion of these two related issues recently, and I have taken some part in it, siding on the whole with the Kantians, but I must pass on to the third and larger issue, viz. whether or not morality is or should be impartial, impersonal, and universal. Let us think of this as the issue between the impartialists and the partialists. The point is that the Antis are not just plugging for an ethics of virtue instead of one of duty; one could do this and still be an impartialist. They want something more radical, though it is not very clear just what it is -- and they in fact differ among themselves about it. I shall try to indicate what it seems to me to be.

Take Kant's first form of the supreme principle of morality in Hare's version of it, i.e. the principle of universalizability, as it is now called. According to it, if X is right for me to do in a certain situation, then it is right for any and everyone to do in a similar situation, and vice versa. In this sense, by

that not everyone else has, but (a) he does not do this in his Foundations, (b) when he mentions them he is not very interested in them, and, anyway, (c) even these duties are impersonal in the sense that one has them if one occupies a certain office or role, whatever one's personal desires, etc., are. The Antis want more than a recognition that people have different offices and roles.

One of the things that especially troubles them about Kantian ethics can be indicated by taking Williams' example of the painter Paul Gauguin. Williams takes it that Gauguin's "basic project" in life -- the project with which he "identifies" himself -- is to be a certain sort of painter, and that Gauguin therefore finds that in order for his life to have "meaning" he must neglect his obligations to his family and go off to the South Seas to paint the way he feels he must. Williams also takes it that impartial morality of a Kantian kind would say no to Gauguin's pursuit of his project under these circumstances, and he (Williams) is convinced that no one can reasonably be asked to renounce his or her basic projects in this way -- because adherence to impartial morality under such conditions forces one to violate one's "integrity as a person" or "breaks one up in business", as it's said. Notice, it is not one's "moral integrity" that it is said to be violated here -- to say that would be question-begging -- it is one's integrity or unity as a person.

Now, it is true that both Kantian ethics and utilitarianism require that one be prepared to set aside one's deepest projects if they are in conflict with one's moral duties. And this Williams and the Antis are against. It cannot be reasonable, they think, to ask a person to violate his or her personal integrity by giving up or drastically revamping projects which he or she has "identified with" in the sort of way Gauguin is here taken to have done; to do this is, in effect, to ask one to revamp one's identity,

a profound alienation, either an alienation from morality itself, or an alienation from one's own being as a person, and that the possibility of such alienations cannot be tolerated in moral philosophy.

Suppose that one goes along with Williams and other Antis to this point. Then there are still two routes one can take in one's thinking. (1) One is to argue that impartial morality has to go or at least has to be cut back in some important ways. This is what I am calling the "partialist" line. It involves holding that what is morally right or wrong for one to do or morally good or bad to be is not by any means so independent of one's desires, purposes, emotions, and attachments -- of one's "pathology" in Kant's sense -- as Kantians (and utilitarians, for that matter) think it is; i.e. that one's "personal equation" must be seen as importantly affecting the question what it is morally right or wrong, good or bad, for one to do or be. I think this is the line that the Antis mean to be taking, which is why I call them "partialists", though there are places where Williams seems to be taking what I will describe as the second route. I should point out here that Kantians and other impartialists can readily allow personal factors to count as excuses for not doing what one morally ought to; we sometimes think that Jones should have done something but is excused by the fact that it would have cost her too much. But the Antis want more than a recognition of personal considerations as excuses for not doing what is right; they want them -- or some of them -- recognized as at least partial grounds for determining what is right or wrong in the first place. This would mean, using the Gauguin example, that his commitment to being a new kind of painter would not merely excuse his doing what was morally wrong but might actually make what he did morally right or even

centered". Any morality, even an impartial one, is agent-centered in one sense, viz. in the sense of asking an agent to do what is right or to be good and of instructing an agent about what is right or virtuous. But the Antis want morality to be agent-centered in another sense, viz. in the sense of allowing that what is morally right or good for an agent to do or be may be based in an important way on purely personal considerations about that agent, considerations not recognized as morally relevant, except as excuses, by an impartial morality.

There are things Kantians can and do say in reply to the Antis on this third point, with which I am inclined to agree.

m) One is that being moral by impartialist standards may and should be among the basic projects one identifies with, though apparently it was not for Gauguin, and that, if it is, then the person's tension, if there is one (and there need not be any), is not between morality and that person's ground projects, but between two of his or her own projects. This changes the picture.

n) Another is to insist that one's ground projects must at least be morally innocent by impartialist standards for anything like the Antis' point to hold. It must not in itself be essentially in conflict with such standards; it must conflict with them, if at all (and it may not), only per accidens, i.e. just because of the contingencies of a person's life -- as was indeed the case with Gauguin's project as a painter.

o) A third is to argue that morality a la Kant does not say what one's projects (other than that of being moral) must be, as utilitarianism in some of its forms seems to do; it only puts a limiting condition on them, viz. that they are not to be such as to entail acting on maxims one cannot will to be universal laws or such as to entail treating someone as a means only -- as Gauguin's project may have.

innocent ground project if and because it happens to come into conflict with impartial morality. This is to insist that morality is not to be revamped so as itself to become partial to a person's projects; we must continue to conceive of it as impartial but we have to admit that then it may not be rational or reasonable for a given person to be moral if his or her ground projects are of certain sorts, as may have been the case with Gauguin's. In other words, there are two possibilities: one is to give up the necessary impartiality of morality; the other is to give up its being necessarily impartial and necessarily rational. The Antis have shown, let us say, that there is reason to question that this is always so, and I have interpreted them as opting for making morality partial to its agents, at least in part or to some extent (just how is something they are not very clear about), while preserving its rationality for an agent, though, as I indicated, there are places in Williams' writings where he seems inclined to do the reverse. My problem about what it is that Williams wants to do may be put thus: We sometimes speak of what a person has to or must do, where we do not necessarily mean something he or she morally has to or must do. Williams does too, and, accordingly, he sometimes distinguishes between the practical ought and moral obligation, as I think one should. My question is whether he wants to bend the moral (or ethical) ought in the direction of what one has to do or must do (being the person one is) or whether he is only arguing that sometimes one just must do what one must do because it is not rational to do anything else, even if it is not the moral or ethical thing to do. I have interpreted him - - and the Antis -- as meaning to do the former, but actually he is somewhat ambiguous on this point. I myself am inclined to think that it is the second option that one should take, i.e. that Kantians may and should insist on morality's being basically impartial but give up its being necessarily rational for a person to live by.

had two conceptions of the way in which morality is rational. According to one, the imperatives of morality are in themselves synthetic, universal, and necessary, and hence rational for one to assent to. They are what a purely rational being would act on. According to the other, it is nevertheless rational for a human kind of person to live by them only if he or she can believe that doing so will be rewarded with happiness, at least in another world, since, in Williams' language, the pursuit of one's own happiness is a (the?) ground project for every human being. If I am right, then all that contemporary Kantians have to give up, if they are convinced by what the Antis say, is the belief that morality is rational in the first of Kant's ways; they can still postulate that being impartially moral does not really require anyone to renounce his or her life's meaning, identity, or happiness, and so is still rational in the second.

William K. Frankena
The University of Michigan

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FACULTY, 1985-86

Frithjof Bergmann; Professor;
Continental Philosophy, 19th Century
Philosophy, Social Philosophy

Paul Boghossian; Assistant Professor;
Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of
Mind, Philosophy of Science, Wittgenstein

Richard Brandt; Professor Emeritus;
Ethics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind

Arthur Burks; Professor; Philosophy of
Science, Logic, Automata Theory

Stephen Darwall; Professor; History of
Ethics, Ethics, Social-Political Philosophy

Kit Fine; Professor; Logic, Philosophy of
Logic, Metaphysics

William Frankena; Professor Emeritus;
History of Ethics, Ethics, Moral Philosophy

Allan Gibbard; Professor; Ethics, Social-
Political Philosophy

Jaegwon Kim; Professor and Chairman;
Metaphysics, Philosophy of Mind, Theory of
Knowledge

Susan Lipschutz; Adjunct Associate

Louis E. Loeb; Associate Professor;
History of Modern Philosophy, Epistemology

George Mavrodes; Professor; Philosophy of
Religion, Social Philosophy

Brian McLaughlin; Visiting Assistant
Professor; Philosophy of Mind

Jack Meiland; Professor and Associate
Dean (LSA); Metaphysics, Philosophy of
Mind, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy of
Social Science

Donald Munro; Professor; Chinese
Philosophy

Richard Noble; Lecturer; Social
Philosophy

Adrian Piper; Assistant Professor; Ethics,
Social-Political Philosophy, Philosophy of
Law, Kant

Peter Railton; Associate Professor;
Social-Political Philosophy, Philosophy of
Science

Donald Regan; Professor and Professor of
Law; Philosophy of Law, Ethics, Social
Philosophy

Lawrence Sklar; Professor; Philosophy of
Physics, Philosophy of Science, Epistemology

William Taschek; Assistant Professor;
Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of
Language, Metaphysics

Neil Tennant; Visiting Professor; Logic,
Philosophical Logic, Metaphysics

David Velleman; Assistant Professor;
Ethics, History of Ethics, Pragmatism

Kendall Walton; Professor; Aesthetics,
Philosophy of Mind, Wittgenstein

Nicholas White; Professor; Ancient
Philosophy, Metaphysics
