



The Society of Christian Philosophers



C. Stephen Evans, President • Kelly James Clark, Secretary/Treasurer • Fall 1999

Fifth Annual Sino-American Symposium in Philosophy and Religion

The Fifth Symposium of Sino-American Philosophy and Religious Studies, October 19-21, 1999, was wonderfully successful in both scholarship and friendship. A delegation of nine SCP members from North America flew to Beijing, China, for this intensive, highly stimulating three day symposium at Peking University. The evening before the meeting, we all rallied around an extraordinary dinner at the University Hotel where we were joined by Zhao Dunhua, and Zhang Zhigang, both from Peking University, and Professor Zhou Jianzhang from Xiamen University. The Americans included Ernan McMullin, Steve Evans, Stephen T. Davis, Robin Wang, Kelly James Clark, Mel Stewart, Tim O'Connor, George Mavrodes, and Charles C. Taliaferro. The many introductions and light hearted conversation over a lavish dinner proved to be a brilliant occasion for us to put jet lag behind and to prepare for the symposium.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Zhao Dunhua, Vice-Chair of the Peking University Department of Philosophy. Professor Ye Lang, Vice-President of Peking University, welcomed us to the conference. Steve Evans, President of the SCP, underscored our gratitude to Peking University, and our excitement over this opportunity for rich philosophical exchange. After a short break we began a day's work of six papers. Professor Zhao Dunhua presented a paper, "Attempt on Monotheism Characterizing Chinese Ancient Religion," a probing, nuanced overview of monotheistic tendencies in early Chinese religion. Ernan McMullin's paper, "Evolution and the Bible," addressed the current debate in North America over creationism. He placed this debate in the context of the history of philosophy and theology, concluding with an Augustinian appropriation of evolu-

tionary biology. "To my mind, Augustine would have rejoiced when Darwin at last laid out how a natural process might produce the variegated world we know." Kang Phee Seng (Hong Kong Baptist University) then read a paper "The Incarnate Word and the Adamic Humanity – A Soteriological Approach," a powerful work on Christology, soteriology, and philosophical anthropology. Steve Evans paper, "What Kind of Reality Is a Human Person? A Sketch of a Religious Interpretation," was a provocative challenge to contemporary treatments of persons (especially among post-moderns and physicalists) and a proposal that Christian theism is able to secure a robust, substantial view of persons. Evans advanced a Kierkegaardian view of persons in which being a person involves becoming a person. "To be created as a person is to be created as a being who is incomplete and who must play a role in its own development." Professor He Guanghu from the Institute of World Religions, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, read his paper, "A Theory of Human Nature: As an Important Dimension Displaying the Compatibility of Christian Philosophy with Chinese Religions." This was a highly valuable, ambitious work in cross-cultural philosophy of religion. The last paper of the day was Stephen Davis' "Karma, Salvation, and Grace," a philosophical study of two systems of salvation. Davis advanced a bold structural analysis of the values and philosophical challenges of each system,



1999 Conference Participants

highlighting the profundity and promise of grace.

The next day, October 20, began with Peng Ziaoyu (Peking University) who read his paper, "The Treatment of Infidels and Heretics in the Decretals of Gregory IX – A Transition from Charity to Legalism?" This was a fascinating, systematic, historical study of the Western Church's legacy of persecution which brought to the fore the role of charity in church law and polity. Robin Wang presented her paper "The Mystery of Women's Script (Nu Shu) and Human Nature," a probing study of the women of Jiang Yong and Dao counties in the Hunan Province, South China. Professor Wang's enlightening work raised deep questions about the culturally embedded character of religious life. Zhu Ziaoyuan's paper "Struggle for Peace: Hans Hergot, 'On the New Transformation of a Christian Life'" was an intriguing, constructive look at a 16th century, radical socio-religious movement. Professor Zhu (Peking University) engaged in topics at the heart of political philosophy and epistemology. Kelly Clark's paper, "Narrative Understanding of the Self," was a concise,

excellent case for treating personal identity in terms of narratives. "We are storied creatures who find meaning in our lives by uniting our past, present and future within the context of an overarching narrative." Professor Fu Youde (Shandong University) presented an impressive, masterful paper, "Body and Soul: Monism and Dualism," arguing for a monist understanding of persons in the Hebrew Bible. In the discussion that followed and in other sessions, the debate between dualism and naturalism was formidable. Mel Stewart's paper, "Humans in the Image of God" was a stimulating, refined study of persons as made in the image of God. Stewart drew on Biblical sources in his analysis of the good of human nature and the role of knowledge, holiness, and righteousness in human flourishing.

Our last day, October 21, included seven rather than six papers. We began with Kwan Kai Man (Hong Kong Baptist University) who read an astute, compelling paper "John Macquarrie's Christian Existential Anthropology." This paper involved natural theology and the debate between theism and naturalism. Timothy O'Connor's "Persons and Freedom," was a skillful, lucid defense of human freedom, notwithstanding contemporary science and philosophical naturalism. Zhang Zhigang's "The Complexity of the Issue: Reason and Faith," introduced us to his long term systematic project of probing the relation between reason and faith. This

project will be a substantial achievement that takes on the subtleties of the way a faith-reason divide has been articulated at different times. George Mavrodes' "The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting," was an ingenious, fertile comparison of Christian, Buddhist and Russellian conceptions of the person and the afterlife.

Xing Taotao (Peking University) presented a paper "Gödel's Argument for the Existence of an Afterlife," which articulated a neglected argument for the afterlife. This was a stunning, welcome contribution as few of us on the American side had any idea of Gödel's work on this topic. Charles Taliaferro's suggestive and challenging [adjectives supplied by ed.] paper "The Virtues of Embodiment," argued for a value-based understanding of embodiment that may be used to enhance both dualist and monist philosophies of mind. Lo Ping-cheung's paper "Neo-Confucian Immanentist Anthropology – a Comparative Analysis and Assessment," was a brilliant, vigorously argued, challenge to reigning interpretations of Confucianism.

The conference ended in a splendid banquet with toasts all around. Ernan



Mel Stewart and Zhao Dunhui, Vice-Chair of the Department of Philosophy

McMullin presented the Department of Philosophy a collection of books by the Americans. Our Chinese hosts were extremely generous. The alchemy of outstanding philosophy, the informal rivalry and private conversations around meals and even a trip to enjoy Peking Opera, helped forge close friendships between everyone.

I would like to conclude this report on a personal note. In our profession, I believe it is easy to sink into one's own projects and to sink into a range of friends. New friendships can become the exception to life as usual. I believe this symposium was a great opportunity to shake up the terrain of settled boundaries and, unless I am terribly mistaken, it secured open-ended, enduring contacts between and among this group of Chinese and American scholars.

—Charles Taliaferro

Announcements

The Mary T. Clark Christian Philosophy Chair

A proposal for endowing a Mary T. Clark RSCJ Chair in Christian Philosophy at Manhattanville College has been announced by the President, Richard A. Berman. Sister Clark has served on the Executive Committee of the Society of Christian Philosophers and on the editorial board of Faith and Philosophy. She is a former President of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, of the Metaphysical Society of America, and of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy. Contributions toward the endowment of the Chair may be sent to: The Mary T. Clark Christian Philosophy Chair, Development Office, Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY 10577.

Initiative Grants to Network Christian Scholars

This program of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) will award \$15,000 grants to small groups (3-6) of Christian scholars for networking activities as they work on individual or collaborative research projects related to a common thematic focus. Applications are due March 31, 2000. For a program description and application instructions, write or email Dr. Harold Heie, Director, Center for Christian Studies, Gordon College, Wenham, MA 01984 (ccs@gordon.edu), or obtain this information directly from www.cccu.org/projects/.

"Worldview and Life-style: What Are We Bequeathing Our Children?"

Lectures in Simferopol and Symposium on the Black Sea coast, May 21-27, 2000. Lectures, Colloquiums, and Conference in Simferopol, October 9-13, 2000.

May papers will be due by email by late February [we can accept it later if absolutely necessary] for translation and possible publication in Russian. October papers will be due by June 30 (plus two weeks grace period if we have the translation team available) for possible publication by October; they may be turned in as late as August 15 for translation but will not be eligible for publication until a year later.

So you want to go to China

I have been asked by many members of SCP how one gets invited to the Peking Symposium in Philosophy and Religion. Those decisions are made by the China Committee (of which I am not a member) which decides according to various criteria. Not everyone, of course, can participate in the SCP trips to China. Nonetheless, everyone with interest and initiative can arrange a significant intercultural exchange with a university in China. This could maximize SCP members in China while minimizing the importance of the Peking Symposia.

When Americans consider Chinese universities, they typically think of Peking University. But China is a huge country with a great many universities most of which are interested in developing ties with the West and learning about the West. Why not consider an exchange between your philosophy department and a department in a Chinese university?

In 1998, my department established a three-year academic and cultural exchange between the Philosophy Departments of Calvin College and Xiamen University on an island city in Southeast China. Xiamen University is one of the 33 'key' universities in China, and offers a post-graduate three-year course in philosophy. John Hare and I visited Xiamen in May, 1998 to present two all-day seminars, together with a session with the department to arrange the details of the exchange and an additional session with the students to talk about study in the United States. Hare offered a seminar on what he calls 'the moral gap.' I offered a seminar on modal logic and the rebirth of metaphysics and, in so doing, made "Plantinga" a household name in China (we have since learned that China now has 101 official surnames since 'Plantinga' has been added to the list). The seminars were attended by 24 post-graduate students and 2 professors. Hare comments: "I learned much from trying to explain myself in such a different cultural context, and from trying to connect my thoughts with what I knew of Chinese philosophy. Those six hours were some of the most extraordinary and fruitful in my life."

This exchange continued at Calvin College with the Interim 1999 visit of Professor Chen Jiaming of Xiamen University. Professor Chen gave lectures on Confucius and Confucianism to my



Xiamen University

Interim Course, "Chinese Thought and Culture." In addition, Professor Chen, a master calligrapher, offered a calligraphy demonstration which he produced paintings (by demand!) for every student in the class.

In May 1999, I returned with Lee Hardy for seminars on "The storied self," "Modernism and Postmodernism," and "Two Schools of Contemporary Western Thought: Continental and Analytic." Like the previous year, the faculty and students were gracious hosts—taking us site-seeing, gift buying, to tea art and treating us to a banquet. Clark and Hardy were accompanied by local businessman, David Schoon, who lectured to MBA students in the Finance Department. In January, 2000 Professor Zhou Jianzhang from Xiamen will visit Calvin for three weeks and lecture in the interim course on Chinese thought. And in spring 2000, Steve Wykstra and Del Ratzsch will visit Xiamen and present seminars on philosophy of science. Since books are so expensive in China, we have begun the process of supplementing the Xiamen University Library's collection of philosophy books in the English language. Members of our department have donated their own books as well as many others, four prominent philosophers have donated complete collections of their works and David Schoon has provided funding for a collection of basic works.

The nitty-gritty details include securing college support (including adequate funding), making arrangements with a willing university in China, writing out lectures well in advance so they can be sent early to be translated, and learning how to communicate cross-culturally. The annual costs for our exchange are about \$5,000. Out of this

fund comes travel expenses for two to China (we usually get over jet-lag for three days in Beijing) as well as airfare and living expenses for a Chinese professor to visit Calvin. When in Xiamen, the University pays for our room and board. When the Chinese professor visits Calvin, our College supplies room (in an on-campus apartment), board (in the student cafeteria) and an office. We have secured funding for three years through a fund at Calvin that encourages cross-cultural education and through regular departmental funds. We have applied for more regular and permanent funding. Making contacts with Xiamen University was fairly easy for us because I spent a year with Professor Chen Jiaming when I was on sabbatical at St. Andrews, Scotland. One nice feature of Xiamen University is that three philosophy professors and many students are fairly fluent in English. So far all of our visitors from China have spoken English and we have not had to worry about securing a local translator. As far as topics for seminars, I believe we shot too high in our first visit. John Hare's rather Kantian seminar was abetted by the fact that of the few philosophers in the west with which they are well-acquainted, Kant is the best known. Modal logic proved rather tedious given that most of the students had had little formal training in logic and of those that had few knew more than Aristotelian logic.

Here is the URL of a webpage with links to 99 universities in China: www.xmu.edu.cn/english/exchange/cn_univ.html. Most of the university webpages include information about international exchanges. With your interest and effort, you and your department could soon begin a valuable and long-lasting exchange with a Chinese university.

—Kelly James Clark

Election results

Francis J. Beckwith, Daniel Howard-Snyder, Jonathan Kvanvig and Thomas Senor were elected to the Executive Committee. They join continuing members Stephen Wykstra, Harriett Baber, Tim

O'Connor, Charles Taliaferro, William Lane Craig, Jorge Garcia, John Hare and J. P. Moreland. The Society thanks retiring members Frances Howard-Snyder, Brian Leftow, Alan Padgett and Melville Stewart

for their service.

The results of the regional elections, as well as all standing committees, can be found on the SCP webpages: www.siu.edu/departments/cola/philos/SCP/

2000 Regional Conferences

Midwest Region

March 16-18, 2000

Baylor University

Theme: Jewish and Christian Resources for Social and Political Philosophy.

Plenary speakers: David Solomon, Tom Hibbs, and Marc Ellis

For additional information:

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Conference web site contains suggested paper topics: www.baylor.edu/~Philosophy/events/SCP2000.html

Pacific Region

March 23 - 25

Fuller Theological Seminary

Pasadena, CA

Plenary Speakers: Lynne Rudder Baker,

Trenton Merricks, Nancey Murphy,

Ted Warfield and Dean Zimmerman.

For additional information:

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SCP Pacific Website at

www.acusd.edu/~babert/SCP

Eastern Region

May 11-13, 2000

University of South Carolina

Theme: Minds and Bodies

Keynote Speakers: Lynne Rudder Baker,

Jorge Garcia, Dean Zimmerman

Contact: Chris Tollefson

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Mountain-Plains Region

Fall 2000

Sponsored by the University of Colorado

Theology Forum

University of Colorado

Boulder, Colorado

Keynote Speaker: Prof. Stephen Davis

Theme: Christian Apologetics: The

Theological Limits

SCP on the Internet

WWW: <http://www.siu.edu/departments/cola/philos/SCP/>

Canada WWW: <http://juliet.stfx.ca/people/fac/wsweet/scp.html>

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