



# The Society of Christian Philosophers



Robert Audi, President • Kelly James Clark, Secretary/Treasurer • Winter 2003

## Tsinghua University

by John Hare, Calvin College

This was, by the account of both Kelly Clark and Mel Stewart, the most successful conference in China that the SCP has had. I think there were three inter-related reasons for this: the topic, the format, and the host institution.

The topic was the relation between morality and religion. The American team consisted of Andrew Dell'Olio from Hope College, Kelly Clark from Calvin College, Michael Murray from Franklin and Marshall College, Lee Yearley from Stanford University, John Hare from Calvin College, Gary Mar from Stony Brook University, Charles Taliaferro from St. Olaf College, and Melville Stewart from St. Thomas University. Harriet Baber from the University of San Diego was all set to come, but was prevented by her husband's illness. (By describing the group as 'the American team' I do not mean to imply that we were in competition with the Chinese!) All of us gave papers about religion and morality, some of them historical (for example, about Confucius and Chu Hsi), and some systematic (for example, versions of divine command theory and impartial observer theory). We felt that we were entering into a lively discussion that the Chinese were already having with each other. Tsinghua University has a Centre for the Study of Morality and Religion which was our host. The Chinese team consisted of Junren Wan from Tsinghua University, Xinping Zhuo from the Institute of World Religion, Lin Zhao from Wuhan University, Shijun Tong from East China Normal University, Jiaming Chen from Xiamen University, Lian Cheng from Peking University, Feng Lu



Conference Attendees

from Tsinghua University, Zhenming Zhai from Zhongshan University and Xiaochao Wang from Tsinghua University. There were in addition twelve formal observers (from twelve different institutions) and a substantial number of graduate students who attended many of the sessions. Lu Wang, from the Chinese Academy of Social Science played a substantial role in the discussion.

Several of the Chinese philosophers spoke of the need for God or faith or the transcendent to support the moral life. Several of them also opposed these ideas. I think the Chinese were looking at Western ideas about the relation of morality and religion in order to determine whether any of those ideas were usable in the Chinese context. One topic raised several times by the Chinese philosophers was the relation between a 'global ethic', formed by consensus from the world's religions, and a 'universal ethic' of a Kantian kind. It was striking how many of the Chinese philosophers knew Kant well. I speculate that there is an affinity between

Kant's view that the interest of reason is finally practical and the concern that several of the Chinese philosophers expressed for a system of thought that would support the moral life. They knew of Kant's insistence that God is a postulate of practical reason.

A second reason for the success of the conference was the format. All the participants sent copies of their papers, and a commentator from the other country was assigned to each paper. Each combination of paper and commentary and general discussion was given an hour. It was exhausting by the end, but very fruitful. We were forced by the format to engage with each other's ideas; and the engagement (while courteous) was often pointed and substantive.

One possible improvement might be a formal time for the graduate students to discuss the topic of the conference with us. We had a good informal time with the graduate students, but it did not provide an opportunity for them to express their ideas. The session was organized in two halves. The first, to

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break the ice, was for entertainment, in which the students proposed humorous questions and the first student to answer won a book or other gift that we had brought with us. The second half was more substantive. Kelly Clark, Charles Taliaferro and I formed a panel, to respond to the students' questions about the U.S. reaction to September 11th, about the connection between feminism and theology, about whether Americans do by and large believe in God and, if so, why they do so, about why American philosophers do not speak Chinese, etc. The final request by the students was that the panel should sing something, and we gave them a rousing rendition of "Amazing Grace." Perhaps next time the students could be invited to prepare in advance more formal questions of a philosophical nature, and the Americans could prepare responses to them.

Finally, the third reason. The host institution must take a lot of the credit for the success. Tsinghua University has just started up again its full philosophy program, which had a very distinguished history in the first half of the twentieth century. As Prof. Junren Wan described for us, Jin Yuelin and Feng Youlan were founder figures in the twentieth century history of Chinese philosophy, and were both on the faculty of Tsinghua University. Tsinghua provided most generous hospitality, not only in material ways by lavish food and excellent accommodation; but even more significantly by their time and focus, so that they attended the sessions faithfully (until right at the end) and wrote fine papers and commentaries. It is extraordinary that they accomplished all of this in our language even though almost none of us Americans had any competence in theirs (though we had an able translator to help).

I think several of the links we made will continue to be fruitful long after the end of the conference. To give just my own experience, I discovered that Professor Junren Wan from Tsinghua University had translated my father's book *Language of Morals* into Chinese and that my father had been helpful in recommending him for study at Harvard. Professor Wan was moved to



*Gary Mar (2nd from right) and Lee Yearley (far right) at the graduate student reception.*



*John hare with Chinese graduate students.*

hear of my father's death and may also translate two other books of his. Professor Lu Wang and I discovered a shared interest in the medieval Franciscans, and I have been able to recommend some places in the U.S. where he can do further study. Professor Jiaming Chen is in regular contact with Calvin College (through our exchange program with Xiamen University) and we have had many fruitful conversations about the foundations of morality. These will undoubtedly continue. I think other members of the American team had similar experiences, though I do not have the relevant information.

I will end with a final reflection. It does make a significant difference to one's own views to hear them in this new context. Perhaps an analogy is hearing a well-loved piece orchestrated for a different set of instruments. I think even the gospel is like this, that you can hear it differently as you listen to Chinese philosophers talk about it. I think the Chinese philosophers also heard their views about morality and religion in a new and fresh way. The conference was successful because it made a place for this kind of translation and examination to go on at a high level of scholarly expertise and also of good will.

# Announcements

## God & Physical Cosmology

*A Russian-Anglo American Conference  
on Cosmology and Theology*  
January 30 – February 1, 2003  
University of Notre Dame

This conference will bring together leading philosophers, theologians, and cosmologists from the USA, Great Britain, and Russia to discuss the implications of recent work in physical cosmology for theology and religious belief generally. The conference is sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation, as well as by the Society of Christian Philosophers, the Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame, and the Societies of St. Sergius and St. Albans.

There will be seven speakers from Russia, including scientists, philosophers, and theologians. Anglo American speakers include: Sean Carroll (physics, U. of Chicago); Robin Collins (Philosophy, Messiah College); William Lane Craig (Philosophy, Talbot School of Theology); Ernan McMullin (Philosophy, Notre Dame); Phillip Quinn (Philosophy, Notre Dame); Richard Swinburne (Philosophy, Oxford); Del Ratzsch (Philosophy, Calvin College); and Dean Zimmerman (Philosophy, Syracuse and Rutgers).

Contact: Professor Michael Murray, Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, PA 17604-3003, *Michael.murray@fandm.edu*. For further information, go to the conference's web site: [www.fandm.edu/Departments/Philosophy/NDConference/philosophy.htm](http://www.fandm.edu/Departments/Philosophy/NDConference/philosophy.htm)

## Meeting of the British Society for Philosophy of Religion

The British Society for Philosophy of Religion and the Society of Christian Philosophers announce a joint meeting to be held 6-8 August 2003 at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford. The general theme of the conference is Religion and Ethics. Members of both

societies are encouraged to submit papers for this meeting. Papers will be reviewed by a committee made up of members of each society.

Submissions should be sent electronically to Dr Mark Wynn at: *M.R.Wynn@exeter.ac.uk* Keynote speakers will include Robert Audi and D.Z. Phillips.

## SCP Pacific/Mountain-Plains (joint) Regional Meeting

*February 13-15, 2003*

Grand Canyon University, Phoenix, AZ  
Conference theme: *The Calling of  
Christian Philosophy*

Plenary speakers: Dallas Willard (USC)  
and Michael Beaty (Baylor)

Contact: David Reiter  
College of Christian Studies  
Grand Canyon University  
3300 W. Camelback Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85017

## SCP at 2002 Eastern APA

Chair: Eleonore Stump,  
St. Louis University

Speaker: James Ross, University of  
Pennsylvania: *"Cognitive Voluntarism  
in Augustine and Aquinas"*

Commentor: Todd Bates,  
University of Pennsylvania

Speaker: Stephen Davis,  
Claremont McKenna College:  
*"Predestination and Free Will"*

Commentor: Susan Peppers,  
Stetson University

Speaker: Gregg Ten Elshof,  
Biola University: *"Conceptual  
Contribution and the Evidential  
Value of Religious Experience"*

Commentor: John Zeis, Canisius College

## Baylor Fellowship

Baylor's Institute for Faith and Learning announces two openings in 2003-2004 for Visiting Fellows. Senior fellows will possess records as accom-

plished scholars and are eligible for up to \$50,000. Junior fellows will show scholarly promise commensurate with time in rank and are eligible for up to \$40,000.

During their appointment, fellows will pursue research or creative activity of the highest caliber integrative of the Christian faith and their discipline. Fellows will participate in the full life of the University, assisting the Institute's efforts to encourage scholarship rooted in Christian intellectual traditions.

Applicants should submit a CV, three recommendation letters, a 750-word description of the project to be undertaken while at the Institute, and a published paper. Material should be sent by January 15 to Dr. Douglas Henry, Institute for Faith and Learning, P.O. Box 97270, Waco, TX 76798.

Baylor is a Baptist university affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and applicants should embrace Baylor's Christian identity. As an Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity employer, Baylor encourages minorities, women, veterans, and persons with disabilities to apply. See [www.baylor.edu/IFL/for\\_faculty.htm](http://www.baylor.edu/IFL/for_faculty.htm) for further information.

For more details and announcements, visit our webpage at [www.siu.edu/departments/cola/philos/SCP/announcements.htm](http://www.siu.edu/departments/cola/philos/SCP/announcements.htm)

## Election Results

**Michael Beaty** (Baylor), **Kate Rogers** (Univ. Delaware), **Charles Taliaferro** (St. Olaf) and **Dean Zimmerman** (Rutgers) were elected to the Executive Committee. We express our gratitude to outgoing members Francis Beckwith, Daniel Howard-Snyder, Jonathan Kvanvig and Thomas Senor.



## Questions from Chinese Graduate Students (unedited):

How about philosophy in America?  
Is it hard, in both philosophy itself and making a living by it?

I major in philosophy. Sometimes I feel sad because I am afraid of not being a wealthy future. What should I do?

Is the faith cultural hereditary?

Do American believe in God? Is God truly exist?

What difference between the China Marxism and West Marxism, do you think?

As well known, the explanation of the theory on religion according to Marxism is very limited in China. Are there any different explanations in your research?

What do professors in America think about Marxism?

In western and eastern countries, will there be same God in the future?

Who (in your opinion(s)), is the most brilliant philosopher ever?

Is female an object, subject or other things for male?

Do you think that women will give up giving birth to children by themselves

when the biology makes great progress?

Nowadays what are American feminists fighting for in the family (not for social rights)? Every American couple I'm familiar with always lived happily with each other.

One or two years ago, someone in China suggested that Chinese women give up jobs and go back to home to take care of children and do house-work. It is normal in America and do you think it is helpful for China?

Do you think there is a structure in human's brain which is the condition of our knowledge or knowledge comes from experience?

Most of developing countries think America as world-police, but why?

How do you think about feminism, especially feminist theology?

Is the faith of human really important? Can't we have it?

Is God higher than human being, same to human being, or different from human being?

Do you know any information about value-based management in the US? Can you give me any the research situation about it in the US?

In China, some men think our failure of development attribute to little or no Christian, what do you think about it?

Human have two values, that is ethics value and economic value, what do you think their relation?

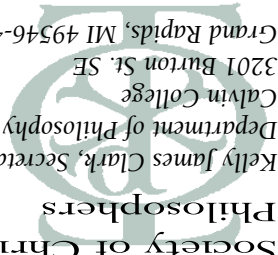
At this meeting, most of Chinese professors and students can speak in English, but most of American professor can't speak in Chinese. But why?

Do we need God to guarantee the morality? Why?

Do most American think that west culture is better than east culture? Do they conflict with each other?

What do you think of the horrible events that happened last year as a philosopher? And the ordinary American citizen?

Can one of the professors sing a song for us? Please, please, please...

  
Society of Christian  
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