



PROGRAM

A Newsletter for Graduates of the Program of Liberal Studies

University of Notre Dame

'Aug '84

The View from 318

"A merely well-informed man," wrote Whitehead in one of his most celebrated remarks, "is the most useless bore on God's earth." More recently in his book *Where Colleges Fail* Nevitt Sandord wondered whether "the time may come when everybody will know everything but nobody will understand anything." I trust that I'm not being a Luddite and hopelessly antiprogressive in suggesting that these remarks bear on the "information revolution" which we are all experiencing and at the center of which is the computer technology that continues to amaze us all. Later in these pages Professor Sloan, our editor, invites you to join us in a discussion in these pages on the implication of this revolution for education.

Even as computers play a larger and larger role in faculty activities, traditional activities remain strong. In fact, there were two notable "talking sessions" in June. We had a memorable and vigorous faculty seminar on Plato's *Meno* led by Dean Samuel Kutler of St. John's College (Annapolis). Dean Kutler was visiting with us primarily for the purpose of exploring our experience with Eastern classics on the Great Books seminar lists. Over ten years ago PLS was a pioneer among Great Books programs in introducing books like the *Analects* of Confucius and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The other traditional "talking session" in June was a breakfast meeting of the faculty and all returning PLS alumni during the University-Wide Reunion '84. This was the 30th reunion year for the Program's first class. I found a common message from alumni as I moved between conversations with members of that first class of '54 and recent graduates of the 1970's. In different ways graduates were in accord in especially appreciating the Program's capacity ("the books and those faculty") to help them "know how to live," "come to terms with life," "appreciate a fully human life." There were stories of Dr. Nutting, a warm reception for the appearance of Dr. Cronin, and queries after Professors Bird, Thompson and Crosson.

Enrollment continues to set new record-highs; this encouraging fact does,

however, pose problems for a Program traditionally devoted to very personal modes of teaching and for a faculty striving hard to make their marks in the world of scholarship while remaining true to the fine teaching traditions of the Program. During the past academic year we continued to get teaching help from Professor Cronin. In addition Frederick Crosson, O'Hara Professor in the Department of Philosophy, returned to the Program to do a seminar and a section of his highly-regarded Politics tutorial.

Some activities of current junior faculty in the program will be of interest to you. Professor André Goddu's book, *The Physics of William of Ockham*, is expected to appear this month. Professor Janet Smith's leadership and the efforts and donations of many Notre Dame students and faculty brought the appearance this past Spring of a Women's Care Center. Already heavily used and widely acclaimed in the community, the Center stands next door to the sole abortion mill in South Bend and across the street from St. Joseph's Hospital. Professor Clark Power is at this time teaching in the summer session at Harvard, and Professor David Schindler treated the entire Notre Dame community as well as many visitors to the stimulating conference on recent physics and Catholic thought discussed later in these pages.

This summer witnesses the departure of Professor Linda Ferguson who for eight years was the primary presence for the fine arts in the Program. She developed the year-long tutorial, emphasizing music, and has taught all of the faculty a great deal in her time with us. Professor Juan De Pascuale also leaves after four years of teaching with the passion and breadth of concern characteristic of his mentor Kierkegaard. A positive aspect to these departures is that in this age of large numbers of young doctorates seeking teaching positions, Professor Ferguson leaves for a tenure-track position in the Music Department at Valparaiso University and Professor De Pascuale for a comparable position in the Philosophy Department at Kenyon College.

Reunion '85 is scheduled for June 6-9 of next year. Already the young class of 1980 talks of their first significant reunion and a seminar together. Mary Schmittlein will be coordinating informal commitments to attend and the process of deciding on the seminar reading. Her address appears under *Lines of Communication* in this issue. I would welcome volunteers from other classes to plan and coordinate reunion seminars. Best wishes for a restful and fruitful conclusion to the summer.

Walter Nicgorski
Chairman

EDITOR'S DESK

In this issue we traditionally take time to thank our contributors and friends who continue to support the work of the Program. In addition, our features for this issue will include a stimulating essay by Professor Paul Roche, our distinguished Poet-in-Residence, who has given the Program many benefits of his creative work, including outstanding readings of his poetry. He has contributed a short essay that I would like to share.

A second feature will be a report by the editor on the stimulating conference, organized in large measure by Professor Schindler, on the philosophy of the quantum physicist David Bohm. The Program was pleased to take part in the sponsorship of the Bohm Conference, along with the journal *Communio*, and we were particularly honored to have David Bohm as a guest in several Program tutorials where his ideas could be explored informally and in greater detail. I am sure that students (and faculty) who participated in these discussions will long remember the occasion.

Comments by alumni at a recent alumni/ae weekend, and a letter from Alumnus Thomas J. Duffy (1970) have suggested that the issues raised by the computer age are beginning to impinge even upon those of us committed to an approach to learning through careful reading of the Great Books. From its modest beginnings in Pascal's adding machine and Charles Babbage's "Calculating Engine," we now seem to be in the midst of a technological revolution that will probably rival in retrospect the steam revolution of the early nineteenth century, and the electrification of the 1890's. The editor is old enough to remember the days of cumbersome binary digit languages, punch cards, and room-sized computers like the once-amazing *Univac*, which was first employed in the 1952 election. He is writing this at a small microcomputer that is probably able to do much more than that entire machine.

Consequently, I am suggesting an alumni/ae forum on the issue of computers, and how they bear on our lives. I am asking for short (2-3) page essays, and a selection of these will be made to compose a round table.

To focus this, I have recently read two articles of some interest. In the *New York Times* for June 26, Erik Sandberg-Diment ("But is it Writing?") suggests that the ultimate result of the great use of computer technology in the domain of writing will be to encourage sloppy thinking:

The slow, deliberate, linear progression of structured logic, formerly used even when one was writing emotionally, gives way to a here-now, gone-in-a-second manner of composition. One's sense of continuity gives way to free-form thought. Dots of ideas

resembling the dots making up the letters on the video screen drift in and out of one's consciousness, perchance to be captured, perchance to slip away unrecorded. (*New York Times*, 26 June, 1984)

Fearing an age "filled with the emperor's new words, where word processing cranks out fast-food prose," he has sounded an alarm over what this will do to good writing, and more importantly, to good thinking.

In opposition, others have argued, no less strenuously, that computers are, like any other instrument, only dumb tools, which surely do not hinder, and even help creativity. In an essay review by Paul Delany in the *New York Times Book Review* for March 18, 1984 of J. David Bolter's *Western Culture in the Computer Age* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984, \$19.95 Cloth, \$8.95 Paper), Professor Delany challenges Bolter's claim that this new form of information control and management will result in such claimed superficiality:

Eventually [the computer's] main use may well be as a medium of communication, for retrieving and distributing texts on a previously unthinkable scale. Mr. Bolter predicts that "men of the computer age seem destined to lose the Faustian concern with depth." But if the average person can have access to information that would fill the Library of Congress or can control as much computing power as a university has today, why should he be shallower than before?(p. 14)

These views provide a pertinent set of issues upon which you are invited to reflect. Please send contributions by October 1 to the Program. I will plan to make this a feature for the January issue.

Phillip Sloan

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Faculty Editor

Phillip Sloan

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University of Notre Dame

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD IN A DANGEROUS AREA

You must surely all have noticed what has happened to the word *area*. It has been sold into slavery and made to do the work of half the words in the language. If that is an exaggeration, it is not too much to say that soon we shall be unable to speak a sentence without it. Look at the current record.

Nothing happens any more in Indiana or Illinois or Timbuctoo but only in the Indiana or Illinois or Timbuctoo *area*. For that matter, nothing ever happens in a place but only in an *area*. Nor do we have any countryside or country any more but only *rural areas*. Are there woods and fields still around? Certainly not. How pedantic of me to hanker after them when I can have *woods-areas* and *field-areas*! Of course, there is still the sea but *maritime-area* is already creeping up on us and the seaside if not a *coastal-strip-area* or *shore-area* is now a *seaside-area*. Do we still have the beautiful and unique word *home*? Hardly, it now means house (Homes for Sale!), but even if we did, *personalized-domestic-living-area* is on its way. And what about dining-rooms and refectories? Forget about them. How much more honest to eat in an *eating-area* or a *food area* or (as a concession) in a *dining-area*! And bedrooms? What is wrong with *sleeping-areas*?

Shall I go on with this litany of boring approximations to human speech? Why not? I may as well be hanged in the sheep-area as in the lamb-area. Very well then: at college we no longer study subjects but only areas. Jim is studying the area of history, Jane the area of government; but soon they will not be able to say even that they are at college but in *learning-process-areas*. Meanwhile, all the way through college, from the prospectus downwards, they will learn to say (as if they needed teaching!), instead of "in the whole realm of medicine," *in the whole area of medicine*; instead of "operating within a narrow radius," *operating within a narrow area*; instead of "comes within the purview or compass of the act," read *area*; instead of "this is not in my line," again read *area*; instead of "outside the range of," *area*. For all the following: "outside the record," "in the lower register," "wanders from the subject," "an ill-defined theme," "in the whole gamut of," "outside our province," "within his competence," "region," "section," "part," "domain," "province," "zone," "sphere," "desert," "tract," "terrain," "beat," "pitch," "parish," "ward," "borough," "premise," "nook," "garth," "abode," "corner," "paddock," "enclosure," "court," "patio," "compound," "grounds," "haunt," "quarters," "division," "arena," "precinct," "sweep," "spread," "grasp," "scope," "category," "object," . . . For all these and countless more, Jim and Jane will be turning-in the word *area*, which after all is only an unspecified space, or a space specified in measurement.

But what has all this got to do with Little Red Ridinghood? Just this, that I have re-written her sad story to bring it into line with our new way of sloppy writing and sloppy speaking--using one little over-worked word to hasten the maceration and destruction of the English language.

You see, Little Red Ridinghood had the temerity to intrude into a very dangerous area. She went to see her grandmother in her grandmother's home-area, which happened to be in a woods-area in the area of Sussex in the Great Britain area. It all happened while she was on vacation from the area of her studies (which was in the area of sociology and government). Her grandmaother lived in the area.

Little Red Ridinghood decided to take a present to her grandmother. It was in the area of eggs, milk and honey. Alas, what did not come within the area of her knowledge was that a canine animal in the vulpine area had preceded her to the area of her grandmother's house and added her grandmother to the area of hisinside.

As the young girl innocently tripped along, going through the park-area, crossing the football-area, and lastly entering the woods-area, many happy anticipations raced through the area of her brain. Little did she know that the vulpine animal, which was indeed a wolf, was already ensconced in her grandmother's bed-area feeling very satisfied in the area of gastric satisfaction. Nor did the hapless girl know that the Wolf had dressed himself up in various items from the area of her grandmother's wardrobe and was simply waiting to add her too to the area of his stomach.

"Enter the area, m'dear," shouted the wolf when she knocked in the area of the front-door, and Little Red Ridinghood, entering, noticed at once how the area of her mother's face had lengthened, and that there was a lot of hair and whiskers in the same area. She supposed that this is what happened in the area of old age.

"Grandmama," she exclaimed, "what big openings you have in the area of your vision!"

"Aha, all the better to keep you in my sight area!" said the wolf, already drooling in the area of his chops.

"But Grandma, what a big area for putting-in-food you have, and what enormous incisors in the dental area!"

"All the better to . . ." but the wolf never finished his sentence. Leaping out of the area of the bedclothes he began to despatch every area of Little Red Ridinghood into his own areas. So much so that when he was done, it would not be too much to say that Little Red Ridinghood had definitely left the area.

---Paul Roche

QUANTUM MECHANICS, MECHANISM AND BELIEF

Under the sponsorship of the Program of Liberal Studies, the Office of the Provost of the University, and the journal *Communio International*, a group of distinguished scholars met in late March to discuss the importance of the theoretical claims made on behalf of quantum physics by the noted physicist David Bohm of Birbeck College, University of London.

Bohm's long history as a theoretician of quantum mechanics reaches back to days as a student of Robert Oppenheimer and important research and teaching work at Princeton University in the last years of Einstein's tenure at the Institute for Advanced Study. His books, *Quantum Theory* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1951), and *Causality and Chance in Modern Physics* (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1957), were for many the first accessible insight into the strange world of quantum mechanics. More recently, his reflections have taken a more speculative turn, represented by his book *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London and Boston: Ark, 1983), which the Program faculty discussed in faculty seminar this spring. The conference was specifically intended to explore some of the issues raised by Bohm's attack in that book on the conception of the universe articulated by the tradition of classical physics, which relies, in his analysis, on a concept of mechanical action between isolated bodies. Need to reexamine this reductive conception of reality was the focus of the conference, and the participants were generally set to explore over three days of meetings the implications of Bohm's quantum mechanics for such issues as the status of consciousness, the possibility of a non-reductionistic conception of life, and even a theology of creation. Bohm's analysis drew to the conference an interesting mix of theologians, philosophers, and humanistic scholars under the conference title "Beyond Mechanism: The Universe in Recent Physics and Catholic Thought." Those interested in the specific content of the stimulating papers delivered at the conference by David Bohm, John B. Cobb, Kenneth L. Schmitz, John Wright, S.J., William Hill, O.P. and Frederick Crosson will be pleased to know that the proceedings are being edited by Professor Schindler for eventual publication by an appropriate press.

Some brief, general reflections on the issues can be offered.

Most of us probably find the world of quantum mechanics unusually alien, and might be unable to see how it is able to connect with these larger questions. Furthermore, as one explores quantum mechanics more deeply, it becomes quickly evident that to follow the issues at more than a superficial level requires one to master complex mathematics, and without this it is easy to be misled by false analogies and generalities. What are the fundamental problems to consider?

Most broadly, quantum mechanics marked a break in the early decades of this century with certain critical assumptions of field theory in physics, and with the assumptions of a particulate conception of matter. Wave and field theories, on one hand, had developed in independence in the nineteenth century from more classical conceptions of matter employed in disciplines such as chemistry, which held on to atomic theory and a conception of matter as formed of discrete, bounded particles.

The philosopher Norwood Russell Hanson has deftly discussed the issues in an interesting and recommended review article.* The assumptions of quantum mechanics, which on the practical empirical level manifest themselves in such claims as that light is both particular and wave like, imply, for Hanson, that a set of philosophical perplexities are indeed raised by this new theoretical interpretation of physics with philosophical importance. On his analysis, at least four levels of problems are raised:

- 1) Questions concerning the significance of scientific knowledge claims.
- 2) The problem of gaining genuine information about the world.
- 3) The problem concerning the real nature of interactions between physical bodies.
- 4) The proper function and domain of scientific theories. Do they only "save appearances," or do they describe reality?

Most relevant to David Bohm's claims are the general issues that quantum mechanics raises with respect to causality and scientific determinism. For on the accepted interpretations of the theory, the claim seems to be that one can neither assume that the nature of underlying physical reality is particulate and governed by classical mechanical principles, nor that it is wave like, but still precisely calculable. We seem to be presented with a strangely intermediate and ambiguous view of what the ultimate "stuff" of the world, a conception that seems to be more profound than simply a sign of present theoretical incompleteness. In the so-called "Copenhagen Interpretation," this duality is taken as ultimate, and, in Hanson's words,

According to the Copenhagen interpretation, there will never be any turning back from this state of affairs. It is idle to hope to discover some analytical error within past calculations or some new datum within future experiments that will restore our microphysical thinking to the level of classical determinism (p. 45).

The interest of such a thesis for philosophers, theologians and humanists was the issue of the conference. Bohm has attempted to articulate his own views on the consequences of a quantum-mechanical interpretation of physics and a quantum-

*N.R. Hanson, "Quantum Mechanics," in: *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. P. Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967),VII:41-9.

mechanical conception of nature in his *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* in a way that the implications of this for classical conceptions of causality, determinism and even individuality and consciousness are suggested. Entitling the conference "Beyond Mechanism" was a way of highlighting these issues. The problem of most general concern was to find a way of articulating some of the dissatisfactions many had found with the reductionist views to be found in domains as diverse as physics, psychology, sociology, and biology, views which have seemed since Descartes and the atomists of the seventeenth century to have raised theological questions as well.

To summarize the results of the three days of discussion would require more space than can be given in this issue. I would simply report that the discussions were lively, and they did not represent uncritical endorsement of Bohm's views. While there was general agreement on the importance of the issues, it was not always clear what real advantages finally obtained in accepting the "quantum mechanical" view of reality. Clarifications were also required concerning such the concepts as "mechanism," since this is a concept that can mean many things, running the gamut from reductive materialism, atomism, strict causality, the inertness of matter, matter-mind dualism, and these do not all amount to the same thing, nor do they have the same implications. It is historically of some interest to reflect upon the fact that the articulation of strictly mechanistic philosophies in the seventeenth-century, for example, was very often carried out by scientists and theologians who saw in mechanistic philosophies a way to *defend* theological interpretations of creation against what many saw as the theological dangers in received Greek natural philosophies. At least for those thinkers, mechanism surely did not imply a rejection of theological and Christian views, nor did it even imply a strictly deterministic notion of causality.* Consequently, the full implications of mechanistic philosophies need, in my view, to be explored with some care.

The stimulating discussions generated by this conference and the projected publication of the papers will surely be of interest for some time to come.

----Phillip Sloan

*Some useful insights into this issue are to be gained from J. E. McGuire, "Boyle's Conception of Nature," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 33 (1972): 523-42.

LINES OF COMMUNICATION

The following alumni have indicated their whereabouts since the last *Programma* and would like their old friends and teachers to know of them.

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David J. Larsen, 7786 East Napa Place, Denver, CO 80237. Marketing Manager of five *Computerland* Stores.

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