

# Philosophy at Cambridge

Newsletter of the Faculty of Philosophy

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## From the Chair

**Tim Crane**

So much has happened in the Faculty since the last newsletter. As you will read here, we have said goodbye, sadly, to Raymond Geuss and Hallvard Lillehammer, but we welcome Dr Tom Dougherty as a new lecturer this autumn. Tom works on ethics and political philosophy, and his presence will add to the Faculty's attractiveness for research students working in these central areas.

On the subject of research students, I hope you will be as pleased as we are to read (on p. 3) about the successes of our recent research students in obtaining academic jobs. We are very proud of them all, and we believe this is more evidence of what a great place Cambridge is to do postgraduate study in philosophy. Application numbers bear this out: despite the financial pressures on postgraduate students – the AHRC has now withdrawn most of its funding for Master's degrees – we still receive about 200 graduate applications every year. But we must not be complacent. There is strong competition among the world's finest universities to attract the best graduate students. It is all the more urgent, then, for us to seek funding from all possible sources. To compete at the highest international levels, we need to be able to fund many more of our research students than we do now.

Any readers who would like to learn more about what we are doing in this area are more than welcome to contact me by email, or to come and visit the Faculty whenever they are in Cambridge, and experience our new coffee machine, which is reported to be the envy of all in Sidgwick Avenue!



Inaugural lecture of the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk

Photo: Glenn Jobson

## Safeguarding the Future: The Centre for the Study of Existential Risk

**Jacob Trefethen**

The age we live in is unprecedented in many respects. Perhaps most exciting, is the sheer speed of our technological progress. But with big changes come big risks: synthetic biology, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence all have the potential to do harm as well as good, on a global scale. How do we navigate these unknown waters when the stakes are so high?

This is the question that Professor Huw Price, Lord Martin Rees, and Jaan Tallinn set out to answer last term to a packed audience in Lady Mitchell Hall. These three men – a philosopher, a cosmologist, and an entrepreneur – have come together to

found the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, a new inter-disciplinary research centre with a focus on anything that may pose a threat to the very existence of the human species. Their inaugural public lecture on 'Surviving the 21st Century' was hosted by 80,000 Hours, an organisation focused on getting students and researchers to spend their careers helping solve the world's most important problems.

What can we do in the face of such unprecedented risks? Whatever the answer is, directing some of Cambridge's foremost intellectual power into the problem is a good first step.

# Judith Jarvis Thomson visit

## Sophia Connell



Rae Langton (left) with Judith Jarvis Thomson

The name 'Judith Jarvis Thomson' immediately brings to mind rigour and tenacity, breath-taking imagination, and broad engagement with issues in ethics, political philosophy and metaphysics. It was our great honour at Newnham to welcome back Prof. Thomson for a week-long visit in Michaelmas of this year. I say 'welcome back' because Judy (as she likes to be known) spent two years studying at Newnham from 1950–1952. Her memories are warm ones, which she enjoyed reliving – despite the fact that her experience at Cambridge almost ended her Philosophy career before it had begun! Trained by John Wisdom in a Wittgensteinian approach that aimed to eliminate philosophical problems by careful attention to language, she lost a sense that philosophy might matter in its own right.

After leaving Cambridge, Judy went into advertising in Manhattan, but soon felt the pull of philosophy calling her back. She completed a PhD at Columbia University, but was discouraged from pursuing an academic career because

of her gender, at a time when very few academic philosophers were women. However she persisted, working first at Barnard College before joining MIT in 1964, where she remained for the rest of her career.

Judy's best-known work is in ethics and political philosophy, where she has made key contributions to theories of rights, action, and meta-ethical naturalism. A workshop on her philosophy held at Newnham College during her visit focused on all three areas. Prof. Matt Kramer, from the Cambridge Law Faculty, discussed the consequences of Thomson's distinction between infringements and violations of rights when we consider cases of desperation. Prof. Jennifer Hornsby from Birkbeck, London (another Newnham alumna) discussed her work on action theory, with a focus on Judy's 1977 book *Acts and Other Events* which Prof. Hornsby had reviewed at the time. Her presentation on 'Action and Imperfectivity' discussed difficulties, about the relationship between events and processes: for example, how an

event, such as a death, relates to the completion of a process, such as dying, when this process can be interrupted. Finally, Prof. Jimmy Lenman from the University of Sheffield sought to support Judy's neo-Aristotelian meta-ethical naturalism in a paper entitled 'Good people and good things'.

During her visit, Judy also participated in many other philosophical events with tireless enthusiasm. She gave a talk to the Moral Sciences Club, entitled 'Rights and Wrongs' (the podcast is available at <http://bit.ly/MSCthomson>), which attracted record crowds and resulted in many an interesting supervision. Next, she presented her famous 'trolley loop' modification of the Trolley Problem to the first year philosophers, who came away in awe. She met with many other friends, colleagues and students, both postgraduate and undergraduate, all of whom benefited greatly by her generosity. It is fair to say that her presence here was an enriching and inspiring experience for staff and students alike. We hope to welcome her back again soon.

**Sophia Connell** is an Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty, and Director of Studies for Philosophy at Newnham and Selwyn.



Judy giving her talk at the Moral Sciences Club

# People

## Staff news

Emeritus Professor **Onora O'Neill** was made a Companion of Honour (CH) for her services to philosophy and public policy in the Queen's New Year Honours List for 2014.

**Prof. Derek Matravers** stepped down from his role as an affiliated lecturer here in Cambridge, after 20 years invaluable service to the Faculty. He has a full time role with the Open University.

**Prof. Rae Langton** was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences on 12 October 2013. She was also chosen for *Prospect* magazine's 2014 list of the 50 world's top thinkers.

**Dr Hallvard Lillehammer** took up a professorship at Birkbeck, University of London in September 2013.

**Prof. Huw Price's** paper 'Causation, Chance, and the Rational Significance of Supernatural Evidence', *Philosophical Review*, 121 (2012) was selected as one

of the ten best philosophy papers of 2012 by *The Philosophers' Annual*.

**Dr Arif Ahmed** was awarded a Visiting Fellowship by the Australian National University, Canberra for Michaelmas 2013.

**Dr Louise Hanson** (University of Oxford) was appointed to a 5-year College Lectureship in Philosophy for Fitzwilliam and Churchill Colleges.

**Dr Raphaël Ehrsam** (Université Paris 1 Sorbonne) was appointed to a temporary lectureship.

**Dr Craig French** (University of Antwerp) was appointed to a 3-year Junior Research Fellowship at Trinity Hall.

**Dr Raymond Lal** was appointed to a postdoctoral position on a 3-year interdisciplinary project in Philosophy/ Foundations of Physics at Oxford and Cambridge.

**Dr Caterina Tarlazzi** is here on a 3-year British Academy postdoctoral award; and **Dr Michael Blome-Tillmann** is an EC Marie Curie Research Fellow for 2 years.

## Student Prizes

**Ali Boyle** (Peterhouse) was awarded the Matthew Buncombe prize for best overall achievement in the MPhil. The Craig Taylor prize for best performance in the Tripos went to **Kacper Kowalczyk** (Trinity) for Part IB, and **Malthe Rasmussen** (Emmanuel) for Part II.

## Appointments

We are delighted that a number of our recent graduates have secured academic posts. **Luca Incurvati** was appointed to an Assistant Professorship at the University of Amsterdam; and **Tom Simpson** to a lectureship at Oxford. The following were appointed to postdoctoral research positions: **Claire Benn** at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem; **Michael Hannon** at Fordham University; **Emily Thomas** at the University of Groningen; **Rob Trueman** at the University of Stirling; and **Will Davies** at the University of Antwerp.

# Raymond Geuss Retires

## Tom Stern

Raymond Geuss retired in 2014, having spent more than forty years, twenty at Cambridge, in a profession he once described as 'mildly discreditable'. Raymond's specialisations would best be listed as: social and political philosophy, 19th and 20th century German philosophy, aesthetics and ancient philosophy. In fact, this would belie the extraordinary breadth of the subjects he writes on, and his ability to write essays which don't sit neatly within any specialisation. His writing style is a rare combination of clarity, depth and antiquarian erudition. It is also very funny – though even his essays cannot convey his infectious laugh. Academics often divide the books they read into 'for work' and 'for pleasure'; with Raymond's books, one does not have to choose.

In political philosophy, Raymond has carved out a position for himself as a critic of liberal political philosophy from the Left. Contemporary political philosophy suffers, he thinks, from various ills: myopic in its focus on particular philosophers and on

narrow, clapped-out debates; disconnected from real politics; self-consciously ahistorical and obsessed with rigour, yet lacking the historical sensitivity and the rigour to understand its limitations. Raymond has devoted much of his intellectual energy to challenging political philosophers on these grounds, whilst reminding his readers that things were not ever thus and that this, too, shall pass (though you might not like what comes next!).

Raymond's lecturing style, grander and more effective than most, was marked by a keen sensitivity to the mood of the room: "Am I boring you? You look bored. Let me tell you a story....". The subsequent anecdotes and illustrations gained Raymond something of a cult reputation: "Is it true", I was asked, "that he started reciting the *Iliad* in Greek, while singing his own musical accompaniment?" (Not that I've seen, but it wouldn't surprise me.) Raymond has been extraordinarily generous to his students. He would, for example, meet some of us each week to



teach us German language and literature – making him, as a contemporary put it, the world's most overqualified German teacher. Depending on the context, Raymond offered streetwise, professional support or inspirational philosophical dialogue. I am hardly the only philosopher to owe my career, in very large part, to his dedicated supervision.

If Raymond means what he says about his retirement – 'no more philosophy' – then his absence will be keenly felt. I wonder how long he can stay away. A recent item listed on his website is a recording of his poem, 'Mr Bricolage', in which disgruntled customers write in with complaints about their Rawlsians.

# Logic and Assertion

Michael Potter on his inaugural lecture



Wittgenstein in the 1910s

My starting point is a remark spoken by Wittgenstein almost exactly 100 years ago, on 9th October 1913, in Russell's rooms in Nevile's Court at Trinity. Wittgenstein, who had by then been studying with Russell in Cambridge for two years, was about to depart for a year in a small town in Norway and wanted to leave him with a summary of the progress in philosophical logic that he had made so far. To assist in the task Russell hired a shorthand typist called Miss Harwood, who prepared a typescript to Wittgenstein's dictation. Russell sent the typescript to Wittgenstein in Norway to check, and his handwritten corrections are visible on the surviving copy.

Almost every sentence in these *Notes on Logic* demands exegesis – a few years ago I published a book devoted to explaining some of them. The one I take as my text

here is, "Assertion is merely psychological". Why did Wittgenstein think this was worth saying? Is it true? And if so, what follows?

To answer the first question – why did he think it was worth saying? – we need to identify who Wittgenstein's target was. Who was it who thought that assertion is *not* psychological? The only recent author I am aware of who has discussed this remark at any length (Colin Johnston) treats it as if the target was Russell, but I do not think this really gets to the heart of the matter, because although Russell did indeed at one point (*Principles of Mathematics*, p. 35) say that he was using "the word assertion in a non-psychological sense", I do not think it mattered greatly to him whether it has such a sense or not. Russell was, in the end, too flexible a thinker to make his account of logic depend vitally on whether assertion is psychological or not. The person to whom the issue mattered rather more, I think, was Frege. And there is some (admittedly circumstantial) evidence that he was indeed Wittgenstein's real target. The evidence consists of a set of three questions addressed to Frege, not by Wittgenstein himself, but by a Cambridge friend of his called Philip Jourdain. One of these questions was: "Will you tell me ... whether you now regard assertion ( $\vdash$ ) as merely psychological?"

Now this is, as I said, only circumstantial evidence: by January 1914, when Jourdain sent his questions to Frege, Wittgenstein had been in Norway for three months, and we cannot be sure that the letter had his say-so. The stronger argument (as so often) is philosophical: it consists in showing why it mattered to Frege, more than it did to Russell, whether assertion is psychological.

One of the things Frege is famous for is anti-psychologism – opposition to the notion that logic has anything to do with psychology – but the view does not originate with him. It was espoused by Kant and frequently repeated by others in the 19th century. What is relevant here though, is not the view itself but the argument for it. Most of the 19th century opponents of psychologism appealed to the distinction between the descriptive and the normative: psychology, being the science of how we think, is wholly descriptive; logic, being the study of how we ought to think, is normative; hence logic cannot be part of psychology. Or so they argued. (The word 'truth-value' – in German, *Wahrheitswert* – was coined, by Windelband, precisely to allude to the alleged normativity of truth.)

Frege repeated this argument for anti-psychologism in several places, but in the most famous passage in which he asserted the view his argument for it was a little different.

*Being true* is quite different from *being held as true*, whether by one, or by many, or by all, and is in no way to be reduced to it. There is no contradiction in something being true which is held by everyone as false. I understand by logical laws not psychological laws of *holding as true*, but laws of *being true*. If it is true that I am writing this in my room on 13 July 1893, whilst the wind howls outside, then it remains true even if everyone should later hold it as false. If being true is thus independent of being recognized as true by anyone, then the laws of truth are not psychological laws, but boundary stones set in an eternal foundation, which our thought can overflow but not dislodge. And because of this they are authoritative for our thought if it wants to attain truth.

(*Grundgesetze* (1893), Introduction)

The point to note about this wonderful passage is that it appeals *not* to the normativity of logic, but to its undemocratic character: it is conceivable, Frege thought, that we might all mis-identify one of the laws of logic.

Now we are in a position to see why Wittgenstein's point about assertion mattered to Frege. If assertion is psychological, as Wittgenstein maintained, this is a problem because of what else Frege said about the nature of logic. Frege

The idea that propositions are names of complexes ~~is~~ 2.6.  
suggests that whatever is not a proper name is a sign for a  
relation. Because spatial complexes consist of things  
& relations only & the idea of a complex is taken  
In a proposition convert all its indefinables into variables; <sup>from apd</sup>  
there then remains a class of propositions which <sup>is</sup> not all  
propositions but a type.

\* you – for instance, numerate every fact as a  
spatial complex

Extract from Wittgenstein's notes on logic

realized that logic cannot be characterized as being maximally general: that would not distinguish a logical truth from something that happened by chance to be true always and everywhere. Instead he characterized logic by its subject matter. The problem was that he thought (sometimes, at least) that the subject matter of logic is assertion:

For there is no doubt that the word 'beautiful' actually does indicate the essence of aesthetics, as does 'good' that of ethics, whereas 'true' only makes an abortive attempt to indicate the essence of logic, since what logic is really concerned with is not contained in the word 'true' at all but in the assertoric force with which a sentence is uttered. ('My basic logical insights' (1915), *Posthumous Writings*, p. 252)

Why, though, did Frege think that logic is about assertion? It must be, he said, because otherwise logic would have nothing to do with inference:

What is to serve as the premise of an inference must be true. Accordingly, in presenting an inference, one must utter the premise with assertoric force, for the truth of the premises is essential to the correctness of the inference. If in representing an inference in my

conceptual notation one were to leave out the judgment strokes before the premised propositions, something essential would be missing ... What is essential to an inference must be counted as part of logic. (Draft reply to Jourdain, 1914)

The way out of this bind was for Frege to recognize, as he eventually did, that the subject matter of logic is not assertion but truth:

Both grasping a thought and making a judgement are acts of a knowing subject, and are to be assigned to psychology. But both acts involve something that does not belong to psychology, namely the thought. (Notes for Ludwig Darmstaedter (1919), *Posthumous Writings*, p. 253)

And again:

The word 'true' indicates the aim of logic as does 'beautiful' that of aesthetics or 'good' that of ethics. All sciences have truth as their goal; but logic is concerned with it in a quite different way from this. It has much the same relation to truth as physics has to weight or heat. To discover truths is the task of all sciences; it falls to logic to discern the laws of truth. ... To avoid ...

misunderstanding and to prevent the blurring of the boundary between psychology and logic, I assign to logic the task of discovering the laws of truth, *not of assertion or thought*. The meaning of the word 'true' is explained by the laws of truth. (Frege, 'Thoughts' (1918), my emphasis)

If logic is about truth, and truth is not psychological, then logic can be non-psychological too, but not because it is normative. What is normative, on this view, is not logic (or truth, for that matter) but assertion.

This leaves us with one uncomfortable problem, though. Recall the reason Frege had offered for thinking that logic *does* have something to do with assertion: "what is essential to an inference must be counted as part of logic". And surely he was right to think that assertion is essential to inference. So if logic is not about assertion, it is not about *inference* either. And that couldn't possibly be right. Could it?

**Michael Potter** is Professor of Logic in the Faculty and a Fellow of Fitzwilliam College. He gave his inaugural lecture on 18 October 2013.

# Philosophy

from Oxford

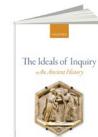
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# The Cambridge Women in Philosophy Group

Claire Benn



*Cambridge women philosophers past and present*

Women are under-represented in philosophy. As discussed in the 2011 Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP UK) report, there is a "fairly steady decline in the proportion of women from over 45% at undergraduate level to under 20% at professorial level". At PhD level, only 35% of students are female compared to 61% in English and 53% in history. This problem, which affects all UK philosophy departments, is exacerbated in Cambridge due to the fact that women working in philosophy are spread out over a range of faculties and are therefore unlikely to meet each other.

In 2010, three graduate students from Philosophy and HPS got together and formed the Cambridge Women in Philosophy Group. The group was created to identify and provide a solution to this particular problem of under-representation by creating a forum to bring together female philosophers from diverse departments. Although the group is principally made up of philosophers from Philosophy and HPS, it is also attended by philosophers working in

History, Classics, Gender Studies, Divinity, Politics, Economics and elsewhere.

Not only has the Women in Philosophy group helped to mitigate some of the problems of under-representation by bringing women together, it has also provided a forum for raising and discussing these problems – both as women and as philosophers. Talks have been given on 'Being a Graduate Female in Philosophy', 'Girly Philosophy', 'Not exactly a career plan: the truth about work/life balance' and 'The Climate for Women in Philosophy'. There has also been an organised trip to a conference dealing with under-representation of women in the sciences. Alongside these talks, other events have been organised in order to promote further discussion.

For example, a panel was organised for all current final year undergraduates to find out more about studying philosophy at graduate level. Also, the group hosted a 'Best Teaching Practices' seminar headed by Prof. Jennifer Saul (Sheffield), and attended by academics, graduates and undergraduates from a wide range of departments on 'Implicit Bias, Stereotype Threat and Women in Philosophy'.

The Women in Philosophy group also provides a forum to celebrate the work that women are doing in academic philosophy in Cambridge and elsewhere. These talks have been on a wide range of subjects from the composition of philosophical writing, to sex, consent and power; from hate speech and pornography to aesthetics; from the empathising-systemizing theory of sex differences to love and revolution of the world. Speakers from Cambridge have included graduate students such as Lorna Finlayson, Joanna Burch-Brown, Christine Tiefensee; and also Faculty members, such as Paulina Sliwa, Elseline Kingma, Anna Alexandrova and Jane Heal. We have also had speakers from

outside Cambridge such as Rae Langton (now a member of the Faculty), David Archard, Sheri Ross, Catherine Wilson, Susan James, Susan Wolf and, recently, Miranda Fricker. In Easter term, there are talks planned by Jennifer Saul, Elizabeth Fricker and Sophia Connell.

The Women in Philosophy group is focused, unsurprisingly, on women. However, this is not to say that the group is open *only* to women – events are open to everyone, of any gender and from any department or career stage. Events usually last for an hour and are often followed by lunch with the speaker or the organisers. They are generally held in the morning so as not to exclude those with childcare responsibilities.

Our group in Cambridge is part of a larger movement of Women in Philosophy groups across the country. In 2011, the group contributed to the first UK report on the representation of women in philosophy, cited above, produced by the British Philosophical Association Committee for Women in Philosophy and SWIP UK. This report can be found at: [www.swipuk.org/notices/2011-09-08](http://www.swipuk.org/notices/2011-09-08).

The issue of gender in philosophy – and in academia in general – is an important and difficult one. To quote from the contribution of the Cambridge group made to the SWIP report: "Addressing gender imbalance is not only an issue for those affected, it also is an important entry point for self-conscious analysis of the discipline as a whole – an analysis that any philosopher should be interested in". The Cambridge Women in Philosophy group goes some way to address these issues by providing an opportunity for women working in philosophy to meet; by raising and addressing the problems faced by women in philosophy, and by celebrating the work of female philosophers.

If you are interested in finding out more, please see our webpage [www.phil.cam.ac.uk/seminars-phil/women-in-phil](http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk/seminars-phil/women-in-phil) or look us up on Facebook ('Cambridge Women in Philosophy'). Alternatively, feel free to email me at [cmab3@cam.ac.uk](mailto:cmab3@cam.ac.uk)

**Claire Benn** is a PhD student in the Faculty.

# A Philosophical Defence of Monarchy

Francis Young

The May 2013 issue of the *Philosophy at Cambridge* newsletter contained Professor Huw Price's summary of the inaugural lecture he delivered in November 2012, 'Where would we be without counterfactuals?', in which he picked up Bertrand Russell's famous remark regarding the obsolescence of the law of causality, "surviving, like the monarchy, only because it is erroneously supposed to do no harm". Professor Price went on to argue that there is "a significant harm associated with modern constitutional monarchies" on the basis that individuals selected to rule by an arbitrary accident of birth suffer an unfair constraint on their personal freedom of choice. Recalling the republican bias of many of my undergraduate contemporaries, and feeling the need to put forward an alternative point of view, I was inspired to take issue with Professor Price's argument.

The underlying justification for hereditary monarchy, even in its diluted constitutional form, is that it guarantees the continuity of the state. At the moment the monarch dies, she is instantaneously replaced so that the institution of monarchy itself is inextinguishable. With no need to elect a head of state, no constitutional issues arise regarding the individual or individuals in whom final power resides during an interregnum. In Britain, the monarch guarantees the continuity of the state in much the same way that the Constitution of the United States is supposed to guarantee the legitimacy of that nation's successive governments. Yet a written document is subject to the vagaries of interpretation and the limitations imposed by the foresight (or otherwise) of its authors, commanding respect only insofar as it serves the interests of citizens. A monarch, by contrast, feels the weight of history and tradition on her shoulders; by giving the state's authority a human face, she can command respect as the living embodiment of continuity in a way that a contentious document never can. The need to command respect imposes an additional duty on the monarch to conduct herself in such a way that she merits it.

If we accept that a monarch is better than (or at least complements) a written constitution as the symbolic and actual source of all authority exercised by the

state, it becomes reasonable to argue that monarchy is a political good that outweighs any possible curtailment of freedom that the individual selected for rule may suffer. Professor Price's argument ignores the fact that most princes and princesses are brought up to rule; they know from an early age that this is their destiny, and this knowledge weakens the potential constraint on their freedom imposed by that destiny. An heir's entire view of life is conditioned by the knowledge that one day they will be monarch. In this respect, princes and princesses are no different from anyone fortunate enough to be born to wealthy parents, who might expect from an early age to have a guaranteed job working for their parents' company, and perhaps one day succeed to the position of managing director. Yet whereas the children of wealthy parents may choose to go their own way, future monarchs are bound by a duty to the body politic that should override considerations of personal freedom.

To object to monarchy on the grounds of unfairness and inequality is the logical consequence of a libertarian outlook that

places the welfare of the individual above the welfare of the commonwealth, yet the libertarian emphasis on children's freedom to choose their own destinies raises questions of its own. Should libertarian parents be allowed complete freedom to give their children the best start in life, for example by paying for superior education and healthcare – or are there greater social goods at stake which mean that the freedom of parents should be restricted, and thereby the ultimate freedom of their children? Requiring that the children of the wealthy should be educated by the state, a view espoused by some on the left of the Labour Party, is no more unreasonable than requiring that a certain child be educated to become the monarch. Professor Price objects to the fact that "we think of royalty as a natural kind", treating it as an example of sloppy thinking – and it is certainly true that royals are not biologically different from the rest of humanity. Again, however, the fact that princes and princesses are brought up to rule means that they *are* a natural kind within the social and political world.

Professor Price's argument requires us to accept a radical libertarian outlook in

*continued on page 8*



The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge with Prince George

Photo: Christopher Neve

which children enjoy absolute freedom to select their destinies apart from any considerations of the welfare of the commonwealth. It is inevitable that some unfairness will be involved in a monarchical system, but hierarchies of merit are also unfair if there are multiple individuals capable of excelling in the most authoritative roles. A successful argument against hereditary monarchy would need to convince us that an alternative system can provide the same political goods as a constitutional monarchy. Until that point, the curtailment of freedom that being the heir to the throne involves is a price worth paying for the constitutional stability that a monarchical system secures.

*Francis Young read Philosophy at Gonville and Caius 1999–2002 and now teaches Philosophy to Sixth Formers in Cambridgeshire.*

Huw Price responds:

## Choice, by George?

I'm grateful to Francis for his thoughtful response to my piece, but I've misled him in two ways. First, I'm not a radical libertarian. I don't think that children should have complete freedom, just that children such as George Cambridge should have the same choices we take for granted for our own children. Second, I'm not a republican, except in the sense that I presume that he is – we both think that it a good thing that the real power rests with parliament and hence with the people. But I've no objection to the monarchy, so long as future incumbents can be chosen from a field of consenting adults. This long-overdue reform need no more mean the

end of the monarchy itself than the granting of full degrees to women in 1947 meant the end of Cambridge University. (I think that future generations will shake their heads about the fact that the former reform came so late, as we do about the latter.)

Francis allows that royal heirs suffer a "curtailment of freedom", but thinks it a price worth paying for constitutional stability. I'm sceptical about the claimed advantage. Is monarchist Sweden more stable than republican Switzerland, or Norway more stable than Finland? Indeed, is Britain more stable than Australia, Canada or New Zealand, where the monarch's constitutional role is played by a distinguished figure chosen from public life? And the evidence in Britain over the past century or so seems equivocal, to say the least. Sometimes all that childhood training has given us a steady hand at the ceremonial tiller, sometimes less so. (Some of the stability surely rests on the fact that the tiller is now only tenuously connected to the rudder.)

More importantly, I disagree with Francis that the price could possibly be an acceptable one, even if there were a small advantage of this kind. Imagine a distant cousin of the famous trolley problem, in which we could reduce the risk of runaway trams by committing a child to a life as a transport engineer – she would be raised from infancy for the profession, without meaningful options of other kinds. Nobody would think this a price worth paying, and it is only familiarity that prevents us seeing that the bargain in the case of royal children is just as bad, and just as unfair. It would be unthinkable that we should now begin to conscript children for state service; and only familiarity prevents us from seeing that we are doing it already. (That's why I felt that this point matched Russell's words so well, the present system being in this respect "a relic of a bygone age ... erroneously supposed to do no harm.")

## The Joint Session, BSPS and BSET

For the first time since 1987 the Faculty is hosting the UK's leading philosophy conference – the Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association.

This is the 88th Joint Session and it will be held in Fitzwilliam College on 11–13 July 2014. The speakers include Hallvard Lillehammer, Roger Crisp, Ian Rumfitt, Gary Kemp, Thomas Pogge, Kimberley Brownlee, Amber Carpenter, Stephen Makin, Tamar Szabo Gendler, Jennifer Nagel, Gideon Rosen and Marcia Baron.

Either side of the Joint Session, the annual meetings and conferences for the British Society for Ethical Theory, and the British Society for the Philosophy of Science will also be held.

## Future Events

### Routledge Lecture in Philosophy

12 June 2014

### Prof. Michael Bratman

(Stanford University) will give the 8th Routledge Lecture entitled '**Acting and Thinking Together**'.

### Alumni Festival 2014

27 September 2014

### Dr Nigel Warburton

will give a talk on '**Philosophy as Dialogue**'. Further details will be available from: [www.alumni.cam.ac.uk](http://www.alumni.cam.ac.uk).

### Cambridge Festival of Ideas 2014

20 October – 2 November 2014

### Prof. Rae Langton

will give a talk on identities. Please see the Festival website: [www.cam.ac.uk/festival-of-ideas](http://www.cam.ac.uk/festival-of-ideas) for further details.

Information about other forthcoming events is available from the Faculty website: [www.phil.cam.ac.uk](http://www.phil.cam.ac.uk).



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Moral Sciences Club talks are now available on iTunes:  
[www.cam.ac.uk/video-and-audio](http://www.cam.ac.uk/video-and-audio)

Your comments and contributions are always welcome. Please send them to the Editor at:

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