

Indiana University PHILOSOPHY

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Alumni Newsletter

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College of Arts & Sciences - Graduate School Alumni Association

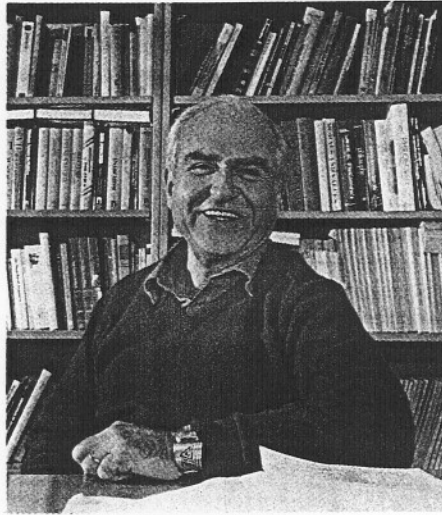
George Nakhnikian to retire

George Nakhnikian will be retiring at the end of the coming spring semester. In the next several years his retirement will be followed by three more—those of Hector Castañeda, Bo Clark, and Raymond Smullyan. George was the first in that distinguished group to join this department, and will also be the first to retire from it.

George was born in 1920 in Varna, Bulgaria, but is of Armenian ancestry. In fact, his father and both his grandfathers were priests of the Armenian church. For the first 10 years of his life, George lived with his parents in Bulgaria; the family then lived in Lebanon for another three years before emigrating to the United States in 1933. They soon settled in the Boston area. George did his undergraduate work at Harvard, where he majored in biochemistry. During World War II he served in Europe for two years with the United States Army. Having finished his military service, he returned to Harvard and turned to philosophy. He received both of his graduate degrees there. His thesis, "Plato's Theory of Empirical Knowledge," was directed by the well-known Plato scholar, Raphael Demos. A long article in two parts, based upon the work he did in the dissertation, was among the earliest of George's publications.

His first full-time academic appointment was in 1949 at Wayne State University—the university with which he was associated until 1968. In 1955-56, however, he served as visiting assistant professor and Carnegie intern in general education at Brown University; and in 1965-66 he was a Fulbright scholar at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

In 1956 he became the chair of the Wayne State philosophy department; and over the course of the next decade, almost single-handedly, he built it into a department well-known and highly respected by analytic philosophers throughout the country. In those years the department's illustrious faculty included, besides George himself, such notable figures as Hector Castañeda, W. D. Falk, Henry Kyburg, Keith Lehrer, Alvin Plantinga, Edmund Gettier,



George Nakhnikian

Robert Sleigh, Richard Cartwright, and (a mere child at that time) Mike Dunn.

Understandably, George came to be nationally recognized during that period not only for his characteristically insightful philosophical analyses but also for his superb ability as an administrator. After a wide-ranging search for an outside chair to revitalize the Department of Philosophy at IU, George emerged as the top candidate. The offer of the chair here was made to him, and he accepted it in 1968.

The dramatic shift in philosophical orientation that his appointment signaled led to a number of resignations within the department. In fact, only three members of the present department had appointments here in the pre-Nakhnikian era: Professors Eisenberg, Fisk, and Grossmann. Thus, once again, George found himself in the position of having to build up a department largely from scratch. Roughly half the members of the present faculty of the department were first appointed here while he was chair. The lion's share of the credit for this department's rise to national and international prominence has to be given to him as the person who made the appointments that, so to speak, made all the rest possible.

George's own work in philosophy has focused on several great historical figures—among them Plato, Descartes, and Kant—and on various problems in contemporary moral theory. In 1967 he published *An Introduction to Philosophy*, in which he probed some of the most important topics in the philosophies of Plato, Descartes, and James. He has also edited or co-edited and contributed to several well-known anthologies, including *Readings in Twentieth-Century Philosophy*, co-edited with William Alston (1963); *Morality and the Language of Conduct*, co-edited with Hector Castañeda (also 1963); and *Bertrand Russell's Philosophy* (1974). It may still come as a surprise to many that another of George's contributions to philosophy was his and Alston's translation of Edmund Husserl's *The Idea of Phenomenology*, published by Nijhoff in 1964, to which he wrote the introduction.

George has also had considerable success as a teacher of philosophy. Throughout the roughly 20 years in which he has been associated with this department, he has, to be sure, taught a wide range of courses; but it should especially be noted that year after year he has taught large sections of P100, and to the many hundreds of students in those classes he has

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Alumni news

Glenn Lesses (MA'77, PhD'81) is spending the year in the Boston area working on an NEH fellowship concerning desire and motivation in Plato's middle dialogues. He will return to teaching at the College of Charleston next year.

Donald Van Liere (MA'42; PhD'50, Psychology) writes from Kalamazoo, Michigan, that after a 32-year career at Kalamazoo College, he retired in 1981. He is still active at the Bronson Methodist Hospital and at the VA Hospital in Battle Creek. He spends spare time on his 27-foot sailboat on Lake Michigan.

Tim's back! Hail and farewell



Tim Day is back with us as a visiting assistant professor this academic year. Tim received his doctorate from IU in 1986, having written a dissertation directed by Bo Clark on reasoning that implies the existence of an infinite succession of items. Particular cases that Tim was concerned with, for example, had to do with regresses of causes, or of justifications, or of exemplifications. He was also concerned with why in some such instances the underlying philosophical position seems to be discredited, while in other instances the presence of a regress seems quite benign. In 1987 Tim received the Esther L. Kinsley PhD Dissertation Award from IU for this work. The award is the University's highest honor for dissertation work and is awarded on the basis of a University-wide competitive review of nominated dissertations.

While finishing his dissertation, Tim taught for a year at Franklin College in Franklin, Indiana. In 1986-87 he taught at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

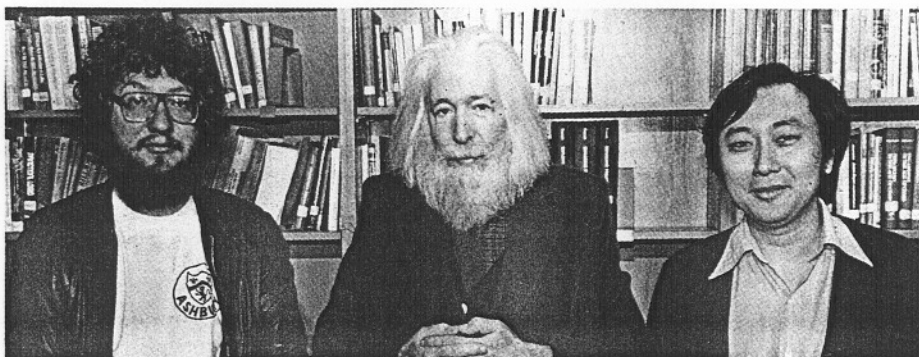
During the past summer he was one of a small group selected by Professor Robert Audi of the University of Nebraska to attend Audi's postdoctorate seminar. The seminar was offered under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and dealt with the theory of knowledge. This fall Tim is presenting a co-authored paper, "Sorites with and without induction," at the Central States Philosophical Association at Columbia, Missouri.

Tim will be "on the market" again this year, hoping to find a tenure-track appointment that will provide the time and stability to develop the courses and do the research for which he is so well qualified. In the meantime, we have him here for the year, teaching classes and adding to the philosophical life of the whole department.

Tim's appointment for this year is to fill a space left when Geoffrey Hellman resigned to move on to the University of

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Tim Day, our visiting assistant professor.



Ed Mares and Yin-Bin Ning (left and right) flank Raymond Smullyan. Mares and Ning were co-winners of the Oscar Ewing Essay Contest's graduate division, Ning for the second consecutive year. Smullyan is the Oscar Ewing Professor of Philosophy.



Paul Spade congratulates Paul Syverson on his award for excellence in the department's graduate program. In the background is the family of Daniel Reising, the winner of the department's undergraduate award for excellence in philosophy. During the ceremony Gonzalo Armijos was recognized as the year's most outstanding associate instructor.

Spring awards ceremony



Graciela De Pierris stands with Elizabeth Hunt, undergraduate winner of the Oscar Ewing Essay Contest. She has been accepted as a graduate student in the History of Science Group at the University of Pennsylvania.

Hail and Farewell

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Minnesota. During the year we will be conducting a nationwide search for a permanent replacement. This vacancy is the first of a number that we will be filling over the next four or five years, for during that time four senior faculty members will be retiring. The first retirement will be that of George Nakhnikian, who is presently teaching his last year as a full-time faculty member (see profile on page 1). His retirement will be followed by that of Bo Clark, Raymond Smullyan, and Hector Castañeda over a period of several years. The loss of such a large and distinguished group of philosophers is a serious and important event in the life of the department, and we will be reviewing replacement candidates with care. No matter how careful we are, however, we will be hard pressed to do without the good judgment and good cheer of George, Bo, Ray, and Hector.

Nakhnikian

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offered lectures characterized by the same human(e) passion and by the same concern for precision of statement and rigor in argumentation as in his most advanced classes. To those students in his introductory courses, George has brought the highest of academic standards.

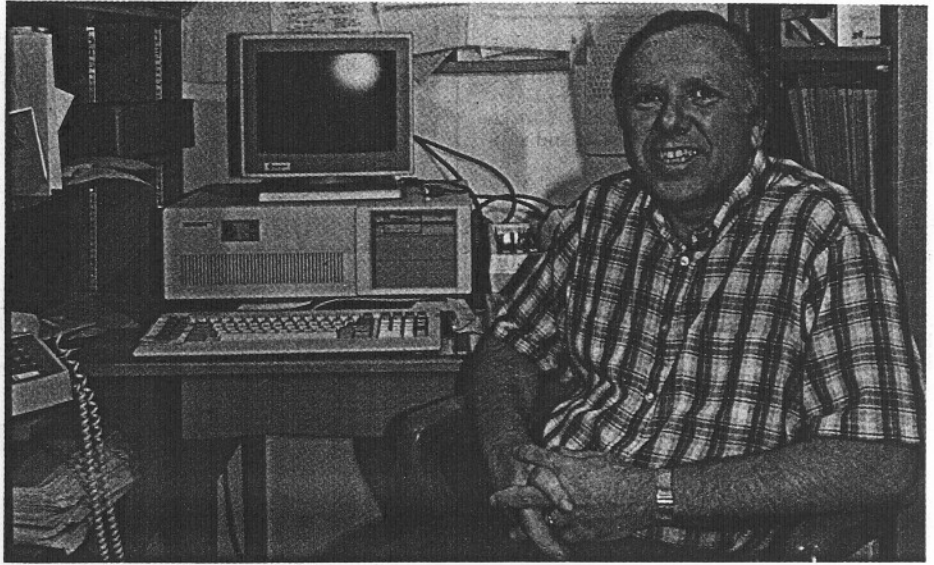
No less important, to students in all his courses, as well as to his colleagues and friends, George has brought himself—a person forthright, courageous, and loyal. In him, keenness of philosophical insight is accompanied by a truly remarkable depth of feeling.

At present he is engaged in a big research project, having to do with the very nature of morality and moral theory, as well as in a variety of smaller projects. Characteristically, he is also engaged in another long-term project of a very different sort—namely, the rearing of his four-year-old son Alexander. Alexander's mother, George's second wife, is Robin Murphy, who very recently earned her second PhD (in psychology, here at IU). George also has three grown daughters by his first marriage.

No report about George Nakhnikian would be complete if it did not mention his skill at tennis and his passionate dedication to the game. It should be added, however, that the rumor—once widely circulated among members of the philosophy profession—that no one who did not share George's passion for tennis would be appointed to a department of which he was chair had no solid basis in fact.

Paul Eisenberg

Computerization continues



Mike Dunn, architect of the departmental computer plan.

The department is currently in the second year ("Phase II") of a three-year plan to "computerize." Acting Dean of Academic Computing Polley McClure began last year to help departments develop and fund such plans, and philosophy was one of the first four selected for participation. The plan was authored by Michael Dunn (with the help of Paul Spade), and he jokes that it is probably the most widely read item that he has authored. It has been duplicated countless times at the request of other departments beginning their planning process, and was a focal point of a paper Dean McClure presented at a recent conference on academic computing.

The results of Phase I were to bring PC- or AT-class microcomputers to faculty desks, to create a cluster of PCs for graduate students, and to bring a document production facility with a Laserwriter printer to the main office—to be used primarily to support publication and teaching.

The basic thrust of Phase II is to acquire two Apollo-type super-microcomputer workstations so as to develop an environment for research in logic and work in automatic theorem-proving, logic programming, and some related aspects of artificial intelligence. These super-micros will be networked to a developing "cognitive science network" connecting us with computer science, linguistics, psychology, and speech and hearing sciences. We have commitments of funding from Research and Graduate Development for this purpose, and are in the process of ordering equipment. Another aspect of Phase II is to have an instructional cluster of microcomputers available to assist in the teaching of logic. This cluster was not funded as a departmental resource, but Academic Computing Services, in cooperation with the office of the Registrar, is in the process of developing shared facilities

that we might use for this purpose. We have already begun experimental use of computers in some of our logic courses, but it has been difficult to regularize this use, since a major problem has been access to computers for training.

Phase III will involve acquiring more super-microcomputers, networking everything (including our PCs), and providing a gateway out to the academic computing system.

The only other places in the world that we know of where philosophers have such outstanding computer facilities are the Australian National University's Automated Reasoning Project and Stanford's Center for the Study of Language and Information.

After three years we shall be pretty much where we want to be, except for one variable—obsolescence. The usual time frame for replacement in the microcomputer world is five years, and so at the end of three years we shall be at the beginning of the planning process again. Didn't Sartre have something to say about this in "The Myth of Sisyphus?"

We expect soon to have an undergraduate interdepartmental major with computer science. A joint committee from both departments has drafted the proposal. There has also been cooperation at the graduate level, with many students from one department minoring in the other, and we have one joint PhD candidate, Yong Auh. Moreover, one philosophy faculty member, Michael Dunn, has recently been appointed an adjunct professor in computer science. Philosophy has been centrally involved in the plans to create a cognitive science program. Obviously, a good computer environment is important to both the form and substance of these interdisciplinary ventures.

Philosophy alumni newsletter

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Monica Holland, *Noûs* editorial assistant, cuts a birthday cake with the help of Hector Castañeda. The party marked *Noûs*'s 30th anniversary.

Tell us about yourself . . .

Pass along the latest about yourself to the Philosophy alumni newsletter, Indiana University Alumni Association, IMU M-17, Bloomington, IN 47405. Use this form for address correction.

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Mike Morgan with his 1987 High School Summer Philosophy Institute. His graduate assistants were Stephen Hicks and Monica Holland. The institute hosted 27 students from seven states during June this year.

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