11 October 07

Professional Development Grant Committee
c/o Provost’s Office
Westmont College

Dear Committee:

This is to report on the activities supported by my Professional Development Grant for Summer, 2007.

In my application of 07 November 06, I applied for support for two projects:

1. **Primary project**: to write and/or edit three research papers in philosophy, on topics in ethics, epistemology and moral epistemology. I undertook to produce, by the end of the summer, complete drafts of all three papers, ready for submission to good, refereed journals in philosophy during the Fall Semester.

**Results**: I did indeed write and/or edit three research papers in philosophy and began sketching a fourth. Two of these papers were ones that I proposed in my application, but the third paper was not one of the ones I originally proposed. (I was seized with inspiration to write on a particular topic and decided to go for it instead of the originally proposed paper.)

**“Rossian Epistemology”** (9,599 words)
- I edited and fine-tuned this paper for presentation at conferences and submission to refereed journals.
- I presented it at the international conference on “The Value of Knowledge” at the Free University of Amsterdam in August 2007 and was encouraged by the response it received there.
- I also presented it at the UCSB Department of Philosophy Discussion Group (the “Santa Barbarians”) in October 2007.
- I have recently submitted it for consideration by *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, and am awaiting their response.

**“Utilitarianism’s Missing Thought”** (5,900 words)
- This is a new paper I researched and wrote over the summer.
- I have sent it to philosophy colleagues at other institutions in the UK and USA (CM Coope and GR Lang, Leeds; Roger Crisp, Oxford; JLA Garcia, Boston College; D McNaughton, Florida State), for comment, and will continue to work on it during the coming year.
- I am scheduled to present it to our Departmental Philosophy Colloquium in October 2007.

**“Y and Z are Not Off the Hook: a modest adjustment to the survival lottery”** (2454 words)
- This is a new paper I researched and wrote over the summer, and was inspired by some material that I teach in my ethics classes (John Harris’s infamous 1972 paper, “The Survival Lottery”)
- I have sent it to philosophy colleagues in the UK and USA for comment, and will continue to work on it during the coming year
- I have recently submitted it for consideration by *Utilitas* (a Cambridge University Press journal devoted to discussion of utilitarian ethics) and am awaiting their response.
- I have also submitted this paper for the 2008 Meetings of the Pacific Division of the APA, and am awaiting their response.

**“Reply to Denyer on Agent-centered Restrictions”** (bonus!)
• This will be a new paper, but I have only begun to sketch ideas for it. Cambridge philosopher Nicholas Denyer has recently argued that utilitarians are, contrary to received opinion, committed to “agent-centered restrictions” or “agent-relative constraints”. This is important, because recognition of ARCs is taken to be both a distinguishing feature of deontological theories and embarrassment for them. Though I am no friend of utilitarianism, I am pretty sure that Denyer’s argument is mistaken and that I can show this.

2. Secondary project: to reflect on my research plans in the medium-term, and to consider whether my move to Westmont could or should be an occasion to change directions of these research plans. (For example, should I continue to write academic papers on topics in ethics, epistemology and moral epistemology, or should I consider projects that would have a more directly ‘Christian’ audience or that would integrate my research work more closely with my undergraduate teaching?)

Result: I have indeed reflected on this matter and concluded that, for the foreseeable future, I can contribute best to Westmont’s intellectual culture by continuing to do what I’ve always done: write academic papers in my areas of expertise. Partly this is a matter of reflecting on what I am inclined to do and what I think I’m good at, but it also reflects the encouraging feedback I’ve received on some of my recent work.

In conclusion: I am moderately pleased with what I accomplished during the Summer of 2007 and grateful to the College for supporting me in my work.

Yours sincerely,

Mark T. Nelson
Monroe Professor of Philosophy

(copies of papers attached)