

# **Sexagesimus**

**A Compendium of Tributes  
from Friends, Students, and  
Colleagues to Michael  
Hauskeller on his 60th  
Birthday**

Teodora Manea Hauskeller

### Intersections

We like to believe that our life is driven by us, mainly chasing different aims that we set up in a rational manner. *We* decide what to do and when, we try to always make the best choices. This is because upon us there is the burden of rationality. We are taught continuously that we are *rational creatures*, that this is our essence, and it should be reflected in our every act. What contradicts rationality is sanctioned, not only as being *irrational* or *mad*, but also understood as a threat to community or common good.

As a base for decisions, rationality is praised; its manifestation is what we call, a 'rational argument'.

At the same time, rationality acts as the tacit premise of individuality. From the doctrine of 'free will' to the principles of today's societies, the ghosts of rationality and individualism prod us constantly with tacit reproaches of our daily mistakes. More than that, increasingly, the AI shames us that even our best 'intelligent' decisions and results are slow, if not suboptimal.

However, looking back at my life, even if I thought that I always took the best decisions, the occasion for having to make decisions did come as a result of what I call here *intersections*. Intersections are kind of events that happen outside our direct choices, in complex networks of causes, people, objects or animals, dreams and wars, natural disasters or revelations.

Intersections are contingent and incidental and yet they can be called fate or luck. (This might give the impression that they are somehow necessary or inevitable.)

I argue that probably in the same way or even more that we are the product of our decisions, we are woven into the fabric of this world by our intersections.

I chose to write about this for Michael, because our lives intersected 20 years ago in Hannover. My trajectory towards Hannover started by my decision to turn to the right corridor, instead of taking the usual left one that I used when going to my office. The same distance, only that this one went through the Department of Letters, where on the wall there was a scholarship advert. Many, many contingent details led to the intersections of our paths and lives. They include: a tick carrying borreliosis, a drunken Russian pseudo-philosopher, a mad bishop, some Canadians, and half of pizza marinara.

From the perspective of our significant intersections, the myth of individualism dissipates into every creature that at a certain point of our life formed with us a meaningful connection. We are them and we are in them. We do not share only a path or an event, but we share a sort of *pneuma*, a breath of air and fire. The *breath of air* is the breath of life with its fragility and beauty, but also literally it is what we do when we are together with others, from our children and partners to our students. And we share the *breath of fire*, the energy and the inspiration that can come not only from people but also from books, from objects and creatures that can make us want for tomorrows.

Back to the rationality I ruffled at the beginning of this text. I didn't want to stab the very soul of philosophy, at least of some *academic* philosophy. But the image of intellect and will Schopenhauer had created, changed forever my view of rationality in my third year of philosophy study. The metaphor I am referring to is the one of the Will as a *blind giant* who carries the Intellect as a *sighted lame man* on his shoulder. The 'lame man' always looks backwards and provides postfactum reasons for decisions already taken by the Will, defending its actions. Without further exploring Schopenhauer's psychological intuitions, he captured the place and stature of our rationality in comparison with passions, emotions, greed, power, or just the 'breath of fire' generated by our encounters, by our significant intersections.

Michael's philosophy is found under many topics, from atmosphere to enhancement, from the meaning of life to ethics, a sensitivity to things that remained at the edge of some established roads of thinking. His 'truffles' grow in a symbiotic manner, as lucky intersections of life.

Alex Badman-King

### Uneasy Ataraxia

When I first set about looking for a PhD supervisor in earnest, I had already become fairly familiar with the world of academia, it didn't impress me much. That might seem like an unhappy state for a prospective PhD student to be in, to be both actively seeking to deepen my role in that world and to have such a low opinion of it. But, for two reasons, there's really no contradiction in that tension: I had spent a year as a trainee teacher in local schools and was quite certain I wanted to delay getting a real job for as long as possible and, secondly, I love philosophy, I love philosophy more than life itself. There are quite probably some professional philosophers for whom that professed love seems like wanton hyperbole, for some of them it will be their occupation, perhaps a cherished occupation, but only one thing amongst many important things in their life. For others that professed love might seem conceptually confused because, for them, philosophy is not something pursued out of positive emotional connection but, rather, out of something more like inexorable compulsion: a drive (often uncomfortable) to clarify ideas, arguments and thoughts-diverse. I suspect Michael might express some of these rejoinders.

But I do love philosophy, or, rather, I love wisdom, and I think that old sobriquet (now disciplinary title) is singularly apt as far as I am concerned. I am sure that many of those Argives who coined and honed the phrase were thinking of wisdom as a collection of knowledge, and that's fair enough (knowledge is good), but I am equally sure that many of those later Hellenes who most potently came to embody philosophy meant something other than mere knowledge as the thing they loved. Wisdom is a state of being, one which is more difficult than almost any other to characterise, describe, appreciate or understand. It has something to do with trying to be a good person (or to live a good life), and it has something to do with the thoughtfulness with which one goes about that attempt. Wisdom has something to do with what someone knows, but (at the risk of voicing a Socratic cliché) it has even more to do with what they do not know and what role that lack of knowledge has in how they go about life. Wisdom is about honesty and humility. The reason I had such a low opinion of academia was that I found in its ranks so much knowledge, so much profession of knowledge, so much confidence and self-promotion, and yet, because of all that, so little wisdom.

Perhaps other hopeful postgraduates have a finely honed shortlist of potential PhD supervisors (I know they do), experts in their chosen field, folk who have accrued all the knowledge which will be most useful to them in their own quest for knowledge (and to prove they have such knowledge), I had no such list. I trawled through their public profiles, those little online blurbs which academics offer to describe their expertise, research interests, and potential PhD supervision areas. Countless fluttering banners in all the brilliant colours of achievement and grand ambition. And there,

amongst all that pomp and distinction, I found it. One person who, when asked what they do, what they are good at, what they are interested in, what they are selling to the world said: 'I'm not sure really'. It said a little more than that, there was a paragraph, but that was the gist of it: 'I'm not altogether sure what I am doing, but I think I am trying to understand life a bit better'. I can still recall my palpable joy and relief as I sat at my little desk in the middle of West Wales. It was a bit like that scene in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (not that I wish to liken Michael to Christ or my fellow philosophers to National Socialists) but why was everyone else picking up those gaudy, golden, bejewelled chalices when this little brown vessel is so clearly the cup of a philosopher? Here it is, right here; if you drink from those ghastly things you're sure to shrivel up and crumble, I shall take this unassuming option. Here, seemingly alone, is a little bit of honest humility in a sea of self-aggrandising guff, that's the supervisor for me. Here is a man who might help me to better understand wisdom and, perhaps, to better negotiate this world of academia which, despite its supposed purpose, seems so peculiarly ill-suited to that ancient and admirable pursuit.

And I think it worked. Through Michael's help I was able to begin my PhD with him as my supervisor, and with his continued guidance and assistance I was able to complete that project and gain employment as a professional academic. I am enormously grateful. More importantly, however, that sterile description of 'completing my project' entails a better understanding (and practice) of wisdom, and that was done, in part, through witnessing part of Michael's own quest for that elusive grail.

The original philosophers had many versions of wisdom, and my own pursuit has focused mainly on moral knowledge. That moralistic, Neoplatonism does not mirror Michael's stance, and this, I think, is telling. I have been unfortunate enough to witness, on occasion, the unfolding ramifications of the academic culture of self-promotion and arrogance upon the lives and work of PhD students. Supervisors possessed of insufficient humility, of insufficient wisdom, will see fit to pressure their scholarly mentees into positions which match their own, little versions of themselves who can flow out into the world as evangelists of their good message. Not so Michael, who certainly demanded rigour, and was always ready with critique, but never an imposed conclusion. But it is not this quality of wisdom (that many faceted philosopher's jewel) which I wish to describe here, not humility, or kindness, not even honesty (although each face of the stone coheres necessarily to the others); Michael does display all of these in different ways but it is, instead, what might be the most intangible of all wisdom's aspects which Michael displays most prominently. Ataraxia came to dominate many of the ancient conversations around wisdom and the purpose of philosophy. For the Epicureans and Stoics (those grand old foes) this mercurial condition was the very essence of wisdom and purpose of their way of life. This concept is often translated as 'serenity' or 'tranquillity', perhaps even 'calmness', and as we read ancient sources and their commentators, we will often get the impression of monk-like, imperturbable contentedness as the end goal of philosophy. This is perhaps

more familiar to modern public imagination as a defining feature of Buddhist schools of philosophy, like Zen, but the principles are similar. And now anyone who knows Michael might wonder what on earth I am talking about. Honesty, sure; humility, fine; kindness, okay; but Zen calm? That doesn't fit. Indeed, if that cartoonish version of ataraxia is what we are doomed to work with, then I agree that it isn't much use for this praise of Michael, but I don't think it is very much use in understanding wisdom either. This is a vision of Ataraxia which is in no small part due to the overwhelming influence of Stoicism in the common conception of these Hellenistic concepts and I have never been thrilled by that predominance. There's far more to this idea which is useful, and Michael helped me to understand that complexity.

The problem with the traditional, ascetic vision of ataraxia is that it can seem alien, cold, disengaged, glassy-eyed and cultish; there's not enough room for convivial warmth, good humour, human concerns and personal passions. What might ataraxia look like if it were far more human? Is that possible? Is there any virtue left in a quality which seems to be all about not being disturbed? I think there is, and I think some of it can be captured by Mark Manson's description of 'The Subtle Art of not Giving a F\*ck'. Another word which I think can be helpful here is 'perspective'. 'Perspective' is a helpful concept because 'not giving a f\*ck' can just seem like crude semantic trickery to get out of the solemn hollowness of ataraxia's more established translations. If no f\*cks are given then aren't we back where we started? Don't we want a well-rounded human being to give quite a few f\*cks in the right places? And that's where 'perspective' helps because that is all about being discriminating in where the f\*cks are given. And that is where Michael acted as something of an oasis for me, in that academic sea of misallocated f\*cks. Static ataraxia: all-encompassing, complete, homogenous, serene, at ease and inhuman is a frightening prospect but a well-grounded sense of what really matters in life, and an allocation of mental and emotional energy and time to those things seems both achievable and desirable. But not easy.

The trouble with a discriminating disregard for inconsequential events is that it is always at work, and it often gets things wrong. A perfectly discriminating sense of perspective might be just as alien as the zombieish tranquillity of the Stoic sage, so a constant struggle (often subtle and unseen) is part of a worthwhile and uneasy state of confidence in what really matters. I think Michael does this quite well. To live and work in an industry which is constructed out of so much misplaced concern, and to maintain a keen sense of what really matters is an impressive feat, and far more impressive given that this is not mere survival, but a thriving enjoyment. Michael is very good at the academic game, and although its framework may be suffused with inconsequential politics, misplaced confidence, self-promotion and Byzantine bureaucracies, he manages, time and again, to place genuinely philosophical pieces onto the board. And, of course, he is not entirely alone. Philosophy, as an academic discipline, contains a gratifying number of wise (or wisdom seeking) people (still too

few), and Michael's proficiency in playing the game means that others, like-minded lovers of wisdom, have a rallying point in him by which their own glass beads may be played.

One of the most compelling forms which Michael's uneasy ataraxia takes (or perhaps a closely allied facet of wisdom) is a sense of humour. It was through spending time with Michael, and discussing my work with him, that I came to better appreciate the extent to which perspective and humour are so closely allied as to be almost identical. And this happens in two ways: first, when difficulties which have hitherto seemed important, are suddenly seen in the context of far more important things, that swift diminishment is funny. The release from fear and tension, coupled with the image of the hitherto giant monster reduced to a yapping puppy, is best expressed in terms of laughter. But secondly, the joy of silliness and laughter is itself, properly understood, one of the most important things in life, and a keen sense of perspective will inevitably mean that more room is given in life for humour. This not only means seeking out and focusing on silly things (as contradictory as that may seem) but also, and more importantly, always being ready to see the funny side of things, because that is often the more truthful side.

Some people report to me that their experience as a PhD student was gruelling, filled with anxiety and intellectual chores, mine was not and I owe a large part of that to Michael. Conversations were productive, but they were almost always occasions of some laughter, and away from those conversations I was never pushed into the impression that my tasks were of such defining significance that I must devote my soul entire to their execution. And yet my achievements were never diminished by that levity, there was always sufficient gravity. And this is another part of this inherently contradictory puzzle that is the quest for wisdom. Gravity and levity, significance and silliness, truth and triviality, achievement and humility, discrimination and disregard, they all are in constant tension in this uneasy ataraxia.

Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes

Some Anecdotes about Michael Hauskeller

Due to a shared interest in the works of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, but more especially Alfred North Whitehead, Michael became my doctoral supervisor at the University of Exeter in 2015. My thesis was on panpsychism – the view that minds were ubiquitous in Nature. This was quite radical, at the time at least, but Michael was more than happy to explore this viewpoint with me, following wherever the path of reason led. In terms of sentiment, Michael also seemed concerned with the plight of minds alien to us: I recall that in the first get-together I attended of Michael's PhD students, the first twenty minutes were devoted to frantically, yet harmlessly, freeing a bee that was on the loose in his office.

These regular fortnightly meetings with Michael and fellow postgrads were without question the greatest aspect of university life for me. Here we read and tore apart paper after paper. Seldom did we accept a paper's arguments, seldom did we agree with one another about those arguments. It was disagreeable merriment – and as such a manifestation, arguably, of a noble ideal of university life.

Michael was known to be somewhat Teutonic in his manner of straight talking: truth trumped courtesy when it came to matters of philosophy. For me this was wonderful: I just wanted to know what was what, and what should be not. Parallel to this manner, however, was Michael's great humour and general conviviality which, combined with his expertise and freethinking, enamoured everyone to him.

Just before I began my PhD with Michael at Exeter, I had written a book about the philosophical aspects of psychedelic experience. I had asked Michael if he would be willing to give a little review for marketing, which he was more than willing to do. As part of the review he wrote the following, "I greatly enjoyed this book, especially the opening essay 'Myco-Metaphysics: a Philosopher on Magic Mushrooms' ... My only problem is that now I can't stop thinking about those mushrooms, feeling greatly tempted to try them myself." To my knowledge, Michael never did try this novel form of phenomenology, yet I do not know what happened after he left Exeter. Regardless, I hope he had a magical time in Liverpool, and I'm sure, in philosophy at least, he will attain higher and higher states of consciousness.



Lewis Coyne

My thinking first intersected with Michael's back in 2012 when I read his book *Biotechnology and the Integrity of Life*.

I'd been looking for references in English-language works of philosophy to Hans Jonas, who I was considering making the subject of my PhD thesis. Even though Jonas is only mentioned a couple of times in *Biotechnology and the Integrity of Life*, Google's search algorithm deemed the latter relevant to my needs and duly brought it to my attention. I quickly read the whole book, which led me to the blog that Michael used to write on pretty much anything and everything of philosophical interest. On the basis of both book and blog I applied to do a PhD at Exeter under Michael's supervision, and so that first intersection led to a second.

As that first intersection was the most consequential, it raises the question of what it was that I saw and admired in his work. I think I could pinpoint three features in particular, features that to me define philosophy as it should be done.

The first is Michael's style of writing, which is clear without being dry, and rooted in a deep learning that is nevertheless worn lightly. This is difficult to achieve but ought, in my opinion, to be a standard aspiration of academic philosophers. Perhaps another way of understanding this stylistic balance is as a combination of the best of both Germanic and Anglophone philosophy. The former has tended to prize depth of learning, and rightly so, but this is difficult to pair with a lightness of expression. Anglophone philosophy, by contrast, has tended to prize clarity – often to a fault, since it frequently veers into aridity. Michael's writing succumbs to neither's pitfalls, but instead combines the best of both, and it struck me then – and strikes me now – as a model of good philosophical writing.

The second feature of Michael's work that defined that first intersection – insofar as it was exactly what I was looking for in a doctoral supervisor – was its openness to ideas that lie slightly outside the boundaries of mainstream Anglophone philosophy. As mentioned, the book in question was titled *Biotechnology and the Integrity of Life*, and it was the latter half of that title that appealed most. In fact, the topic of biotechnology interested me – and I think Michael too – pretty much *because* it illuminates the concepts of integrity and dignity as they apply to living beings. This was something of a revelation to me, as I'd been raised in the tradition of philosophical ethics that concerns itself almost exclusively with benefits, harms, and human dignity. I was well aware that ethics was, or could be, so much more than this, but I didn't then have the vocabulary to express what this 'more' really was. I found that vocabulary in large part through Michael's work, which to me approaches philosophical ethics in the right way.

The third and final feature of Michael's work that strikes me as exactly right follows from the second, but is broader and harder to explain. If pushed I would describe it as *taking the world seriously*. His writing – from those books and blog posts, through to

*The Meaning of Life and Death* – is always engaged with the richness of the world, its ambiguity, and its puzzles. This means not looking at the world through the lens of disciplinary debates, but rather the other way around: starting with the world itself and then moving to theory, all the while keeping the world in view. This attentiveness is, to my mind, the wellspring of philosophy, and the test of any good philosophy is how well it can enact it. Certainly this is true of any worthwhile ethics, since what it explores is the moral texture of the world, the way that good and bad, right and wrong manifest in the unfolding of things. Of course, being able to write in the manner that I described above is one of the best ways of actually doing philosophy that takes the world seriously – and so style and subject matter are intimately connected.

For me this ultimately defines the appeal that Michael's work has, is what marks him out as a genuine philosopher, and is why I am grateful to have had him as my doctoral supervisor.

Thomas Schramme

### Hauskeller on Mill on Higher Pleasures

Michael is of course well-known for his work on the meaning of life. In pursuing a side project, he published an interesting article on John Stuart Mill's defence against the charge that utilitarianism is a "doctrine worthy only of swine" (Mill 1861, 210; Hauskeller 2011). The objection takes issue with Mill's hedonist version of utilitarianism, which sees pleasure as the final aim of life. Indeed, many people feel that some things humans do are more valuable than others, and that these differences in prudential value are not simply due to their experienced value. There seems to be a certain shallowness in hedonist theories of prudential value, as epitomised in Bentham's statement that childish games have no more intrinsic value than reading poetry. Mill's defence depends on the distinction between higher and lower pleasures. Michael argues that Mill's argument fails. I want to defend Mill. I believe Michael assumes an argumentative goal that Mill does not need to pursue, namely that a human life is nobler than an animal life.

Michael states the following aim for Mill: "In order to counter the objection, it needs to be shown not only that utilitarianism allows for a difference between human and animal pleasures, but also that human pleasures are in some way higher, better or nobler, that is, more worthy of being desired and pursued (not merely for humans because of the way they are constituted, but in themselves) than animal pleasures" (Hauskeller 2011, 430). This is an interesting way of seeing Mill's purpose, because it interprets the swine-objection not metaphorically but literally. Animal pleasures are not simply seen as metaphors for allegedly lowly human pleasures, the proverbial sex and drugs and rock'n'roll. According to Michael, Mill needs not merely a distinction between different levels of value for human pleasures, but an argument that establishes the higher value of human pleasures over animal pleasures.

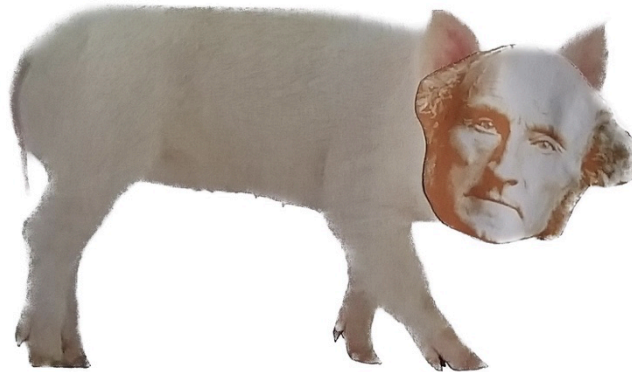
Mill's argument regarding higher pleasures is notorious for raising numerous philosophical riddles and potentially containing logical howlers. I think these accusations are wrong, but this is not the time to defend Mill in all respects. My focus is on the already mentioned point about comparing animal and human pleasures, because this is Michael's addition to the elaborate philosophical discussion about Mill's qualitative hedonism. Michael concludes: "what a utilitarian *cannot* do is show that the life of a human being is better than the life of an animal in the sense of being *nobler* or *more dignified*" (Hauskeller 2011, 245; emphasis in original).

To establish the idea of higher pleasures for humans, Mill needs an assumption about the proper form of human life, a kind of Aristotelian move, as Michael acknowledges. Such a move is, of course, itself contested and it might undermine Mill's hedonist credentials. But be that as it may, the argument does not need to establish the higher value of human pleasures over animal pleasures. Humans that roll around in mud, eat roots and rub their back against trees do not live a human life in the normative sense

of *human*. But that does not mean that living a human life is better, nobler or more dignified than living an animal life. We do not need to compare animal lives and human lives when pursuing an argument that aims at establishing higher pleasures for humans. Animals do not feature in this debate, except metaphorically. When Mill says that it is better to be a dissatisfied human than a satisfied pig, he means that a human is better off leading a life according to the human life-form. He does not say that the pig life-form is inferior. In short, Mill does not need to endorse the "belief in the inherent superiority of the human mode of existence" (Hauskeller 2011, 446).

Hauskeller, Michael, 2011. No Philosophy for Swine: John Stuart Mill on the Quality of Pleasures. *Utilitas* 23 (4), pp: 428-446.

Mill, John Stuart, 1861. Utilitarianism. In: *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society; Collected Works of John Stuart Mill X*. Toronto (1969), 203-259.



Richard Gaskin

I am delighted to contribute to the celebration of Michael's sixtieth birthday. Michael has been a truly outstanding head of department, conscientious, committed, and efficient. He is passionate about the well-being of the department, and has a strong desire to see it work both for the students and for the staff. His drive and energy have communicated itself to us all. He really wants to see the department playing in the premier league: in short, he is the Jürgen Klopp of Liverpool Philosophy (Heaven forbid he is about to announce his retirement!). He is also a world-class researcher and publisher with an academia page and h-index that makes the rest of us terribly envious. We are very lucky to have him leading us, and I wish him all health and success in the coming years!

Simon Hailwood

In the summer of 2017, on the day when we were interviewing for a new Head of Department in the SoTA library, it was pouring with rain (I seem to remember thunder and lightning). At one point a rather intimidating figure burst into the room. He was big, bearded and bedraggled, and not in the best of moods having rushed up from Lime Street without a raincoat or umbrella, dodging into doorways to avoid the worst of the downpour. This was by a long way the scariest interviewee. Actually it was more like we were the interviewees ('you're the Director of Research, aren't you, then how come...?'). For those on the departmental interview panel this was our first encounter with the one and only Michael Hauskeller, and we anticipated his arrival as HoD in the following year with a certain amount of trepidation. How lucky we are that this turned out to be a completely unfounded anxiety.

Michael has been easily one of the best Heads we've had in my (quite long) experience of life in the Department. As a leader he is always determined to encourage his colleagues to do their best, and support them accordingly, and has been terrier-like in engaging with the wider University to advance Departmental interests (special achievements here include our move to an excellent new building that is a vast improvement on our previous location, and the increase in staff in recent years).

As a philosopher, Michael's work is similarly impressive and rooted in life as a practical business the meaning of which requires vigorous but careful exploration, and indeed affirmation. Michael's work is admirably immune to the disciplinary temptation to reduce philosophy to a set of abstract puzzles insulated from personal and social life. His approach is an inspiring one and I have learned a lot from it. On a personal level too I have found Michael a truly supportive and thoughtful presence through times of difficulty. Thank you, Michael. You're an excellent colleague and a great collaborator in this, let's face it, pretty weird, enterprise of academic philosophy.

Happy Birthday, and Many Happy Returns! If I could make just one suggestion: don't forget to keep a raincoat or umbrella to hand in case of sudden summer downpours!

Nikos Gkogkas

Dear Michael, on the special occasion of your sixtieth birthday, I wish you every joy and pleasure that you may fancy! I really thank you for the rich and varied ways in which you have contributed to the wellbeing and the success of our little academic home at Liverpool Philosophy. And beyond this, my family and I feel really lucky to count you and your family among our friends. I hope that my slightly more extended speech at the Departmental event in your honour only adds to the happiness of the day!

Daniel Hill

Thank you, Michael, for keeping such a steady hand on the Department's tiller as we navigated some choppy waters over the past few years. The Department has never been in better hands than it is at the moment, and you have transformed the place both by fighting for us at the higher levels and by working hard to forge an atmosphere of collegiality among ourselves, not to forget your efforts to improve the student experience. Your work ethic and your light touch have combined to make Philosophy at Liverpool a growing, thriving, and desirable place in which to work. To speak personally, your friendship and support have meant a huge amount to me and to my family, and made a big difference to us. As they say in Romania, *la multi ani* – we hope that you'll keep leading us for many years to come.

Chris Bartley

Barry may have read more works of science fiction. The predecessor Michael has probably spent more hours in contemplation. Rachael, I daresay, is the more accomplished synchronic swimmer. Daniel has admitted more undergraduates. Thomas may have scored more goals, and Richard scanned more dactylic hexameters. But these trifles should not distract us from our central purpose, which is that of offering glory, laud and honour to one who has been an inspiring head of department during troublous times. Not only has Michael supported us as colleagues at work, but he has also demonstrated a supererogatory generosity of spirit in welcoming us all into his and Teo's home and family. It is the concern for Loretta and me during the past three years for which I am most deeply grateful and which is the measure of the man.

Rachael Wiseman

Happy birthday Michael! It's been lovely getting to know you over the last six years (so long!) and to see the department flourish under your care. I had a look back through my inbox and found your first message to the department, just after your appointment: "May your research plans bear rich fruit, may your students be smart and have a keen interest in what you have got to teach them, may you enjoy your work, and may you have enough time left for family and friends" (Hauskeller 2018). Wishing this all back at you for the coming year! Rachael

Robin McKenna

Happy birthday to you, Michael. Being head of any department must be a thankless task. Being head of a philosophy department must be an even more thankless task. We philosophers style ourselves as independent spirits, as free thinkers. We're opinionated and we like to argue. We're not always the most tactful. We can be pedantic. All to the good, then, that we have a dedicated and passionate leader like you. Someone with a vision for what the department can be, and with plans for making it happen. Someone who is supportive of us, who is enthusiastic about our ideas. Someone who can answer (and send!) emails at all hours of the day and night. I'm sorry I can't be there tonight for the celebrations, but let me just express my personal gratitude for the support you have given me over the years and wish you all the best for the years to come.

Vid Simoniti:

Dear Michael, Proust often comments on the competing demands of intellectual and social life. Describing how salons at Mme Swann, where he was socializing with Bergotte and other writers, took him away from the hard work necessary to write, he says: "And yet the assumption that anyone can be dispensed from having to create that talent for himself, from within himself, and can acquire it from someone else, is as erroneous as to suppose that a man can keep himself in good health (in spite of neglecting all the rules of hygiene and of indulging in the worst excesses) merely by dining out often in the company of a physician."

And yet, I would add, our Philosophy department offers a riposte to Proust here: it contains precisely the company that is conducive to intellectual creativity (even if going for Stapledon dinners sadly does not absolve us from solitary hard work....). This is in no small part thanks to you. Thank you so much for creating a wonderful, collegial place where it is so easy to thrive. On your personal jubilee, I wish you all the very best, happiness, health and creative spirit in spades.

Tom Bunyard

Dear Michael, Happy birthday. Thanks very much indeed for the help that you have provided. The dramas, fights and redundancies at Brighton last summer made for a very difficult and worrying period, and I'm extremely grateful for the welcome and support that you and other colleagues have offered here at Liverpool. I've not been here long, but I can already see just how much effort and commitment you put into making this department flourish, and how appreciated those efforts are. Thanks, and very best wishes, Tom.

Laura Gow

Dear Michael

Happy Birthday!

I hope you enjoy celebrating it!

You definitely deserve some fun and relaxation after working so tirelessly for us all.

It's amazing how much you have done for the department - the new building and all the staff hires (I wouldn't have a job without you so I'm particularly grateful for that!) But even more importantly, you are always so wonderfully supportive. It's lovely having a head of department who I know will help me sort out problems if they arise, and will encourage me in going after opportunities to further my career.

Your guidance has helped to create a happy and collegial department and I am so pleased to be a part of it. So, thank you for being an inspiring and thoughtful leader, and for genuinely caring about us all.

Wishing you a fantastic birthday celebration!

Laura



J'Annine Jobling

Many happy returns, Michael, and wishing you all the best. Thank you for your personal and professional support -- you know we value your leadership greatly since we mithered (good Northern word, that) until you and management agreed you'd stay on as Head!

Jon Bebb

Happy birthday Michael, I've had a very warm welcome to the department, thank you for creating such a supportive environment

John Adams

Happy Birthday, Michael. Thank you for all your help and encouragement. John

Tom Whyman:

Happy birthday, Michael, the only boss I've ever had who's doubled the length of my contract before I've even met him in person. Grateful to you every day for inviting me to be a part of such a great, welcoming department.

Tarek Yusari

Michael, even though I've only met you briefly, I look forward to my time in the department under your leadership. I wish you the best for your 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. PS: I've now completed all the mandatory training!

Ian Dunbar

The Department has flourished greatly under his leadership. In Gillian Howie house it is a case of: si monumentum requiris, circumspice.

Katherine Furman

Happy Birthday! Thank you so much for being our head of department And thank you so much for bringing me to lovely Liverpool! I hope that you have a "boss" time!

Liam Shore

Happy Birthday, Michael! Thank you for your patience over the years. I've enjoyed our discussions on our common interest subject of transhumanism. I'm looking forward to the many more to come.

Barry Dainton:



Yiota Vassilopoulou

Dear Michael, under your headship the department has flourished as what one of your predecessors, Stephen Clark, termed a *parliament of souls*. "Access to the common is not direct: we may naively believe that 'we' are solid, coloured, noisy objects rattling around within a directly perceived universe, and so ignore the vast worlds of delight hidden away in others. Birds are not small brown fluttering objects any more than persons are identical with what we see or touch or hear". With many thanks for your support over the years and best wishes for your birthday, Yiota.

Elias Markolefas

