

Presidential Address (during the Lauener Prize Award Ceremony 2009)

Ladies and gentlemen,

It's a pleasure to welcome you to this year's Lauener Prize-Giving Ceremony.

As many of you may know, the Lauener Foundation annually awards a prize for analytical philosophy. The prize is given alternately in recognition of an outstanding oeuvre (a life's work) and in recognition of the promising achievement of a young talent in Analytical Philosophy.

We are proud to be awarding for the third time the Prize for Young Talents. It gives us particular pleasure to hold this ceremony as part of the SOPHA Conference. I am certain that our prize-giving and the conference both aim at encouraging the rising generation of philosophers to keep on working in the best traditions of academic philosophy.

At this point, let me say a few words about the founder of our institution.

Henri Lauener had two hearts in one breast: On the one hand he was hard-working, single-minded, serious and very persistent; on the other hand he really knew how to enjoy life to the full: fine food, good wine... In his student days, he was called the "weekend bohemian". And he remained true to that attitude all his life. Near here, at the other end of Lake Geneva, at Baugy (next to Montreux), he spent most of his vacations, devoting himself to his work, the elaboration of his "Open Transcendentalism". For days, he kept on working without leaving the house, eating directly out of the cooking pot. At these times he did not read any newspaper, and he did not listen to music (jazz, beside philosophy, was his elixir of life). But then, when he'd had enough of it, he left the house to abandon himself to the pleasure of fine eating in one of the nearby restaurants. Though we had to put up with his severity and bluntness during the semester, all this ambiguity of his made him an approachable and loveable person to us.

Lauener had a strong interest in fostering young talents, and he always kept a direct line to his students. On the other hand, he was well aware that only a few of them would remain true to philosophy. There is clearly a great risk that after finishing their studies, young philosophers lose heart to continue their pursued course. They have to get over too many hurdles: Apart from having difficulties with publications that need to be accepted, with rare job opportunities sought-after by large numbers of applicants, etcetera, many young philosophers have trouble with earning their living. The Lauener Foundation hopes to smooth a bit the way for at least a few promising young philosophers.

We are pleased that this year's Lauener Prize for Young Talents goes to Stephan Leuenberger.

I wish you all a very pleasant evening.