

May 14, 2013

The Virtual Lab for Prior Studies: A Letter of Invitation

When A.N. Prior died in 1969, he left a considerable number of unpublished items. Foremost among these are finished as well as unfinished manuscripts on philosophical problems with which he had been working over the years. He also left a substantial correspondence, mainly of a research-oriented nature. The collection however also includes a number of more personal but nonetheless interesting clues to Prior's interests at various stages of his career, for instance some scrap-books with pictures and paper cuttings.

Prior's Nachlass is now kept at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Several researchers have worked with the registration and annotation of the various items in the Prior Collection at the Bodleian. Per Hasle et al. have produced a comprehensive overview and description of the Nachlass, see www.prior.aau.dk.

A good deal of the material in the Bodleian Library has been published since Prior's death. However, there is still a significant number of interesting papers in the collection which should be made available for ongoing and future research into Prior's work.

With this letter, you are invited to take part in and contribute to this goal, and publish correspondingly on Prior and his work (provided that you fulfil a few conditions stated below).

The legal background of this invitation is a written permission from A.N. Prior's widow, Dr. Mary Prior, to the undersigned Per Hasle and Peter Øhrstrøm. The said permission allows us to publish in digital form all hitherto unpublished material from Prior's hand.

It should be mentioned that while the collection in the Bodleian Library contains the bulk of Prior's Nachlass, further relevant material is also kept at other places than Oxford, including Canterbury, New Zealand. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that Mary Prior died recently, which however does not invalidate the permission just mentioned.

In order to prepare this desirable publication, all significant papers should be transcribed and the texts should be enriched with relevant comments.

The Virtual Lab for Prior Studies (<http://research.prior.aau.dk>) has been established in order to carry out this work as a collective process. This means that interested Prior researchers invited by this letter can join the Lab and contribute to the production of the digital edition of Prior's hitherto unpublished papers.

The Virtual Lab for Prior Studies is a web-based environment which gives registered users access to digital photos of all items in the Prior Collection. The user will then be able to select one or more papers in the collection according to his/her interests and provided that they have not already been selected by other members of the Lab. The selected paper should then be transcribed and the text should be enriched with suitable comments. The functionalities of the virtual Lab have been designed to support this work. When this editorial work has been completed it will be subjected to a standard peer review process for which Per Hasle and Peter Øhrstrøm are responsible. After final approval the edited text will be part of the digital publication of Prior's nachlass. The editor's name will be clearly stated in the header of the digital publication. Any such annotated edition of a hitherto unpublished Prior text is of course at the same time a peer reviewed scientific publication by the relevant editor.

It is important to emphasise that most of the digital photos in The Virtual Lab for Prior Studies are the property of Bodleian Library, and the Lab has been formed in close cooperation with the Bodleian Library. For this reason, to obtain username and password to the Lab users must undertake the obligation not to use or in any way distribute the photos outside the scope of The Virtual Lab for Prior Studies. Moreover, all rules laid down by the Bodleian Library must be kept. For these reasons, and to ensure the relevant scientific background for joining this project, new members of the Lab should be approved by Per Hasle and Peter Øhrstrøm.

In order to take care of the practical matters regarding the production of the digital edition of Prior's papers a project group has been formed. The members of this project group are: Peter Øhrstrøm, Per Hasle, Volkmar Engerer, David Jakobsen, Jørgen Albretsen.

It is the ambition of the group to have the publication ready at the Prior centenary in Oxford in 2014.

Anybody interested in becoming a member of the Virtual Lab for Prior Studies should contact Jørgen Albretsen <jalb@hum.aau.dk>.

Kind regards

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