

2017-August-31

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL (CJENNINGS3@UCMERCED.EDU)

Professor Carolyn Dicey Jennings
Department of Philosophy
University of California, Merced
5200 N. Lake Road
Merced, CA 95343

Re: Brian Leiter

Dear Professor Jennings:

We are counsel to Professor Brian Leiter, and are assisting him in the forensic investigation of the circumstances related to the mailing of excrement to several philosophers last year. We have retained a forensic handwriting expert who has confirmed that handwriting on the packages received by Carrie Jenkins and by you were the same. We have already contacted one individual whom we suspect of possible involvement to seek a sample of his handwriting. Happily, he has agreed to cooperate. We would like to extend you the same opportunity. Please let us explain why we are doing so.

First, you have, in both social and traditional media, aggressively placed blame on Professor Leiter for sending the packages, unlike the other recipients or indeed other members of the academic community. Those actions have led two different academics to contact Professor Leiter to suggest that you might be the perpetrator.

Second, on October 22, 2016, you again cast suspicion on Professor Leiter via your own blog. In that blog posting, you falsely alleged that Professor Leiter had undertaken a “campaign of harassment” against you, referring to four of his blog postings over a two-year period (beginning in July 2014) in which Professor Leiter criticized, or quoted others criticizing, your public analysis of data about the academic job market in philosophy. (As you know, Professor Leiter also complimented your work in September 2015.) Your blog posting and hyper-sensitivity to Professor Leiter’s criticism of your analysis is a possible motive for seeking to discredit Professor Leiter.

Third, in that same blog posting, you acknowledged that “by chance” (as you put it) in June 2016—just weeks before the package was sent to Professor Jenkins—you filed a report with your University about “the events of 2014,” meaning Professor Leiter’s criticisms of your data analysis. That such a report would be filed *two years* after Professor Leiter’s criticisms and so close to the defamatory mailings is striking.

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Fourth, the photo of the package you allegedly received at your office in Merced and supplied to the media shows clearly that it had no postmark (which you also confirmed to be the case on social media). The lack of a postmark makes the claim that it was sent through the mail and received by you implausible.

Fifth, Professor Leiter was in Germany at a conference the day the malicious package to Carrie Jenkins was first “tracked” by USPS near Chicago O’Hare last year (June 23, 2016). It was public information that the conference Professor Leiter was attending began on June 24, but it was not public that he left Chicago on June 22. You took a surprising and keen interest in the timing of Professor Leiter’s attendance at the Conference, writing to an organizer of the Bonn conference in an effort to confirm Professor Leiter’s whereabouts that “The police are looking into it, attempting to get USPS involved, but they are skeptical they can get this information [about the travel itinerary] from Brian himself.” That is not true. The police expressed no such skepticism. Neither the police nor USPS ever contacted Professor Leiter about this matter—he was never a suspect, contacted both the police and USPS himself, and has been eager to get to the bottom of this attempt to defame him from the beginning. Had a law enforcement agency wanted that information, it could have easily obtained it from Professor Leiter himself or from the organizers of the Bonn Conference. They never did. Only you did, and we are skeptical that you would have been deputized to assist law enforcement in its investigation.

Finally, in addition to providing a handwriting sample, it would be useful in ruling out your participation to have documentation, such as a flight itinerary, of your whereabouts between June 18, when you left a conference in Buenos Aires, and June 23, 2016.

We have contacted others in the same effort and have been glad to have had some cooperation. Whatever grudge you may bear against Professor Leiter, we sincerely hope that you will take this opportunity (1) to exonerate yourself and (2) to aid our efforts to find the culprit by providing an existing sample of your handwriting (print, not cursive) that the handwriting expert can compare to the mailing labels. Any sample (for example letters, notes, or applications) verifiably dated prior to the date of this letter should be sufficient. You may of course white out or cross out any sensitive personal information.

If you have any other information that would aid in the investigation, we would welcome hearing that as well, and of course feel free to contact us with any questions. However, if we do not hear from you or your legal counsel by 2017-September-14, we will assume you are unwilling to cooperate, and will take instructions from our client to proceed accordingly.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JR Cahill". The initials "JR" are large and stylized, with "Cahill" written in a smaller, cursive script to the right.

John R. Cahill