



# RPA Newsletter 2019

Newsletter for the Radical Philosophy Association

10-28-19

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## Greetings from the Co-Coordinator

by Tanya Loughead and Brandon Absher

As we explained in our last newsletter, we envision this - the RPA Newsletter - to be our inward-looking document, circulated for member interest. On the other hand, the RPA has two more outward-focused publications: (1) Radical Philosophy Review (RPR), which is for scholarly articles and book reviews, and (2) RPA Mag, which is composed of short pieces that take a radical view on problems and issues in the contemporary world.

The RPA Mag is “meant for all our comrades” in that we encourage the style to be accessible and the content to be of interest to people outside of academic philosophy. The style is journalistic/blog-like with pieces ranging in length from 1000-2000 words each. Recent topics covered in the RPA Mag include student loan debt, immigration, intersectionality across activist movements, and a response to a New York Times piece that critiqued philosophers who sign petitions. We encourage pieces written by activists on movements and strategies. We also encourage radical takes on pop culture such as reviews of TV series, movies, or other art forms. Please send us your submissions and encourage your friends both in and outside academia - and even your students - to submit to the RPA Mag.

The RPR welcomes article and book review submissions and is currently seeking submissions for a special edition on the theme “The Radical Tradition, Politics, and Climate Change.” They are “particularly interested in papers addressing from a radical perspective questions like the following: What is politically necessary to prevent at this juncture disastrous climate change? Is the project feasible, how does it relate to struggles of climate justice, and how can the Left contribute to its realization? Why has effective carbon mitigation thus far been unsuccessful and what may happen politically if it continues to fall short? How should the Left respond to disaster capitalism, militarized adaption to climate change, and the like?” Please see their call for papers below.

The next RPA conference is starting to take shape! This conference will take place November 12-15, 2020 at San Jose State University in San José, CA. Our local hosts will be Carlos Alberto Sánchez, assisted by Cynthia Kaufman. Our conference program chair is Cory Wimberly. There is a longer piece included in the Newsletter from Cory wherein he notes that the conference theme will be: *Facing Catastrophe: Environment, Technology and Media*. The key theme of the conference is climate catastrophe. The conference committee also raises questions about technological and media catastrophes. What are the most effective means of engaging in activism in order to fight these catastrophes, especially global

warming? And what are the various actions that we ought to be taking - both as individuals and as social bodies - in order to fight global warming?

At the heart of the radical philosophical approach is the belief that theory and praxis are entwined. We work through philosophy in order to understand and - yes - change the world. In that vein, we would like all RPA members to consider two points as we prepare for RPA 2020: (1) encourage and contact activists to present at the conference –the goals of the RPA have never been merely scholarly/professional, and (2) let us be sure in facing environmental catastrophe that we not only write papers about global warming but also ask ourselves what we - as people in the world - are concretely doing or neglecting to do in the face of this catastrophe. Global warming is the most pressing concern where only “interpreting” the world rather “changing” it is a striking case of the negligence and arrogance of philosophers. We radical philosophers have to do better. As Greta Thunberg so powerfully tells us, we are collectively failing the younger generation of humans and in fact all species on the planet. We cannot be class reductionists on this point. Feminism, racism and speciesism are all entwined in the catastrophe of global warming.

In closing our letter, we'd like to note that a new membership option is now available. We noticed that during years when we have a conference, the membership numbers are higher than in years when we don't have conferences. We suspect that many of us can charge our university budgets with the organization membership fee along with the conference attendance fee. So now, we have a two-year membership option. Please renew your membership through the Philosophy Documentation Center.

In solidarity,

Tanya and Brandon

P.S. If anyone would like a hard copy of this newsletter, please email Tanya Loughead at [loughead@canisius.edu](mailto:loughead@canisius.edu) with your postal address.

## Tribute to Outgoing Secretary Richard Peterson

by Tanya Loughead and Brandon Absher



1 - (Photo credit, Gail Presbey)



2 - (Photo credit, Gail Presbey)

The co-coordinators on behalf of the RPA would like to thank Richard Peterson for his long service – decades of service! – to leading and organizing the RPA through his work as secretary. We have been fortunate to have such a dedicated and detail-oriented comrade in Dick. As secretary, he assiduously

took notes, kept records, and encourages all to run on track. His service reminds us all that changing the world is never merely a matter of good intentions, but of also showing up and doing the —sometimes exciting but often painstaking or tedious—work that all organizing requires. Dick, our friend, we send you a warm and well-deserved thank you!

## The Philosophical Is Political - A Response to Agnes Callard

by Tanya Loughead, Richard Schmitt, and Brandon Absher

In her recent opinion, "[Why Philosophers Shouldn't Sign Petitions](#)," Agnes Callard criticizes philosophers who choose to be "political" by writing or signing petitions. As Callard presents it, she was asked to sign a petition to oppose the practice of excluding philosophers from standard academic opportunities such as publishing or speaking because these philosophers held supposedly unpopular views about sex and gender.

This petition had to do with how philosophers treat each other. Philosophers, Callard asserts, should resolve such issues through reasoned debate, and not persuade each other by signing petitions in order to show how many people hold the same view.

The problem with this argument is that it misconstrues the purpose of petitions. Do you author or sign a petition to persuade people of the truth of your beliefs? We think not. When any of us mean to persuade our fellow philosophers, we write articles and books; we do not circulate petitions. Petitions are not meant to persuade. They call attention to issues or positions previously ignored by those in power.

Petitions show, if they work, that many, or many important, people share a belief, value or concern. Petitions demonstrate to people in power that a view they have been ignoring, because they think it does not deserve being taken seriously, has widespread support and should therefore be considered carefully. Petitions are political tools, not means of persuasion.

Callard calls our attention to two well-known logical fallacies which she associates with petitions, appeal to popular belief and appeal to authority. Undoubtedly, philosophers, like everyone else, should avoid bad reasoning. As radical philosophers, we are only too aware that unpopular ideas like communism, veganism, or unpopular sexual practices are not wrong just because most people in the USA disagree with or dislike them. And we certainly also believe that an opinion is not correct just because a well-known person says so (be that person Donald Trump or Judith Butler) —though, of course, the opinions of experts should be weighed very strongly when considering matters related to their field of expertise. But these are not good reasons to avoid signing petitions since their purpose is not, in the first instance, to persuade.

Philosophers have a duty, like everyone else, to oppose injustice wherever they may find it. This duty involves an active, practical component. Rendered as a faculty of abstract debate and impotent reflection, practical reason is anything but practical. All practical persuasion, regardless of its philosophical pedigree or basic soundness, must come to an end in some kind of decision. All of which is to say, debate, sure, and good arguments, absolutely. But also, at the end of the day, action in opposition to injustice.

As we see it, Callard’s fear of contaminating the purity of philosophy is symptomatic of a deeper misunderstanding. She believes that in order to be a good philosopher one needs to violate one’s moral obligation to oppose injustice and oppression. In the interest of “the core values of intellectual inquiry,” Callard claims, one needs to stay aloof when others are treated unjustly.

As leaders of the [Radical Philosophy Association](#) and editors of its online publication, the [RPA Mag](#), we, by contrast, support the overtly political aims of our organization. Further, we do not believe that there is a morally defensible way to be “a-political.” We agree with Iris Marion Young when she says that “the philosopher either reinforces or struggles against oppressions.” The dispassionate intellectual purity Callard aspires to does not and cannot exist. Indeed, as educators, we have a responsibility to teach towards the liberation of our students and the world.

In our view, signing petitions is only one, relatively ineffective, method for combatting injustice any of us have at our disposal. One certainly should sign a petition drawing attention to injustices done to LGBTQ philosophers, including the promotion of hateful and harmful ideologies in otherwise reputable philosophical venues. But this is only a bare minimum. Among other things, one should speak out in lectures and in one’s teaching and writing. Moreover, one must defend unjustly targeted or systematically oppressed and marginalized colleagues —even if that may endanger one’s “career.”

Callard cites Socrates in support of her rejection of taking public political stands. She forgets that Socrates spent his days questioning the legitimacy of prevailing authorities and the basis of dominant values, and that he went to his death in defense of this public activity. In short, the philosophical is political.

## Treasurer's Report

by Harry Van Der Linden

January 1, 2018-December 31, 2018

### Income

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| • RPR, RPT (subscriptions, online articles) | 8,644.72 |
| • Conference income                         | 9,662.95 |
| • Donation for RPA Magazine                 | 250.00   |

Total: 18,557.67

### Expenses

- PDC Subscription Fulfillment Services 2017 1,747.28
- Printing, typesetting, and editing RPR 21.1 4,090.86
- FISP 240.43
- Domain name (renewal), RPA and RPA Magazine 158.93
- Iris Young Prize 300.00

Total: 6,537.50

**Surplus: 12,020.17 \***

**Funds on hand on 1/1/2018: 13,588.90**

**Funds on hand on 12/31/2018: 25,609.07**

**(15.90 petty cash; 25,593.27 in bank account)**

\*The large surplus is due to the fact that a check of \$7000 (for conference costs) has not yet been cashed. Also, we should receive soon a bill for RPR 21.2. In short, the “real” surplus for 2018 is presumably around \$2000.

01/01/2019

## Minutes from the 2018 Business Meeting

by Richard Peterson, Outgoing Secretary

RPA Business Meeting, November 10, RPA 13th Biennial Conference, Nov. 8-10, 2018, University of Massachusetts/Lowell.

1. Meeting called to order by Tanya Loughhead and Brandon Absher (Co-coordinators) at 3:00 pm.
2. Minutes from the business meeting at the previous conference at University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, Nov. 10-12, 2016 were presented by Richard Peterson (Secretary) and approved by the body.
3. Treasurer’s Report. Harry van der Linden distributed an accounting that shows a current balance of \$14,777.27, after spending (to Nov. 1, 2018 to date) \$6237.50 and taking in \$7425.87. Most budgetary

activity concerns the journal. Money remains for special projects. Figures do not reflect the costs of the most recent issue of the journal, in part due to delays in the Philosophy Documentation Center's printing and distribution.

4. *Radical Philosophy Review*: Editor's report. Harry van der Linden notes that the journal now averages 150 pp per issue; it receives roughly 30 submissions per year, and prints 4 to 6 articles per issue (in addition to book reviews). The first issue in 2020 will be based on the 2018 conference and will be guest edited by George Furlas, José Jorge Mendoza, and Cory Wimberly. Further, the editors propose a special issue on climate change (a topic that has not received much attention in the journal or at the conference) and will soon issue a call for papers. Finally, the editors propose renewing the Advisory Board, hoping to develop a closer working relation with at least some of its members. Nominees for the Board will be welcomed by the editors. We continue to need more individual and institutional subscriptions (there has been a 25% drop in subscriptions in the past year), and hope that RPA members will promote this at their home institutions.

5. *RPA Mag*. Brandon Absher reports on the successful launch of this project and invites everyone to visit: [RPAMag.org](http://RPAMag.org) (one can go to it from the RPA website as well). He urges members to contribute texts that are popularly accessible and short responses to ongoing matters. Writing should be sensitive to diverse political presuppositions of potential readers and is subject to light editing. Brandon suggests thinking of these as, among other things, possible readings for undergraduates. He sees the *Mag* as one facet of a necessary web presence for the RPA. This requires money for maintaining the website and related social media operations. Harry van der Linden notes the availability of RPA funds for these purposes, though it was not clear how much is needed. The ensuing discussion introduced the suggestions that the website could be used for fundraising, that student labor might be brought in, and that we may need another national officer who would focus on the RPA's existence online.

6. Regional Committee Reports: Sebastian Purcell noted a panel on indigenous philosophy as radical philosophy at last year's Central APA meetings. Ali Kashani reported limited activity at the past Pacific APA but points to an author meets critics session planned for the coming meetings. There was no report from the Eastern division.

7. We did not receive a report from The Center for Global Justice.

8. Personnel matters. Brandon Absher was re-elected as a co-coordinator (four year term). Jeff Nichols was elected as Secretary (four years). Sebastian Purcell indicated interest in taking over as Treasurer when Harry van der Linden leaves this post in two years. Lila Wakeman was re-elected as student member of the Advisory Committee (four years). Mladjo Ivanovic was elected as at large member of the Advisory Committee (four years). New regional coordinators (and Advisory Committee members) were selected: Joan Braune (Pacific), George Furlas (Eastern) (four year terms).

Finally, Sarah Vitale and Margaret McLaren were re-elected to the RPR editorial committee (four years).

9. Preparations for the World Congress of Philosophy. Though we will have time to prepare for this at the next conference (2020) it is important to be better prepared than we were for the recent meetings. It's desirable that any panels under our name should be arranged by the RPA and provide opportunity for RPA members to participate. These meetings are planned for Melbourne, Australia.

10. Planning for the next conference. A planning committee was elected: Cory Wimberly (chair), Joseph Trillinger, Mladjo Ivanovic, and Anne Pomeroy. No decision was made regarding location, though Providence College was presented as a concrete possibility.

11. New Business. Some discussion of retrieving the history of the RPA; materials available on the website were mentioned as well as the archive of RPA materials at the New York Public Library. Sarah Vitale announced a survey of views on this conference and hopes for a good response which would help in future planning.

12. After enthusiastic thanks from those present to the conference organizers – noting especially the tireless efforts of Sarah Vitale and Jose Mendoza – the meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm.

## Report from the 2018 Conference

by Sarah Vitale

In November 2018, over one hundred members and friends of the Radical Philosophy Association met for the organization's 13th biennial meeting. As the conference theme was "Strategies of Resistance," it was appropriate that we met at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, in a city with such a deep history of radical labor struggle. We also had the good fortune of a special insight into that history during the "Labor and Immigration History of Lowell Walking Tour" with Dr. Robert Forrant, Distinguished University Professor of History, UMass Lowell.

Over the course of 3 days, the participants gathered together to build solidarity and share strategies in 44 different panels. They discussed topics such as the alt-right, immigration, technology, and care. In order to keep the conference on 3 days and not go beyond 4 concurrent panels, the program committee was unfortunately unable to accept many promising submissions.

The conference featured three keynote speakers: Dr. Tommy Curry (Edinburgh) spoke on the first night. His paper was titled "It's Not Radical Because You Say So," and it focused on the importance of empirical social scientific research in radical philosophy - particularly as it relates to questions of race and gender. On the second night, Dr. Todd May (Clemson University) led participants in an interactive presentation called "How Would Jacques Rancière Organize?" On the final night, Dr. Linda Martín Alcoff (Hunter College) presented a paper on "Norming Sex," discussing her recent work on rape and sexual violence.

Throughout the conference, participants also discussed new work by several radical philosophers, including *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* by Amy Allen; *Decolonizing Dialectics* by George Ciccariello-Maher; *Men's Rights, Gender, and Social Media* by Christa Hoddap; *The Moral and Political Philosophy of Immigration: Liberty, Security, and Equality* by José Jorge Mendoza; and *The Mismeasure of Wealth: Essays on Marx and Social Form* by Patrick Murray. We continued our spirit of supporting the work of undergraduate students, and we held four Radical Undergraduates sessions. Finally, Jorge M. Lizarzaburu of Emory University received the Iris Marion Young Prize for his paper "Zapatistas More than Ever: Lessons of a Revolution Amidst Capitalist Catastrophe." In recognition of his achievement, Lizarzaburu presented his paper in single-author session, and his paper will be published in the conference issue of the *Radical Philosophy Review*.

We also inaugurated a new tradition at the November meeting, which was born during the plenary session “Reinventing the RPA: Goals, Strategies, and Visions” at the 12th biennial meeting of the RPA in 2016. One of the ideas discussed at the plenary session was collaborating with other organizations through invited sessions. We are very pleased that our 2018 meeting included invited sessions by the International Herbert Marcuse Society, the LATINA/X Feminisms Roundtable, the Society for Mexican American Philosophy, Philosophy Born of Struggle, and Philosophy in an Inclusive Key Summer Institute (PIKSI).

## Radical Philosophy Review Report

by Harry Van Der Linden

The materials for *RPR* 22.2 have been sent to the Philosophy Documentation Center. The issue should appear by early November, 2019. It contains four articles (already posted on Online First), two review essays, and five book reviews.

José Mendoza, George Fourlas, and Cory Wimberly are putting together *RPR* 23.1, a special issue of papers presented at our last RPA conference at UMass Lowell. It is scheduled for May 2020.

A special issue is planned on the theme “The Radical Tradition, Politics, and Climate Change” (submission deadline is November 1, 2019). Depending on the number of accepted submissions in the coming year, the special issue will be published as a third issue in 2020/21 or count as one of the two regular *RPR* issues scheduled for each year.

It is now possible to renew the journal once every two years (concurrent with our conference schedule). Let us hope that this will lead to more consistent yearly individual subscription numbers. The journal would benefit from more institutional subscriptions (convince your librarian!).

We welcome submissions, inquiries, and feedback.

## RPA Mag Report

by Richard Schmitt

For about a year now various members and supporters of the Radical Philosophy Association (RPA) have contributed to a collective blog we called [RPA Mag](#). This blog has several goals.

It allows for brief comments (about a thousand words) on current political affairs from the perspective of philosophy. We have had blogs dealing with different aspects of the immigration crisis, with gun control, racism, the abolition of prisons, student loan debt, the women's march, and other topics. These short pieces are usually challenging and thought-provoking. They are opportunities for philosophers to be slightly outrageous without providing all the footnotes academic journals demand. There is a role, we think, for doing philosophy that is thoughtful without footnotes to John Rawls.

Most of us are teachers. We want to present to our students perspectives that are not mainstream but are designed to encourage critical thinking in the young minds in our classes. Reading Marx in class will take you only so far. The RPA Mag entries are bound to give rise to a number of lively and informative

classes which give our students practice in raising questions about what they may have been told is common sense.

Most of us have a bundle of beliefs which we don't question very often. There is not enough time and energy to do that. Most of us will find some of the blogs in the RPA Mag challenging and stimulating and may teach us lessons we had not learned before.

RPA Mag is a valuable effort. It will continue to be more effective than it has been in the past year if more members of RPA, and their friends, will send in potential blog posts. Many blogs receive some editing; few are rejected.

To submit posts you will need to first [sign up](#) for an account and create a profile. After this, go to "Your Submissions," which can be found in the top right corner. Once on the [submissions](#) page, click the "+" sign. From there, simply copy and paste your submission.

## Announcement of the 2020 Conference

by Cory Wimberly, Carlos Sánchez, and Cynthia Kaufman

The Program Committee for the 2020 meeting of the Radical Philosophy Association is already hard at work and excited about the upcoming conference in San José, California, on themes of environment and technology. While the conference has always been open to papers that lie outside of the theme, we felt that radical work on the unfolding global environmental disaster and the changes being brought by technology were especially timely. The membership has been encouraging those themes for years and we are listening! Carlos Sánchez and Cynthia Kaufman are hosting the meeting, which will take place on the campus of San José State University. San José State University is the largest and oldest university in the Cal State System. It sits in Downtown San José and at the heart of Silicon Valley. San José is great venue for this conference as it is at the epicenter of both environmentalism and technological change. Also, we have secured great hotel rates and three airports are within 50 miles of San José—San José International Airport (6 miles), Oakland International Airport (35 miles), and San Francisco International Airport (45 miles).

Carlos Sánchez is a Professor of Philosophy at San José State and works in the areas of Mexican philosophy, the philosophy of immigration, and the philosophy of violence. He has published a number of articles on the philosophy of immigration and three books on Mexican philosophy (*The Suspension of Seriousness* [2012], *Contingency and Commitment* [2016], and *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century: Essential Readings* [2017]). His book *A Sense of Brutality: On the Philosophy of Narco-Culture* is due out sometime next year from Amherst College Press.

Cynthia Kaufman is the Director of the Vasconcellos Institute for Democracy in Action De Anza College where she runs a community organizer training program and teaches philosophy. She is the author of four books on social change: *Challenging Power: Democracy and Accountability in a Fractured World* (Bloomsbury 2020), *Getting Past Capitalism: History, Vision, Hope* (Lexington Books 2012), *Ideas for Action: Relevant Theory for Radical Change* (2nd Edition PM Press 2016), and *Burning Down the House: A Guide to (Hopefully) Preventing Climate Catastrophe* (PM Press, 2021). She publishes on social justice at Common Dreams.

Cory Wimberly is chairing the program committee after serving as a program committee member for the 2018 conference. He is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and his most recent work has been done on propaganda. His book *How Propaganda Became Public Relations: Foucault and the Corporate Government of the Publics* is due out from Routledge this winter. The program committee includes Anne Pomeroy (Stockton University), Corwin Aragon (Cal State Polytechnic at Pomona), Joseph Trullinger (George Washington University), and Mlado Ivanovic (Grand Valley State University).

**Look for the call for papers this fall!**

## CFP: Special Issue of the *Radical Philosophy Review*: "The Radical Tradition, Politics, and Climate Change"

### CALL FOR PAPERS

The *Radical Philosophy Review* invites article submissions (of no more than 10,000 words) for a special edition on the theme "The Radical Tradition, Politics, and Climate Change." We are particularly interested in papers addressing from a radical perspective questions like the following: What is politically necessary to prevent at this juncture disastrous climate change? Is the project feasible, how does it relate to struggles of climate justice, and how can the Left contribute to its realization? Why has effective carbon mitigation thus far been unsuccessful and what may happen politically if it continues to fall short? How should the Left respond to disaster capitalism, militarized adaptation to climate change, and the like?

### Guidelines for Submissions

Manuscripts (of no more than 10,000 words) should be sent as e-mail attachments (preferably in MS Word) to the editors of the special issue. Please attach two copies, one of which is prepared for blind refereeing with all direct or indirect references to the author removed. Include an abstract of no more than 100 words, as well as a short author bio of no more than 60 words. Citation style should follow the Chicago Manual of Style with short-title citations in the footnotes and a list of references at the end of the article.

**Submissions are due January 14, 2020.** Early submissions are welcome. Accepted papers may be posted in final format on Online First by the Philosophy Documentation Center. We especially welcome submissions representing radical perspectives from under-represented and/or marginalized groups.

### Editors of the Special Issue:

- Harry van der Linden, Editor of the *Radical Philosophy Review*. Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Butler University. E-mail: hvanderl@butler.edu.
- Reed M. Kurtz, Guest Editor. PhD in International Relations, Ohio State University. Visiting instructor at Otterbein University. E-mail: rmkurtz27@gmail.com.

Published biannually since 1998, the *Radical Philosophy Review* provides an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed forum for activist scholars, community activists, and artists to explore concepts central to the

humanistic transformation of society. It features original articles, special discussions, and reviews that will be of interest to those who share the view that society should be built on cooperation rather than competition, and that social decision-making should be governed by democratic procedures. The journal is sponsored by the Radical Philosophy Association and published by the Philosophy Documentation Center. For more information, visit us [here](#).

## Contact Us

To get in touch, please send us an email or a bit of snail mail:

### **Radical Philosophy Association**

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Visit us on the web at [www.radicalphilosophyassociation.com](http://www.radicalphilosophyassociation.com).

**Be sure to check out the [RPA Mag](#) and join the conversation!**