FROM THE COORDINATORS

by Anne Pomeroy and Richard Jones

These theater-goers, too want to be entertained, hence loosened up and liberated, by the performance, but not without more ado or to be merely liberated from something but to be liberated for something.

Ernst Bloch

The Conference

Given the ongoing global climate of militarization, capitalist market expansionism, the erosion of basic human rights, surveillance, environmental ruin, and the corruption of the political, the Eighth Biennial RPA Conference “Art, Praxis and Social Transformation: Radical Dreams and Visions” offers hope beyond the ongoing empty spectacle of elective politics. The conference, to be held at San Francisco State University, November 6-9, 2008, promises to be the most well organized, diverse, informative, and highly participatory conferences in RPA’s history.

The conference’s Program Committee, chaired by Peter Amato, has crafted a compelling theme, invited renowned plenary speakers, and constructed a politically relevant program worthy of our shared “Radical Dreams and Visions.” We would like to take this first opportunity to thank Peter and the Program Committee for their outstanding efforts thus far. Anatole Anton and the site committee at San Francisco State also deserve praise for their efforts to enoble our struggle by providing the platform to engage our students, colleagues, and friends in RPA’s conference celebrating and consolidating our progress. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Anatole, the site committee, and San Francisco State for being such gracious and willing hosts. You can learn more about the conference at RPA’s website www.radicalphilosophy.org or at the conference’s website at www.sfsu.edu/~raza/rpa.

This is an inspired conference that will change the face of the RPA. Please make your arrangements to attend and encourage your students and friends to attend. We look forward to seeing you in San Francisco!

Mid-Term Update

When we assumed the co-coordinator positions at our last conference at Creighton University in November 2006, we identified
a number of urgent matters facing RPA: (1) consolidation of our membership; (2) new ideas to reinvigorate and inform our activism; (3) the reinstitution of the RPA Newsletter; (4) increased emphases and focus on our publications, Radical Philosophy Review and Radical Philosophy Today; (5) rededication to our committee work; (6) improving our website; and, (7) involving more graduate students. Toward these ends, we have succeeded in part, but work remains.

(1) membership: With regard to the consolidation of membership, we have gained approximately 50% in our paid memberships. When we began our terms there were 147 current subscribers. As of the end of August, there are 235 (and we anticipate adding to this total before and at the conference). If you have been too busy to renew your membership, please take time to do this. It is important if we are to continue to grow as an organization.

(2) New projects: We have formed an exploratory committee for RPAfrica, written a grant proposal to APA for start-up money, and hope to have, with membership approval, an RPA sponsored conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, at Witswatersrand University in July 2009 (see the article in this issue of the Newsletter for details). At RPA Secretary Richard Peterson’s suggestion, we have inaugurated the RPA Iris Marion Young Award, to honor her memory and contributions to the RPA, for the best paper presented by a graduate student at our biennial conferences.

(3) RPA Newsletter: Richard Schmitt has provided great service to our RPA community of friends and supporters by twice yearly producing and mailing 500 or so copies of the “Radical Philosophy Newsletter,” which you hold in your hands.

In this era of email and texting, the Newsletter is a familiar and comforting conduit for information we feel should be continued. The Newsletter is an important vehicle for sustaining the organization.

(4) RPA Publications: Jeff Paris, Executive Editor of the Radical Philosophy Review, has provided great leadership in bringing new facets of Radical Philosophy to light. Reading RPR reminds us of the ever-changing nature of radical engagement. Similarly, Harry van der Linden, who also serves as RPA’s Treasurer, has edited and published Radical Philosophy Today (the proceedings of our conferences) in a professional and timely manner. Because our publications are so important to us, we are exploring radical new ways to increase their readerships.

(5) Committees: One area where we feel we have more work is on our committees. In prior years, the Anti-Racist Education Project, the Anti-Death Penalty Committee, the RPA Prisons Project, and other committees were much more active than they are currently. As Co-Coordinators, we want to emphasize the reintroduction of actual committee activism. If you want to become involved in any existing RPA Committee, or have ideas for new committees, please let us know, as we are investing our energies for the next two years in strengthening this aspect of the organization. With 40 new student memberships, we hope to be able to enjoin their enthusiasm.

(6) Web Site: Jack Green Musselman, RPA’s webmaster, has graciously accepted the responsibility for maintaining our web pages. We want to help Jack get the help he needs to not only maintain, but also redesign the portal. As Co-Coordinators, we feel it is well past time that the Website get a facelift. To that end we are requesting money from the Treasurer to pay for said web site updates.
We hope this can be accomplished before the next National Conference in 2010.

(7) Graduate Students: Forrest Perry, RPA’s Graduate Student Coordinator, and Doug Morris, RPA’s Outreach Representative, bring new life and enthusiasm to the task of attracting and supporting younger scholars. If the organization is to thrive, we all need to motivate our students to attend our conferences, work in our committees, and embark on Cliff Durand’s summer Cuba Trip. Perhaps it is time to use some of our surplus money to actually fund RPA summer internships for selected graduate students.

Our Radical “Visions”:

We continue to be inspired by the many people who work so hard without pay for the RPA. We both know that “la lucha continua” (the struggle continues), but we also know that, as Kwame Ture said, “Ultimately we will win because we are right.” We struggle for a world without I. M. Young’s five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence, and for a world with human dignity, equality, equity, and justice. In our Radical Dreams and Visions, the fight continues, but as a friend reminds us (quoting Femi Kuti’s CD) we should not fight continually, but “Fight to Win.” To struggle for “liberation for something.” Thank you for struggling with us. If you have ideas or suggestions for us please contact Anne at Anne.Pomeroy@stockton.edu or Richard at rajones19@cox.net.

Venceremos!

Come to the Radical Philosophy Conference

Thursday, November 6
to Sunday, November 9

at San Francisco State University.

For a complete program
Please see

http://mysite.verizon.net/restvvl9/rpa2008program/index.html

For registration and lodging see

http://www.radicalphilosophy.org/

This will get you to the RPA Website. Once there click on RPA CONFERENCE WEBSITE.

That website has all the information you need BUT it takes a moment of looking carefully before you find what you want.
FROM THE OUTREACH COORDINATOR

-by Doug Morris

Doug Morris - new RPA Outreach Coordinator received his Ph.D. from Penn State University in Curriculum and Instruction where he studied with Henry Giroux and Pat Shannon and focused his work on various forms of critical literacy and public pedagogy, with an emphasis on the public pedagogy of films operating within the US culture of militarism. Prior to the doctoral work at Penn State, he taught English, social studies and music (jazz) in high schools in CT, NH and VT. He currently teaches courses in various forms of critical literacy in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Eastern New Mexico University, in Portales, NM. He has been a participant in the RPA "Research Network in Cuba" four times (a recent interview reflecting on and inspired by the 2008 experience is online at: www.dissidentvoice.org). Doug is hoping to extend the reach, membership, and influence of, as well as support for, RPA into the general field of education.

If schools are one of the few remaining sites in US culture in which students might learn the tools and skills necessary to function as individual and social agents, empowered workers, critical inquirers and engaged citizens, the work of RPA can help inform and inspire the kinds of pedagogical endeavors required to produce an informed, involved, inclusive and energized democratic economics and politics. At the core Doug's approach to critical literacies for public educators is the exploration and development of pedagogical projects committed to the evolvement of a critical mentality that reflects a willingness and dedication to question assumptions (including our own), remain very suspicious of absolutes, unpack agendas, interrogate prevailing notions, critique conventional wisdom, challenge the dogma of common sense, cultivate doubt, and hold power and authority accountable. It is based on the radical assumption that an energized and emancipatory critical mentality is necessary to not only challenge the dominant ideologies that promote political passivity, over-production, ruthless competition, and rapacious greed, but also the dominant hierarchical structural relations around which US society is organized (or disorganized) that perpetuate authoritarian social relationships as well as the rule of capital over the needs of people, and the pursuit of markets over ecological rationality and a sustainable environment. What role can schools play in carrying out social transformations of the momentous and epochal nature required to abolish the conditions and transform the institutions that produce the inhumanities we increasingly confront? The multiple sites for public education open up opportunities for adults to provide young people with skills and capacities necessary for taking on these tasks.

Such tasks require collective engagement, discussion and pursuit on the grounds that social problems require social solutions, structural crises require structural changes, and epochal imperilment demands epochal transformations establishing a radically transfigured human friendly and ecologically rational social order. Tasks of such magnitude point to the importance of inspiring, encouraging and mobilizing the collective intelligence and imagination of
populations of people across multiple borders, and schools, again, remain one of

PHILOSOPHY BORN OF STRUGGLE 2008

Fifteenth Annual Conference
October 24 & 25, 2008
PHILOSOPHY AND AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES
Michigan State University Union
The Parlor Room

This conference will seek to explore the conceptual framework that informs the emergence and consolidation of the area of inquiry of African American Studies and its relationship to the intellectual and cultural movement that began in the sixties as Black Studies. Consequently we will reflect on the philosophical, sociopolitical, cultural and intellectual ethos of the experience in the U.S. that resulted in the Black Consciousness and Black Arts Movement with the assertive political refrain, Black Power. Consideration will given to the influence of “the movement” on the rise of multiculturalism and the search for cultural identity among ethnic groups, gender politics, national/internationalism and the search for alter-natives in political and academic discourse.

Abstracts for papers should be no more than 80 words and proposals for panels are welcomed. July 21, 2008 is the deadline for abstracts and proposals.

The conference which is being sponsored by the African and African American Studies Program at Michigan State is free and open to the general public. Looking forward to your participation and support.

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HELP FOR CUBA

IFCO is organizing a variety of disaster responses this week.

Here is how you can help:

1. Help us organize an IFCO-Pastors for Peace Construction Brigade of 30-50 skilled carpenters, electricians, plumbers, etc. They and a small number of support individuals will travel to Cuba for approximately two weeks to assist in the reconstruction of social projects—i.e. schools, hospitals, medical facilities, home for the elderly, etc.

   This brigade will arrive in Cuba with tools and humanitarian aid collected from our friends.

   As usual this aid will be delivered to the Ecumenical Distribution Committee which will distribute the aid wherever it is needed most.

2. Help us organize a mini-caravan to gather aid that Cuba says they need.

3. Send a generous donation. IFCO has established a Hurricane Relief Fund to respond as best we can to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Cuba.

   The magnitude of need in Cuba has reached historic proportions. Each of us can contribute in some way to the recovery effort. You have helped us in the past.

   Our friends in Cuba need our support now more than ever before.

   Please be as generous as you can. Send your tax-exempt contributions to IFCO, 418 W. 145th Street, New York, NY 10031 212-926-5757 by phone or by snail mail or donate online at our website.
RPA AT THE APA

THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION, EASTERN DIVISION

DECEMBER 27-30, 2008

GROUP PROGRAM
SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 28, 2008
GROUP SESSION VI – 7:30-10:30 P.M.
GVI-9. Radical Philosophy Association
7:30-10:30 p.m.
Topic: Philosophy and the Black Experience: Nineteen Sixty Eight and Beyond
Chair: J. Everel Green (New School for Social Research)
Speakers: Richard Jones (Howard University)  
"Race and Class Struggle"
William R. Jones (Florida State University)
"Beyond Miseducation and Misreligion: Correcting the Mismanagement of the Philosophy of Black Liberation”
Maulana Karenga (California State University-Long Beach)
"Kawaida Philosophy and the Problematic of Liberation in the Sixties: Cultural Revolution and Radical Social Practice”
John McClendon (Michigan State University)
"African American Studies: A Materialist Philosophical Perspective”

MONDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 29, 2008
GROUP SESSION X – 7:00-10:00 P.M.
GX-8. Radical Philosophy Association
7:00-10:00 p.m.
Topic: Religion, Universality and Critique
Chair: Richard Curtis (Cornish College of the Arts)
Speakers: Kevin Brien (Washington College)
"Away with All Gods Perhaps: But Not All Spiritualities”
Roger Gottlieb (Worcester Polytechnic Institute)
“Think Religion is Useless? Think Again: The Promises of Religious Environmentalism”
Edward D’Angelo (Quinnipiac University)
“The New Atheist’s Critique of Religion”
Richard Curtis (Cornish College of the Arts)
“The Evolution of Consciousness: On the Universality of Religion”
RADICAL PHILOSOPHY ASSOCIATION
Meeting Roundtables at the
XXII World Congress of Philosophy,
Seoul, South Korea, July 30-Aug. 5

The two roundtables described below have been organized by Dr. Rodney G. Peffer (Philosophy, University of San Diego) and subsequently sponsored by the Radical Philosophy Association as part of its intervention in the XXII World Congress of Philosophy.

Socialist Political Philosophy Today

Participants:
Professor Rodney G. Peffer (organizer and chair)
Dr. Thalia Fung Riveron (Cuban Society of Philosophy & University of Havana, Cuba)
Professor Horacio Cerruti-Guldberg (Director, Centro Coordinador y Difusor de Estudios Latinoamericanos, UNAM, Mexico DF)
Professor Frank Cunningham (Politics, emeritus, University of Toronto, Canada)
Professor Xu Changfu (Philosophy, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China)

Description:

This roundtable is composed of well-known philosophers from contemporary socialist societies (Cuba and China), economically well-developed capitalist societies (Canada and the U.S.), and economically developing capitalist societies (Mexico). The general perspectives of the participants ranges from social-democratic to market socialist to (primarily) non-market socialist to liberation philosophy. Although the number of nation-states claiming to be (in some sense) socialist has decreased over the past few decades the historical question of whether some form (or forms) of socialism may, in the end analysis, be both viable and preferable to some (or possibly even all) forms of capitalism has not yet been definitively settled. There are still societies that are socialist – or at least claiming to be such – that have a number of seemingly praise-worthy characteristics (especially developing societies that are socialist and have consistently been able to meet their citizen’s basic needs and provide them extensive medical services and educational opportunities). This is not to say, of course, that all societies claiming to be socialist have evinced these admirable characteristics. Moreover, many other societies have strong elements of socialism in them (such as public ownership of significant numbers of large-scale economic enterprises, provisions for public welfare and minimum standards of living, limitations on allowable economic inequalities, and constraints on markets in order to meet these goals). On the other hand, many argue that socialism – at least a form of socialism that is truly democratic – is either not viable or, if viable, not morally acceptable. Some former socialists have concluded that the best that can be hoped for is a more humane form of welfare-state capitalism; for example, a social-democratic form. However, today many socialist philosophers and intellectuals – both within and outside of societies still claiming to be socialist – are willing to allow substantial markets as a part of a viable form of socialism and are also strong advocates of democracy in some form, although what forms of socialist democracy are possible or morally required in the present historical period in particular societies is also contested. This set of issues makes for a philosophically interesting and politically
important discussion.

*Just War Theory and Contemporary Military Conflicts*

Participants:
Professor Rodney G. Peffer (organizer and chair)
Professor Mark Evans (co-organizer & co-chair) (Politics, University of Wales, Swansea)
Professor Harry van der Linden (Philosophy, Butler University, Indiana)
Professor Lutz Alexander Keferstein (Philosophy, UNAM & Humboldt University)
Professor Zhang Zhicang (Philosophy, Nanjing Normal University)

*Description:*

Just War Theory is the long-standing theoretical tradition that today dominates international morality and law concerning military conflict although, arguably, some nation-states that officially adopt it do not actually abide by all of its standards. It stands against the two great opposing traditions: pacifism (wars are never justified) and realism (morality does not apply to the behavior of nation-states in the international arena). This roundtable brings together a number of theorists from the first two of these traditions to discuss contemporary Just War Theory (and Pacifism) and their application to contemporary military conflicts such as the U.S. War in Iraq, the current war in Afghanistan, and the civil war and/or genocide in the Sudan. Some of the philosophers on this panel are advocates of Just War Theory but are very critical of such contemporary military conflicts as the U.S. War in Iraq. Rodney Peffer and Mark Evans fall into this category. (Mark Evans is editor of the excellent anthology *Just War Theory: A Reappraisal* and the author of several articles on applying just war theory. Peffer has recently completed a long essay titled “Just War Theory, the U.S. War in Iraq, and Neoconservatism.”) On the other hand, Harry van der Linden argues in his excellent essay “Just War Theory and U.S. Military Hegemony” (in the anthology *Rethinking the Just War Tradition*, that he co-edited) that traditional Just War Theory may need to be modified in light of the hugely asymmetric wars between extremely militarily powerful nation-states and much less technologically sophisticated and militarily powerful nation-states or groups (as in the current Iraq War). Professor Lutz Alexander Keferstein, who has academic positions in both Germany and Mexico, will analyze the significance of the EZLN (Zapatista) movement in Chiapas, Mexico within the context of Just War Theory and its competitors. Professor Zhang Zhicang will comment on Just War Theory and Pacifism within the context of Chinese intellectual culture and contemporary Chinese policies. This discussion should be a valuable addition to the World Congress.
CHALLENGING GLOBAL
POLITICAL CRISIS:

Transnational Capitalism, Identity, and Immigration

– by Justin Hansford

As technology enables global capitalism to push the flow of labor across national borders at an unprecedented rate, reactions around the world have ranged from political upheaval in the United States to xenophobic violence in South Africa. What are the philosophical and economic ramifications of the situation we confront today and our respective countries’ nativistic reactions to it? What are viable solutions to the problems posed by the advent of an exploited globalized labor force?

The idea of convening a three week symposium in South Africa to examine these questions emerged from a series of discussions between Justin Hansford—a recent Georgetown University Law School graduate—Meetali Jain of American University School of Law, Mecke Nagel of the State University of New York at Cortland, David Masondo of the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and Richard Jones of Howard University. Modeled on the Radical Philosophy Association’s successful Cuba conferences, this conference would be sponsored by RPA under the rubric of RPAfrica (Radical Philosophy in Africa), and held from July 7th to July 28th 2009.

The first week of the conference will take place at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. These discussions between North American students and professors and African students and professors will explore the clash of values that has crystallized in the violence surrounding the immigration debate in South Africa, the U.S., and around the world. For example, we will discuss the role of global governance in creating the conditions that necessitate transborder labor exploitation; the phenomena of PanAfricanism and the role of the nation state in identity formation in South Africa; how labor exploitation contributes to the poverty and immiseration of women and children; and possible responses from the Global South to both the reality and the ramifications of Global Capitalism in the 21st century.

In the second week, we will engage in a series of cultural exchanges designed to orient the participants to the historical and contemporary context in which the current conflicts emerge. This will include a trip to the Apartheid Museum and the site of the Soweto Township Uprising, meetings with local union organizers and members of the South African Socialist Party and the ANC, interactions with Hip Hop youth activists for social justice, and a tour of Cape Town and the University of the Western Cape.

The final week of the program will be dedicated to creating lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with local organizations on the ground that are attempting to address these issues pragmatically today. We will establish these relationships by allowing those participants who are able to do so to spend one week volunteering with the organization of their choice. These groups will include activists who are attempting grassroots and political responses to the conditions underpinning the necessities for transborder labor exploitations, focusing on such issues as labor rights, immigrant rights, women’s rights, water rights, land redistribution,
HIV/AIDS treatment, and racial justice.

We are hoping you will join us for this exciting inaugural RPAfrica conference! Additional information on dates, costs, and applications will be forthcoming. If you have questions, suggestions, or would like to volunteer to help in the planning and coordination, please contact the conference Steering Committee:

Mecke Nagel
<Nagelm@cortland.edu>
Justin Hansford
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WHAT RPA MEANS TO ME

-Richard Jones

In the revolutionary organization’s struggle with class society, the weapons are nothing less than the essence of the antagonists themselves: the revolutionary organization cannot allow the conditions of division and hierarchy that obtain in the dominant society to be reproduced within itself.

-Guy Debord,
The Society of the Spectacle, pp. 88-89

For me the Radical Philosophy Association is more than the spectacle of its national conferences. It is more than its publications. It is more than its history. To me, RPA is an organization that publicly represents my personal oppositions to the alienation produced by consumption, competition, and egoism. RPA is the counter argument to the “professionalization of philosophy.” When Mecke Nagel asked me two years ago if I would serve as RPA Co-Coordinator, I answered, “You have chosen the wrong person. I am not a leader.” She responded, “We will help you, because we are your family.”

Mecke’s answer reinforced what RPA has always meant to me. When I was struggling as a fifty-year-old graduate student at the University of Colorado, my dissertation advisor, Alison Jaggar, sensed my isolation as a non-traditional student (race, age, class). She suggested in 1997 that I attend a few conferences: “Philosophy Born of Struggle” (New School), “SOFPHIA” (Brown University), and RPA’s “Intersections of Race” (Morgan State). At these conferences, I was awed by being in the presence of philosophers I had only read about, including Lucius Outlaw, Louis Gordon, Tommy Lott, Leonard Harris, Anthony Appiah, Ann Ferguson, and Nancy Fraser. Beyond their “class” status as well established “academic stars” with many published works, I found all the people I encountered at RPA-affiliated conferences and meetings to be warm, friendly, approachable, and helpful. They seemed to try to live the high egalitarianism that many philosophers only endlessly profess.

When I later attended RPA national conferences, I could see that many of the participants, whether graduate students, public intellectuals, independent scholars, or professors, were suffering similar professional humiliations, degradations, and marginalizations as I was experiencing. There was an instant recognition that we were fighting the same fight and suffering the same losses. We were struggling against the dehumanizing effects of academic rank, elitism in tiers of universities, pervasive academic snobbery, and the institutional
powers that maintain these alienating conditions. These struggling people were my family. I always left RPA conferences with new hope and new strength in knowing that somehow, somewhere, there were others who knew and shared what I thought philosophically important.

Finally, as many have realized, alienated labor produces dross. But when one labors for one's "family," there is an inexhaustible energy. Being Co-Coordinator of RPA allows me to work for my family. Within this RPA family are 60's radicals, old hippies, union organizers, new leftists, new new leftists, socialists, Marxists, reformers, feminists, anarchists, and humanists. Without the support of my RPA family, I would not have graduated from the University of Colorado; I would not be doing what I love (teaching philosophy), nor would I currently be associated with so many very fine people. The Radical Philosophy Association continues to sustain me. As I anticipate our forthcoming conference in November, my own "Radical Dreams and Visions" for RPA include seeing it flourish into an even larger extended family with 1,000 to 2,000 activist members—a family disdaining the poverty of hierarchy and sharing in the wealth of its rich alterity. With your help we can do this and more. I look forward to seeing you in San Francisco and hearing what RPA means to you. Venceremos!