

## Committee on Public Philosophy 2009-2010

Last year I observed that the Committee on Public Philosophy has a mix of concerns, “from figuring out what ‘public philosophy does and should mean, to enhancing publicity, to sponsoring work that forwards engaged philosophy.” This year, we have tried, and are still planning, to be responsive to APA’s interest in those differing aspects.

### Conference Sessions

*To enhance publicity* and find broader interest and support for philosophy and philosophers, at **APA-Eastern** in 2010 we will be sponsoring a 3-hour session on “Philosophy and the Media,” convened by Andy Lamey, who will discuss “Generating Media Interest in Philosophy: Suggestions for Researchers and Conference Organizers.” Other speakers and titles of papers include Christopher Shea on “What Makes a Good Philosophy Story?” as well as talks by Anastasia Friel Gutting, Julian Baggini, and Gary Gutting. There will be reflection, suggestions, instructive examples.

Also at Eastern APA, CPP is sponsoring another panel session, “Public Grants for Philosophy,” featuring talks on funding opportunities at NEH, NSF, and more specifically for collaborative grants in “Ethics, Science, and Public Policy.” This one has been put together by Eric Thomas Weber.

In short, at Eastern this year CPP is trying to be of use to the profession in its appropriate areas. We are also doing so at Central and Pacific, but by focusing more on the complex ways *philosophy* and *public* in conversation with each other challenge meanings and practices.

**Central APA:** For 2011, we are planning a session tentatively titled, “Public Philosophy and Public Rationality: Solving Public Problems through Philosophical Discussion?” Since this is in the works, I will not say more now.

**Pacific APA:** for 2011, we are also working on several possible panels, one of which may engage the age-old questions of whether, or how, philosophy is actually suited to engage publicly or might, indeed, be dangerous in that role. Related to that is whether, or how, a philosopher’s views on public issues may inform, or deform, her/his apparently apolitical philosophical work. On a differing but hardly unrelated tack, another panel may explore reasons and ways to offer internships related to philosophical study.

Earlier in 2010, CPP co-sponsored a day-long, informal symposium on “**Practicing Public Philosophy: Reflection and Dialogue**” with the Center for Global Ethics (George Mason Univ.) It was held off-site during the APA Pacific conference, but was also enabled by APA to be announced as filling two 3-hour session slots. Put together and facilitated by

Sharon Meagher and Ellen Feder, the gathering had some interesting and promising themes. See last year's CPP Report, but also and more important, the conference report prepared by Meagher and Feder. It is posted on Sharon Meagher's *Philosophy And The City* website: please do check it out. There will be follow-up the "Practicing Philosophy," and it is in the Report and on that website that you will find out about it.

### **Ongoing Concerns**

**Committee meeting, Lobbying:** We met at APA Eastern. Among other agenda items, Tom Powers reported on his participation, with David Schrader, in Humanities Day on the Hill, in D.C. The CPP has issued invitations each year for philosophers to join David in lobbying; Tom Powers is the first to accept. This is an important and instructive event, and we hope more will join in next year.

**New radio show?:** A couple of CPP members responded to an invitation to consult on a project to start a radio program designed to engage philosophers in discussion on significant concepts in the news. I have received no news on how that is going.

**Supporting "public scholarship":** Responding to a request approved by the conference in San Francisco (see above), I posted a call for "examples of official departmental and/or institution-wide policy statements in support of public scholarship" in the May 2010 issue of the APA Proceedings. No responses have been received. I am, however, collecting statements along these lines from other fields (History, notably), and a few universities. We would like to hear from you if your institution has amended hiring, promoting, tenuring policies to recognize "public scholarship," so that we can support members doing "public philosophy." For example, it is useful to know that Syracuse University refers positively to "community activism related to professional work" in its promotion and tenure documents (College of Arts & Sciences), and has rephrased the "service" aspect of expectations for faculty to include applying "knowledge and talents in the interest of society as a whole...".

**Website:** We will have a nice new website up and working very soon, thanks to Eric Weber (and Dr. Markate Daly, too: she allowed us use of the domain name). We have not announced the website with fanfare yet so that we can finish developing it and establish policies for its use. Soon, though: Dr. Weber is doing a really fine, and generous, job.

**Collaborations:** We are exploring possible collaborations with those involved in pre-collegiate teaching of philosophy.

**Materials:** A new documentary can be located at [www.feministing.com/archives/014190.html](http://www.feministing.com/archives/014190.html) -- interviews with eight philosophers.

*Still under consideration:* Further selection of philosophers to honor for their work in public philosophy, to follow up the session at APA-Central in 2010 honoring Lawrence C. Becker. This would make a fine every-other-year event that should draw publicity while also advancing our understanding of ways to do public philosophy in differing ways.

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