September 23, 2019

Dear Linda Nuoffer,

My name is Cameron Wright. I am a member of the Philosophy Graduate Student Organization at the University of South Florida. Our group was awarded a $2700 grant for our conference this past Spring. The title of our conference was “Transcontinental Migrations: Selfhood, Community, and Nature in World Philosophies.” It was held between April 5th and April 7th, 2019. We invited Dr. Mohammad Azadpur from San Francisco State University. The talk he presented for us was titled “Avicenna on Moral Perception in Humans and its Counterpart in Animals.” Dr Azadpur also participated in a discussion panel titled “Transcultural Encounters” with two professors in our department, Dr. Martin Schönfeld and Dr. Wei Zhang. It was a discussion on what the goals and methods of comparative philosophy are or ought to be. All three speakers brought to bear their own experience and work in various aspects of comparative philosophy and its application to contemporary issues in philosophy. Dr. Schönfeld also presented a talk for us titled “World Philosophy as New Paradigm of Reason in the Anthropocene.” We had one more invited speaker from the Religious Studies department here at USF. Dr. Gil Ben-Herut presented a talk titled “Epic Churnings: Moral, Ethical, and Philosophical Dimensions of Classical Indian Myth.”

Our conference generated considerable interest among graduate students. The topics of the accepted talks included Buddhist concepts of self and the metaphysics of presence, discussion of Latina Feminist perspectives on identity and embodiment in the context of Continental philosophy, Islamic and Jewish philosophy, comparative discussion on Nietzsche and Indian thought, Indigenous epistemologies, and comparative discussion of Chinese and Medieval European thought.

In addition to the $1300 budget allotment from the USF Student Government, the generous APA grant allowed us to cover the following expenses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Space for the event.</td>
<td>$1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Azadpur’s Honorarium</td>
<td>$500</td>
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<td>Dr. Azadpur’s Travel</td>
<td>$840.00</td>
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<td>Dr. Azadpur’s Accommodations</td>
<td>$490.32</td>
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<td>Total:</td>
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We are very grateful to the American Philosophical Association for providing this grant to assist us in the success of our conference this year.

All best,
Cameron Wright – PGSO Vice President, 2018-2019
Monica Meierdiercks – PGSO President, 2018-2019
Epic Churnings: Moral, Ethical, and Philosophical Dimensions of Classical Indian Myth

The myth about the churning of the ocean is observable throughout the South Asian sub-continent in myriad forms, recounted in numerous texts (from the classical Sanskrit canon to late medieval retellings in regional languages), presented in performance arts (from village festivals to blockbuster films), and portrayed in intricate temple sculptures. In this lecture, I will discuss a canonical version of this myth and consider some of its abstracted meanings and philosophical aspects, which I argue are key elements for understanding this myth’s ubiquitousness in Indian culture and imaginaire. My analysis of the myth of the churning will focus on three elements: its prescriptions for social development, the relation between man and the environment, and a metaphysics that is dualistic and dialectical.
Saturday, April 6
10:30am – 5:30pm

Breakfast & Coffee
10:30 – 11:00am

James Taplin
"Farabi and Maimonides on the Role of the Imagination in Prophecy"
11:00 – 11:45am

Chair – Sam Badger

Plenary Lecture
11:55am – 12:55pm

Chair – Sam Badger

Dr. Mohammad Azadpur
San Francisco State University | Department of Philosophy

Avicenna On Moral Perception in Humans and Its Counterpart in Animals

In my earlier work, Reason Unbound, I drew on Pierre Hadot’s pioneering account of ancient philosophy as primarily a way of life to argue that Islamic Peripatetics, Avicenna included, also adopt this approach to philosophy. Of course, philosophy as a way of life emphasizes the centrality of ethics in the philosophical enterprise. In this essay, I don’t mean to recite the old arguments. Rather I want to emphasize the importance of moral perception in the ancient account of virtue and discuss Avicenna’s contributions. In the process, we come to appreciate the status Avicenna assigns to the animal awareness of value-related features of the environment. In contrast to the trite assumption that it is only with modern philosophy’s connection between sentience and morality that animals acquire a moral standing, Avicenna’s philosophy already ascribes to animals complex morally salient abilities. Of course, he distinguishes the human ability to perceive value from that of animals; but that is not a case of all or nothing.

Lunch 1:00 - 2:00pm

Sarah Jacob
"Philosophizing with a Gong: Nietzsche and Indian Thought"
2:00pm – 2:45pm

Chair – June Alice M Brown

Panel Discussion
2:55pm – 4:55pm

Moderators – Sam Badger & Cameron Wright

Dr. Mohammad Azadpur | Dr. Martin Schönfeld | Dr. Wei Zhang

Transcultural Encounters

The goal of our panel will be to engage the methodological, epistemic, and cultural challenges relating to comparative philosophical discourse as will be addressed in this conference on World Philosophy. What should the goal of comparative philosophy be, and what alternatives are there to comparative philosophy in engaging thinking from outside our own traditions? To what extent should we take different cultural approaches to philosophy as incommensurable? How do we avoid the pitfalls of exoticizing and othering traditions of thought outside our own? Our panelists will bring together their expert knowledge on diverse philosophical perspectives to bear on these and related questions. Lastly, they will attempt to offer conference participants heuristics for future philosophical Transcontinental Migrations, showing its contemporary significance. This critical panel will thus integrate the findings of our conference speakers and provide an outlook for the future.
World Philosophy as New Paradigm of Reason in the Anthropocene

The Given
In 2019, civilization finds itself at the fork in the road. We face a choice between staying on a trajectory to a hothouse state that would mean the end of life on Earth as we know it, and guiding climate to a stable state that would let us transition to sustainability and keep the biota and the biodiversity that remain. In 2018, the United Nations concluded that civilization has twelve years left to head for the hothouse-exit, otherwise climate will cross the tipping point.

The Argument
Clearly, the old ways of cognizing and valuing won’t do anymore. The hothouse trajectory is the legacy of the canonical elders whose ideas constitute hegemonic Far Western culture: Plato, Augustine, Rene Descartes, John Locke, Adam Smith, David Hume, Max Weber, Ayn Rand, and others. Their ideas, gone viral as civilizational memes, had been victorious in the Holocene but they also ended the Holocene. They define the paradigm that has precipitated the current crisis.

The Question
What, then, will be the new paradigm of reason? Which ideas will allow for a paradigm of hope instead of angst; of progress instead of decline? A paradigm of universal facts, not relativistic narratives? A paradigm of reality instead of anti-realism? A paradigm of scientific dogma instead of skepticism? A paradigm of future-oriented critique instead of an embrace of the past? A paradigm that serves the world’s children, the world’s poor, the world’s ethnic communities, the world’s pagans, the world’s gay, the world’s women—and that does not serve the old rich white evangelical breeder males who have put civilization on a trajectory to hothouse-Earth?

The Abstract
In this talk, I will describe the given, present the argument, and raise the question. I will suggest that despite the near-infinite richness of world-philosophical perspectives, there is a coherent and holistic pattern of reason, the key of which is found as the antithesis to the old paradigm. A new paradigm of reason is emerging, which straddles the West and the East, and which bridges Global North and Global South. It is rationality in between. I will conclude by outlining the profile of this future-oriented pattern of reason, and how it elucidates world philosophy.