

October 10, 2012

To: Amy Ferrer, Executive Director, APA  
From: David H. Kim, Chair of the Committee on the Status of Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies  
RE: Annual Committee Report 2011-2012

Over the last year, the Committee on the Status of Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies continued to sponsor panels, including one on Asian American Philosophy, at the Division Meetings of the APA and maintain its portion of the *APA Newsletter*. Besides these typical activities, the committee also came up in the rotation of APA committees for review by the Executive Board of the APA. In addition, it made an appeal to the Executive Committee of the Pacific Division Meeting. These are discussed in turn.

At the Eastern Division Meeting in 2011, two panels were sponsored. Kyoo Lee and Ronald Sundstrom organized a panel, entitled "Xenophobia and Critical Race Theory." Kyoo Lee chaired the session, and the speakers included: 1) Sally Haslanger (MIT): "Being a Foreigner at Home, Being at Home in Foreign Land: Thoughts on Race and Place;" 2) Kyoo Lee (CUNY, John Jay College): "Xenoracism and *Homo Habitus*: How to Speak American without an English Accent;" and 3) Eduardo Mendieta (Stony Brook University): "The Somatology of Xenophobia: Towards a Biopolitical Analysis of Hate". The second panel, entitled "Japanese Contributions to Aesthetics," was organized and chaired by A. Minh Nguyen. The speakers included: 1) Peter Leech (University of Otago and Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México): "The Fragrance of Paris: Delicacies of Kuki Shuzo's Aesthetic Thought;" 2) Mara Miller (Independent Scholar): "Japanese Literary Aesthetics Today: Rewriting the Traditional in the Modern and Post-Modern World;" 3) Yuriko Saito (Rhode Island School of Design): "The Moral Dimension of Japanese Aesthetics;" and 4) Barbara Sandrisser (Architectural and Environmental Aesthetics): "The History of Elegance in Japan." A forthcoming edition of our portion of the *APA Newsletter* will feature a detailed report on this panel by A. Minh Nguyen.

At the 2012 Central Division Meeting, David Kim organized a panel, entitled "New Work in Asian/Comparative Ethics." The panel was chaired by Mavis Bliss (Loyola Maryland U.), and the speakers included: 1) Emily McRae (U. of Oklahoma): "Transforming Emotions and Living Morally: Some Tibetan Buddhist Perspectives;" 2) Charles Goodman (SUNY Binghamton): "From Madhyamaka to Consequentialism;" and 3) Peimin Ni (Grand Valley State U): "How Moral Is Confucius?"

At the 2012 Pacific Division Meeting, two panels were sponsored. JeeLoo Liu organized a panel, entitled "Much Ado about Nothing: Conceptions of Nothingness in Asian Philosophy." The chair was Douglas Berger (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale), and the speakers included: 1) Jay Garfield (Smith College): "Empty of What? Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti as Realists, Not

Nihilists;” 2) Curtis Rigsby (University of Guam): “The Kyoto School on Nothingness: Japan's Philosophical Response to the West;” 3) Bo Wang (Peking University, China): “The Way to Nothingness: From Laozi to Zhuangzi;” and 4) JeeLoo Liu (California State University, Fullerton): “Was There Something in *Nothingness*? – The Debate on the Primordial State between Neo-Daoism and Neo-Confucianism.” Roy Sorensen (Washington University in St. Louis) served as commentator. The other panel was organized and chaired by Halla Kim, and it was entitled, “Contemporary Philosophical Development in East Asia.” All of the speakers were drawn from afar and included: 1) Zhen HAN (Beijing Normal University, China): “Modern Chinese Philosophy and Its Challenge in Society;” 2) Yukio IRIE (Osaka University, Japan): “Philosophy in Japan after World War II;” and 3) Suksoo KIM (Kyungpook National University, South Korea): “Some main issues in philosophy in Korea since 1945.”

By all reports received, each of the panels produced fruitful philosophical dialogue. As an additional note, one of these, organized by Kyoo Lee and Ronald Sundstrom at the 2011 Eastern Meeting, featured an Asian American philosophical theme. This thematic focus is highlighted here because advancing the subfield of Asian American Philosophy is a part of the committee’s charge and it is typically only through this committee that venues on Asian American Philosophy are made available to the APA. There are no other formal organizations specially focused on Asian American Philosophy.

The committee also assembled and published short pieces salient to its charge in the *APA Newsletter*. In vol.10, no.2 (Spring 2011), the outgoing Chair of the committee, Gary Mar, edited an edition of the newsletter that focused on the theme of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 9/11 from an Asian/American perspective. It included three short essays based on presentations given at a panel he organized at the 2011 Pacific Meeting of the APA: George Lipsitz, “Affinities, Affiliations, and Alliances: Why Asian American Perspectives Matter Now;” Mary Watkins, “The Shame of Forcibly Displacing Others: 9/11 and the Criminalization of Immigration;” and Gary Okihiro, “The Alien: Reflections Along the Border, Ten Years After September 11, 2001.” The Newsletter also included a report on a panel sponsored by the committee – A. Minh Nguyen and Josef Velazquez, “Report on ‘The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi’ – and a reply to a book review in an earlier edition of the Newsletter: Bo Mou “Reply to a Review by Alan Fox, University of Delaware, of *Chinese Philosophy A-Z* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009).” Finally, it featured a book review by Gary Mar on Tritia Toyota’s *Envisioning America: New Chinese Americans and the Politics of Belonging*.

From May 2009 to December 2010, A. Minh Nguyen distributed questionnaires to colleges and universities throughout North America (and beyond) on the nature, challenges, and rewards of teaching Chinese Philosophy. For the Fall 2011 edition (vol.11, no.1) of the *APA Newsletter*, Nguyen processed and assessed the replies and produced an article based upon them, “Teaching Chinese Philosophy: A Survey of the Field.” The newsletter also included a short report by Falguni Sheth on a committee-sponsored panel, “Report on (Mis)Recognition: Race, Emotion, Embodiment Panel.”

The committee has already lined up several panels for the Division Meetings of the APA from the coming year. And it will maintain its portion of the *APA Newsletter*.

Apart from these bread-and-butter activities, the committee came up in the rotation for review by the APA Executive Board. In November 2011, the Chair of the committee attended part of the Board Meeting in Chicago to give an account of the committee's activities and needs and to reply to any questions or concerns raised by Board members. There seemed to be general approval by the Board, and no special concerns were raised at the meeting. There was some discussion about the difficulties of gathering demographic data salient to the committee and a few exchanges about minority recruitment.

Lastly, the Chair of this committee appealed to the Executive Committee of the Pacific Division Meeting of the APA to create a flexible two-tiered system for timeslot allocations that gives special but defeasible priority in timeslot allocations to diversity committee-sponsored panels. The Executive Committee decided not to grant our request. This request is noted here not simply because it was an activity over the last year, but also because its rationale expresses some of the challenges that configure committees like this one.

The basic rationale for the proposal was as follows:

Panel-making is one of the few standing "powers" that an APA diversity committee possesses to fulfill its charge, and division meetings are the sites at which this is exercised. So the allocation of decent or even "primetime" timeslots for a diversity committee panel enhances, and "difficult" timeslots obstruct, the ability to gather people to discuss issues salient to the charge of these committees. And since diversity committees play a vital role in diversifying the profession, the enhancement of their ability to gather people in panel sessions has broad significance.

Relatedly, the existing arrangement for diversifying division meetings, namely diversifying the very people who organize the division meetings, does not obviate diversity committee panels and their being conducted during decent timeslots. It seems likely that a diversity panel sponsored by a divisional meeting member (as opposed to a diversity committee member) will have as its aim advancing high quality research in a subfield. Here there is some overlap with the work of my committee since we put on "state of the art" panels too. But, in its advocacy capacity, our committee has also been trying to put forward two different types of panels: 1) panels whose themes are comparative, of wide interest, and/or generally broadly welcoming to help bring non-experts into the fold and help interested colleagues to retool, and 2) panels that help develop areas that don't have very developed research agendas and bibliographical ledgers, like Asian American philosophy (which is a rough counterpart to African American philosophy). Clear examples of the first type of panel can be found in the two we offered for the Pacific 2012 Meeting. And regarding the second type of panel, I

believe nearly every Asian American philosophy panel offered at an APA meeting has derived from our committee work and not through some other process.

The Executive Committee of the Pacific Division Meeting offered various reasons why our proposed two-tier system would be logistically too difficult to implement. In addition, it expressed concern about setting a precedent that might open the floodgates for other groups seeking the same status. The Committee on Asians decided not to press the matter further.