

New Frontiers in Philosophical Practice

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Edited by

Lydia Amir

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Finally, I thank the authors of this anthology for their good will and dedication to the completion of this project.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to explore new approaches to the practice of philosophy. *Practicing Philosophy* (2015), the previous anthology co-edited with Aleksandar Fatić, describes the state of the art of this relatively young theoretical and practical discipline. Apart from one exception, the current anthology includes essays from different authors than those who contributed to the previous anthology. I have mostly turned to prominent philosophical practitioners from various countries who, in the course of their extensive experience, have changed the ways in which they practice philosophy, or refreshed their methods, or challenged philosophical practice's goals and means, or innovated in the problems and audiences they addressed. However, I have also solicited relatively new voices who bring fresh perspectives and methods to the field.

This anthology does not exhaust its theme; limitations of space have obviously precluded the inclusion of all significant recent innovations and innovators in this discipline. I ask those who are not included here not to bear a grudge, as I hope there will be other opportunities for collaboration.

Expanding its boundaries, the practice of philosophy is time and again reaching new frontiers. It is to pay tribute to the creativity this field requires that I have undertaken this project. I believe it is of value not only to philosophers, both practical and theoretical, as well as to professionals and students in education and the helping disciplines, but also to the general public, since this anthology exemplifies how philosophers can fulfill their responsibility towards their communities, and, ultimately, towards civilization at large.¹

Lydia Amir
Boston and Tel Aviv, 2017

¹ Regarding philosophers' responsibility towards their communities, see Amir (2017). Regarding philosophers' responsibility towards civilization at large, see Amir (forthcoming).

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PART I

**INNOVATIVE CHARACTERIZATIONS
OF PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE**

CHAPTER ONE

DADA AS PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE,
AND VICE VERSA:
REFLECTIONS ON THE CENTENARY
OF THE CABARET VOLTAIRE

LOU MARINOFF

This calendar year, 2016, marks the centenary of the Cabaret Voltaire – the birthplace of dadaism. The cabaret itself has known periods of counter-cultural popularity, decline, neglect, and renaissance. Although its current incarnation nestles comfortably in Zurich’s trendy Bohemian-cum-boutique quarter, catering to tourists in the immaculately polite Swiss shopkeeper’s way, the Cabaret still retains something of the essence of its rebellious founders. Dadaists did not conceive that dada could (or should) be bottled, sold, marketed, or branded, let alone boutique. Then again, since the founders and patrons of the Cabaret Voltaire were all heretics of one stripe or another, as dada requires, it would be problematic to accuse its current proprietors of heresy against dada. The spirit of dada demands heresy against everything, including (if not starting with) itself. True dada is therefore also anti-dada. So as long as the Cabaret Voltaire stands, it stands for dada, even though one can now purchase souvenirs of dada there, using credit cards.

More significant perhaps than the Cabaret, albeit the physical epicenter of the cultural earthquake of dada, were the palpable aftershocks that propagated throughout Europe and the New World in the ensuing decades. Surrealism, Bohemianism, The Beat Generation, Hippie Counter-Culture, and – I shall argue – Philosophical Practice, were and are infused with dada.

A common denominator of all these movements is non-conformism, not simply for its own sake but, importantly, as identification and rejection of absurdities ensconced in status quos and standing orders. This kind of non-conformism, in any milieu or genre, is quintessentially dadaist. Indeed, consider that the Cabaret itself is named after the author of

Candide, who savagely satirized conformity with Leibnizian optimism by situating its avatar – the ludicrous Dr. Pangloss – in the midst of the sanguinary Seven Years’ War, and the catastrophic Lisbon earthquake.



Cabaret Voltaire. Photo by the author

This chapter will make a number of salient comparisons between dada and philosophical practice, in several dimensions: linguistic, conceptual, aesthetic, and political. In the hands of practitioners of dada and philosophy alike, non-conformism with and ridicule of received absurdities unflinchingly sheds the light of reason upon the darkness of ignorance, no matter wherever and however it obfuscates human minds. As expressed by Hugo Ball, the founder of the Cabaret Voltaire: “For us, art is not an end in itself . . . but it is an opportunity for the true perception and criticism of the times we live in.” Ball was implicating an array of arts, from painting and sculpture to poetry and theatre. Many contemporary philosophical practitioners could well identify with this paraphrase of Ball: “For us, philosophy is not an end in itself . . . but it is an opportunity for the true perception and criticism of the times we live in.”

Inasmuch as most philosophical practitioners subscribe to Pierre Hadot’s notion of philosophy as a guide to the art of living (1995),

“philosophy is not an end in itself” for us either. And insofar as much of our work with clients entails liberating them from Plato’s Cave – i.e. from mis-perceptions and mis-conceptions impressed on them partly by habitual human error, and increasingly by a culture of thoughtlessness – then our art also entails “true perception and criticism of the times we live in.” Thus Hugo Ball’s characterization of dada in 1916 can also apply, verbatim, to philosophical practice in 2016. Moreover, I contend that this is not accidental.

Linguistic Dimension

What does “dada” mean? Hugo Ball addressed this question at the inaugural Dada Soirée, in Zurich, on July 14, 1916. (Coincidentally or not, July 14 is Bastille Day in France.)

Dada comes from the dictionary. It is terribly simple. In French it means “hobby horse.” In German it means “good-bye,” “Get off my back,” “Be seeing you sometime.” In Romanian: “Yes, indeed, you are right, that’s it. But of course, yes, definitely, right.” And so forth.

One could add that “da-da” is a widely-occurring doubled phoneme, babbled by infants in countless Indo-European tongues, signifying “daddy” or “pappa” or “father.” Indeed, “ma-ma” and “da-da” are among the first words uttered by a majority of infants, who appear linguistically (as well as psychologically) predisposed to having fathers as well as mothers, current fashion notwithstanding. Hugo Ball apparently missed an opportunity to assert that “da-da” is innate.

Now, consider the American Philosophical Practitioners Association, founded in 1999, and better-known as “APPA.” Over the years I have mentioned on many occasions, albeit obliquely, that APPA’s founders (at least, this one) were profoundly influenced by dada. In this chapter, some of those influences will be made explicit for the first time.

What does APPA mean? Like Dada, Appa can mean many things. “Appa” in Tamil and Korean is similar to a word that means “dad” or “father.” Or, an anagram of the word “Papa.” “Appa” also sounds like “abba,” which is the Hebrew word for “father,” as well as the name of a famous Swedish rock band. In Urdu, “appa” is a word for a female elder or caretaker. In the Indonesian language, “appa” means “what.” Appa also means “water” in both Romanian and the Samkhya school of Hindu Philosophy. More recently, Appa is the name of a fictional character in the animated television series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and the corresponding

film, *The Last Airbender*. In the series, Appa is the only known living sky bison, and the animal guide of the protagonist, Aang.

From father to guide, from hobby-horse to sky-bison, it seems that “Dada” and “Appa” have more linguistic overlap than first meets the eye.

Conceptual Dimension

Although Dada is historically and conceptually associated with the anti-war backlash against World War One, it also took aim at some of the root causes that enabled that conflict to attain the apotheosis of carnage, and to perpetuate its relentlessly horrific slaughter for four years. Those root causes included colonialism and bourgeois nationalism, along with mind-numbing cultural and intellectual conformity. An entire generation of young men was wiped out savagely, pointlessly, and at crippling cost. Bertrand Russell, among other luminaries, protested publicly against the butchery, and managed to get arrested, but to no avail. Attempts to open the public’s eyes by swimming against the current of conformity were viewed as unpatriotic.

The political blindness of the ultimate victors, who imposed crippling reparations on Germany, helped sow the seeds of World War Two. That unprecedented conflict dwarfed World War One and culminated not in world peace, but rather in Cold War, dozens of conventional “proxy wars,” and the unimaginable threat of nuclear war. It was against this post-Hiroshima backdrop that the pioneering generation of philosophical practitioners was born: we witnessed the Berlin Wall, the Cuban missile crisis, the Kennedy assassination, the civil rights movement, and the Vietnam War. Just as dadaists had protested World War One – its operational insanity and underlying cultural conformity – so the Hippies protested Mutual Assured Destruction, totalitarianism, Vietnam, and all the conformities of the emergent mass-age that had enabled these new horrors. Just as dada fostered a counter-culture to finger and skewer the foibles of its day, so hippiedom assumed that very name – “counter-culture” – to promote its life-affirming values amidst rising tides of death and destruction; that is, before a critical mass of 1960s radicals transformed themselves into contemporary self-hating totalitarian “progressives.”

Comparatively speaking, the convulsions of World War One were mild compared with the atrocities of World War Two and the convolutions of Cold War. Living in a simpler day, dadaists enlisted non-conformist art to elevate ordinary consciousness. To keep pace with the atomic age, hippies enlisted psychedelic drugs to inspire mind-expanding music (among other arts) to elevate ordinary consciousness. Timothy Leary’s mantra, “turn on,

tune in, and drop out,” encapsulated the Hippie manifesto, while Bob Dylan and The Beatles, tie-dye and blue jeans paved the way to counter-



Timothy Leary's mantra

cultural transformation. So potent was this music and garb that it served to spearhead protest not only in the free West – where “cookie-cutter” suburban lifestyles were viewed as a kind of sterile cultural death – but also behind the Iron Curtain, where they became contraband symbols of protest against brutal despotism. Even the original dadaists would have to admit that the hippies outdid them in bandwidth, providing unitary artistic remedies against bourgeois conformity, on the one hand, and Soviet enslavement, on the other. The times themselves had become so strange that hippies were obliged to transcend realism and surrealism alike. That was no mean feat, and yet (at least for a time) they managed it.

Needless to say, hippies were also full-time practitioners of a well-characterized counter-cultural philosophy, aimed at dispelling illusions of their day, and at creating a nobler (if less materialistic) quality of life than that of the “rat-race” which had consumed their parents. In this sense, hippies were precursors of many of today’s philosophical practitioners, as well as an evident link between dada and philosophical practice. As one who came of age during the 1960s, I acquired a life-long love of artistic rebellion against any measures – be they cultural or political – that militate against the realization of human potential and otherwise attempt to crush the human spirit.

Contemporary philosophical practitioners are incomparably more politically diverse than their dadaist and hippie forebears; in fact they are spread across the political spectrum extant. For example, APPA has members from the American political left, committed peace activists who stridently opposed the 2003 invasion of Iraq, as well as members from the political right, of more hawkish bent, who strongly supported it. For another example, APPA has members who are devoutly religious, representing a variety of orthodox faiths, as well as members who are either agnostic or firmly atheistic. APPA has members who are ardent (but not militant man-hating) feminists, and members who just as strongly favor traditional gender roles. In the present American electoral context, APPA has some members who will vote for Clinton; others, for Trump; still others, for neither.

This divergence of views is scarcely surprising; rather, it is a credit to the portability and applicability of philosophy. If you assemble in a room any number of philosophers, they will soon be found to disagree with one another, mildly or profoundly, over virtually any question that one cares to raise. But, if you assemble in a room any number of philosophical practitioners, they will similarly disagree, save on one overarching point: that philosophy itself can be useful and helpful to people generally. That singular convergence enables philosophical practitioners to collaborate with colleagues whose metaphysical, epistemological, axiological, and political views greatly diverge. The movement emulates this delightful description of the New England transcendentalists, by one of its members: “the club of the likeminded” in which “no two of us thought alike” (Myserson 2000, xxvi). The movement thus promotes the profoundest interpretation of tolerance: getting along with those with whom we disagree, without rancor or conflict, for the sake of something greater than our differences.

But this diversity of views prompts an obvious question: If dadaism was a protest against World War One, and hippiedom a protest against the

Cold War, against which (if any) major conflict is philosophical practice similarly in uniform protestation? Simply stated, philosophical practitioners stand united in protest against the occupation and colonization of the human mind itself, by a congeries of forces including cultural imperialism, economic colonialism, and predatory capitalism.

Examples of cultural imperialism include the dumbing-down and politicization of education in the West, the marginalization of philosophy and critical thinking, the psychologization of the human condition, the pathologization of normal human problems, and the dismantling of the written tradition. Examples of economic colonialism include governance of the medical and psychological professions by insurance companies (in the U.S.) and big pharma (wherever possible), which has resulted in global pandemics of culturally-induced illnesses (e.g., obesity, depression, ADHD, ED, among a host of others) being diagnosed and treated as though they were primarily or exclusively body or brain problems (see Marinoff 2012). Examples of predatory capitalism follow from the foregoing: the mass-drugging of entire populations for decades has resulted only in the steady increase of these “epidemics,” which reap gargantuan profits but fail to solve the problems themselves. Another facet of predatory capitalism is the deluge of digital technologies sold to consumers, which have undermined attention span and social relations alike, and which severely impair one’s ability to distinguish between appearance and reality. Collectively, these forces have herded consumers into Plato’s Cave. But this cave is bugged: it tracks and monitors consumer behaviors in the service of further predation and yet more cultural imperialism.

Just as dadaists and hippies inevitably became social and political activists in the performance of their arts and adherence to their principles, so too have philosophical practitioners become activists in the performance of and adherence to ours. Just as Ralph Nader pioneered consumer advocacy by exposing an auto industry that knowingly sold dangerous or dysfunctional vehicles, so too have philosophical practitioners pioneered noetic advocacy by exposing a constellation of forces that knowingly sell dangerous or dysfunctional doctrines.

Yet another conceptual affinity between dada and philosophical practice lies in their respective perceptions by “establishment” artists and philosophers. Dada attracted accusations of “heresy” from entrenched artists, who declared, “This is not art!” Dadaists were not perturbed by the charge; far from it. In fact, they embraced it. Dada is not art, they admitted; rather anti-art, in the sense that it refused to pander to received tastes and fashions that directly or indirectly supported the sanguinary

slaughters and structural violence against which dada railed. Philosophical practice initially attracted the same accusation from institutionalized philosophers, who similarly declared, “This is not philosophy!” And we embraced this accusation too, for philosophical practice likewise refuses to pander to received tastes and fashions, including the exclusion of philosophy from everyday life, that directly or indirectly support the noetic vacuum and culture of thoughtlessness in which too many consumers currently reside.

By all these lights, consider again my earlier paraphrase of Hugo Ball: “For us, philosophy is not an end in itself . . . but it is an opportunity for the true perception and criticism of the times we live in.” Philosophical practitioners inhabit a conceptual dimension that extends vital elements of dada and hippiedom alike to our own times.

Aesthetic Dimension

To illustrate an aesthetic congruency between dada and philosophical practice, let us compare two iconic images, one from each movement. First: Marcel Duchamp’s *Mona Lisa* epitomizes dada, and is one of its most recognizable icons. Second: the logo of the American Philosophical Practitioners Association, which has become a kind of “brand” in its own right, implicitly and explicitly incorporates dadaist elements and themes.

In 1919, Marcel Duchamp committed a brazen act of anti-artistic insolence, by literally defacing a cheap reproduction of *Mona Lisa* with a mustache and goatee. The classic portrait of Lisa Gherardini, the wife of Francesco del Giocondo, painted by Leonardo da Vinci circa 1503-1506, has been called “the best known, the most visited, the most written about, the most sung about, the most parodied work of art in the world.” That Duchamp created the “best known” parody of the world’s “best known” painting speaks volumes about dada’s dartsmanship: its ability to hit a bull’s-eye of anti-art.



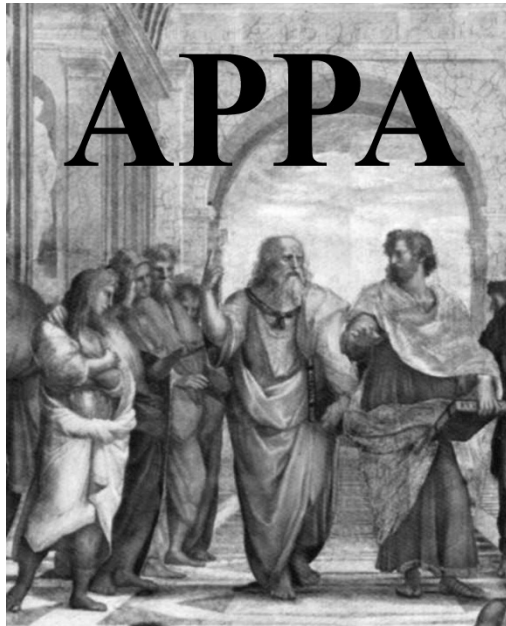
But Duchamp's dadaist message runs deeper than mere defacement. His playfully obscene inscription "L.H.O.O.Q." approximates in phonetic French "Elle a chaud au cul." Politely translated by Duchamp, in an interview with Arturo Schwarz,² it means, "There's a fire down below." More colloquially, it reads, "She has a hot *derrière*." Thus Duchamp's inscription mocks the deliberate and demurely chaste pose of *Mona Lisa*'s crossed hands, which Leonardo chose in lieu of a wedding ring, in order to illustrate *sans artifice* the virtues of marital modesty and fidelity. So Duchamp derides not only her beauty, but also her chastity, with the dadaist intent of stripping away our fanciful veneer of delicate human social mores, and exposing our coarser underlying grain of bestial carnality.

In so doing, he allegorically strips away the veneer of bourgeois nationalist support for World War One and exposes the bestial conditions in the trenches. After all, the same bourgeois nationalists who habitually mingled at the Louvre to gawk at the *Mona Lisa* in peacetime had lately massed at the front to indulge in orgies of mechanized slaughter over her possession as a spoil of war. Thus Duchamp's defacement of a classic

² <http://www.dada-companion.com/duchamp/interviews.php>

female portrait is not mere graffiti for the sake of aesthetic rebellion; it has distinctive political undertones.

As founding president of APPA in 1999, I was inspired to conceive its logo and motto, approved by the co-founders and so adopted. Now, in light of our foregoing discussion of Duchamp's *Mona Lisa*, the dadaist influence on APPA should be plain. A similar schema presents itself here, beginning with the apparent defacement of yet another masterpiece of the Italian renaissance, this time Raphael's *School of Athens* (1510). Having excised the central panel, featuring Plato and Aristotle, APPA stamped its name on the marquee. We made sure to use a Roman font. But the *School*



Nemo Veritatem Regit – Nobody Governs Truth (APPA motto)

of Athens was now transformed, from an Italian renaissance depiction of an Athenian gathering of philosophers to an American branding of an Italian renaissance depiction of an Athenian gathering of philosophers. The torch, as it were, had been passed, from Athens to Rome to New York by way of Zurich.

Contra what kinds of conformity, and against what kinds of imperialism, does APPA stand? First, since APPA's members share the premise that

philosophy is an invaluable guide to the art of living, APPA complements the parochial conformism of institutionalized theoretical philosophy, which had largely removed itself from the world, rendering itself both inaccessible and irrelevant to quotidian concerns. In the same sense that dada flouted convention, producing art deemed by establishment artists to be anti-art, but intended to utilize art as a medium to elevate public consciousness, so does APPA flout convention, producing philosophy deemed by some establishment philosophers to be anti-philosophy, but intended to utilize philosophy as a medium to elevate public consciousness. Second, APPA protests the economic and cultural imperialism that emanate from the pathologization of non-medical human problems by the psychiatric, psychological, and pharmaceutical industries, abetted and empowered by governments. These industries have exacerbated the spread of epidemics of culturally-induced illnesses – e.g. depressions, anxieties, attention deficits, among a host of other “disorders” afflicting affluent nations – to the extent that some of their proffered “cures” appear to be contributing causes. APPA’s members world-wide have been courageous in lambasting both the hubris and the associated consumer fraud of these industries of spurious diagnosis and gratuitous drugging of wholesale populations, which appear to be worsening many of the problems they purport to cure (Feary and Marinoff 2014).

This points immediately to a deeper meaning of Raphael’s painting, which has been obscured by aesthetic diplomacy: its putative title, “The School of Athens,” is a convenient fiction. The history of philosophy testifies amply enough to the richness and variety of philosophical schools in ancient Athens. There was a philosopher on virtually every street corner, each one propounding his own brand of love of wisdom, and each one attracting his own following. Starting from the painting’s centerpiece of Plato and Aristotle, we know that they diverged so substantively that Aristotle did not become Plato’s successor in the Academy, and was obliged to found his own school, the Lyceum. In sum, Raphael was well-aware that there never existed any *singular* school of philosophy in Athens, and hence he never would have called his portrayal of such diversity “The School of Athens.” The original title was “Causarum Cognitio”: knowledge of causes. Contemporary philosophical practitioners are similarly seeking *knowledge of causes* of debilitating cultural epidemics, and daring to question why the received “remedies” are driving these “epidemics” in proportion to their consumption, even (or especially) if such questioning attracts accusations of “heresy.”

Now let us reflect on APPA’s motto – *Nemo Veritatem Regit*. Nobody Governs Truth. Unlike Duchamp’s caption, this has no prurient content

but, to a greater extent than Duchamp's anagram, it possesses political implications. To begin with, I chose Latin not only for its consonance with the Italian renaissance, but also because benedictions and slogans alike sound somehow more authoritative in a dead language. In this case it's a delightfully dadaesque irony, since the motto itself is quintessentially anti-authoritarian: *Nobody governs truth*. No dadaist could fail to appreciate the humor of an anti-authoritarian pronouncement cloaked in a mantle of authority.

Yet this alone does not plumb the motto's depths. Just as the "The School of Athens" represented a variety of viewpoints, so "Nobody governs truth" may bring to different minds differing (and perhaps mutually inconsistent) propositions that each one finds (respectively) questionable. No matter which ostensive truth anyone wishes to challenge, "Nobody governs truth" provides a suitable departure point – on the tacit assumption that the motto itself is true. Then again, if nobody governs truth then nobody governs the truth of propositions such as "nobody governs truth" – in which case if true, it might be false. But if it is false that nobody governs truth, then it must be the case that someone or something governs truth, or conceivably that everyone and everything governs truth, in which case some truths might be entirely arbitrary. So if false, it could also be true.

Since no member of APPA has ever been troubled by this paradox enough to question the conundrum, at least to my knowledge, I suspect it is because our minds are focused elsewhere: not in the logical and epistemological quagmires associated with contending theories of truth or paradoxes of self-referential propositions (the analytic interest); rather, in the practical mission of assisting others to conduct deeper inquiries into the veracity of propositions they may happen to believe, or of dilemmas they need to resolve (the practical interest). Philosophical practitioners do not govern truth either; we conduct explorations of clients' belief-systems, sometimes with a view to co-discovering truths. We assist people in a search for something that may or may not exist, and if it exists may or may not be found. But we insist, as did Socrates in the agora, that the "examined life" is well-worth the journey, whatever it reveals and wherever it leads.

But if you read between the lines, we are also saying what philosophers have said from time immemorial: whatever you happen to believe, we can subvert it. Subversion is our *métier*. Be it a misconception that misguides one person, or an ideology that deludes a generation, or a myth that cripples an empire, philosophers can always be found to subvert them. At the best of times, we are dispassionate subversives, seeking only

truth, or beauty, or justice for their own sakes. But in dire times we cannot declare neutrality, and are impelled to become passionately engaged with defending what we hold to be true, or beautiful, or just. As often as not we illuminate our path with *elenchus*, exposing and subverting that which is false, or ugly, or unjust. In this sense, purely academic philosophers busily subvert one another, while philosophical practitioners busily subvert everyone else. Surely dadaists would endorse APPA's genre and scope of subversion, as for that matter they would have endorsed the psychedelic, musical, and sexual subversions of hippiedom. We were, and are, aesthetically compatible.

Political Dimension

The attentive reader will have noticed that the four dimensions of this chapter are hierarchical: the linguistic informs the conceptual; both of these inform the aesthetic; all three in turn inform the political. If politics is the highest art, as Aristotle argued, then it also affords the most grist for a subversive's mill.

We have already seen, albeit briefly, that philosophical practice can and does entail consumer advocacy. A well-informed and well-educated civil sector is indispensable to the maintenance of fundamental freedoms. This was brought home to me in no uncertain terms one day in 2003, when out of the blue I received a phone call from Ralph Nader, the *sine qua non* of consumer advocates. He wanted to acquire a number of copies of *Plato Not Prozac* for his Washington D.C. library of civics. I gladly donated them. Nader had understood immediately that the ability of philosophical practice to boost consumer resistance to predatory capitalism by enhancing self-reliance via the inculcation of virtues situated us in the camp of consumer advocacy. His phone call was therefore also a "wake-up" call to me, highlighting the importance of philosophical practice as an educational activity in the interests of the civil sector (see Marinoff 2017).

That said, the civil dimension too – along with the linguistic, conceptual, and aesthetic – falls ineluctably under the aegis of the political. What happens, then, when philosophy or philosophical practice itself is placed under political constraint? What can philosophical practitioners do when the delivery of their services is politically prohibited? At this juncture, and to address these political questions, I must remove my APPA hat and speak as a private citizen. Why? Because APPA is a non-profit organization, and one of the conditions entailed by its IRS classification is abstention from political activity. As an individual tax-payer, I am free to engage in politics, but as a director or officer of a

non-profit organization I am obliged to avoid embroiling the organization itself in political activity. So, for the record, what follows is my own personal answer to the aforementioned questions, made as a private citizen exercising First Amendment rights (while they last) and in no other capacity.

Once again, when confronted with political prohibitions, philosophers find themselves in familiar territory. From Socrates to Hobbes to Thoreau to Russell to Sartre, among legion examples, philosophers have engaged in political activities ranging from so-called “heresy” to civil disobedience to underground resistance, from risking life and limb to enduring exile, imprisonment, and even the death penalty itself. Tyrants of all stripes are so fearful of the liberating power of ideas, and cognate freedoms of expression, that they have habitually gone to great lengths to suppress free-thinkers, intellectuals, and artists.

That said, owing to bizarre twists and turns that only politics and theology can navigate, the West’s former bastions of free and reasoned inquiry – namely the universities – have become, in Abigail Thernstrom’s oft-quoted phrase, “islands of repression in a sea of freedom.”³ The irremediably foolish and fatuously anti-realist politics of the radical left (who call themselves with Orwellian irony “progressives”) have eradicated freedom of thought, speech, and inquiry in the Western academy, and have replaced them with a deluded and vindictive tapestry of politically correct ideology, which through their brainwashed graduates has metastasized like an aggressive cancer, invading and debilitating the very institutions – public, private, and civil alike – upon whose functionality the health of our polity and our civilization themselves depend. A similarly virulent strain of political correctness has lately dragged Sweden to the brink of self-destruction at the hands of Muslim immigrants, which in turn gave impetus to the pro-Brexit vote in Britain this June 2016.⁴ The same pervasive political correctness has pre-empted Western condemnation of the ongoing self-destruction of South Africa by a government of racist black thugs, and their complicity in genocidal violence against whites (e.g., Mercer 2011). Meanwhile the US is succumbing to its own epidemic of virulent black crime and violence, as Colin Flaherty courageously and relentlessly documents (e.g., Flaherty 2013; 2015).

The self-destruction of America began in the universities, and continues to this day through their radicalized graduates. University campuses have

³ First quoted in Finn (1989); later re-quoted in Aberman (2014). See Konnikova (2014).

⁴ This catastrophe is well-documented. E.g., see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psFO_P-8gvU among myriad examples.

been collectivized by political commissars, mental midgets, and soulless bureaucrats, pre-occupied above all with parroting and enforcing contentless slogans like “diversity,” and promulgating half-baked myths of “under-representation” in order justify reverse-racist and reverse-sexist hiring policies and career preferments. Race and gender are at the forefront of daily life on all fronts, from the classroom to the boardroom, under the constant scrutiny of party apparatchiks who monitor the minutiae of thought, speech, and deed, lest any objection whatsoever be raised at the plethora of dysfunctional educational policies that have rotted the foundations of Western civilization entire. Progressivism’s preposterous postulates and failed policies cannot withstand analysis and evidence, so counter-arguments are prohibited and evidence suppressed. The price of political incorrectness on campus is steep; nothing must be allowed to interfere with progressivism’s ongoing self-destruction of the U.S.A., particularly free speech and thought.

One of Martin Luther King’s signature dreams entailed a future in which his children would grow up in a world in which they would be judged pre-eminently by the contents of their characters, and not by the color of their skins (King 1963). But the universities have instead ensured, by steadily poisoning the minds of half the US population, that everyone will be judged first and foremost by the color of their skins, in tandem with gender. Progressivism’s incessant divisiveness has stirred up civil discontents of ever-increasing incivility, and violent crimes of widening scope and riotous amplitude.⁵ Progressivism’s bogus “diagnoses” and self-righteous “cures” are expedient vectors for these social epidemics themselves. Progressives have trained the American people to wage perpetual racial and sexual civil war, and have armed them with incendiary ideologies that lead only to ever-more vituperative conflicts. The universities have willfully inverted and rabidly violated King’s enlightened dream. Shame on them all.

Character and its contents are apparently nowhere addressed outside of traditional Western and Asian philosophy courses, or so my students inform me at CCNY, where it is my happy lot to teach these subjects. Mainstream students are invariably relieved and gladdened by discussions of character and its contents, along with their inevitable implications for life experience, for worse or better. Such reflection – via for example the virtue ethics of Aristotle, Buddha, and Confucius – kindles students’ individual capacities, furthers their intellectual curiosity, and refines their

⁵ E.g., see Colin Flaherty’s YouTube channels for daily exposure of this ongoing catastrophe: engendered, fomented, and defended by toxic doctrines of the deluded Left.

moral agency. Contemplation of character and its contents immediately re-awakens among discussants the nobility of being human, and therefore also the ability to value humanity in others – the opposite of the imposed yet toxic ethos of vicious and dehumanizing identity politics.

Meanwhile, university administrations coast-to-coast are preoccupied not at all with contents of character, but rather with Orwellian mantras such as “diversity” – a code-word for a rainbow coalition of malcontents, agitators, revisionists, and hate-mongers – bent on rewarding “victims of historical disadvantage” *über alles* (see, e.g., Kimball 1998). Note that “diversity” applies to everything except belief, opinion, thought, and political or religious persuasion. Deviation from the politically correct monolithic party line that dictates what everyone must think, believe, and say is not tolerated in Western “higher” education. Jewish, Christian, conservative, and libertarian white males are openly persecuted, heterosexuality is demonized, the European enlightenment is vilified; while reverse racism and reverse sexism, along with every conceivable form of apostasy and aberration, are normalized, celebrated, sponsored, and promoted. As Kors and Silveglate attest:

On virtually any college campus, for all its rules of “civility” and all of its prohibitions of “hostile environment,” assimilationist black men and women live daily with the terms “Uncle Tom” and “Oreo” said with impunity, while their tormentors live with special protections from offense. White students daily hear themselves, their friends, and their parents denounced as “racists” and “oppressors,” while their tormentors live with special protections from offense. Believing Christians hear their beliefs ridiculed and see their sacred symbols traduced – virtually nothing, in the name of freedom, may not be said against them in the classroom, at rallies, and in personal encounters – while their tormentors live with special protection from offense. Men hear their sex abused, find themselves blamed for all the evils of the world, and enter classrooms whose very goal is to make them feel discomfort, while their tormentors live with special protections from a “hostile” environment. (Kors and Silveglate 1998, 103)

Dissenting students are either shamed, chastised, suspended or expelled; while dissenting faculty are either fired, ostracized, marginalized, or sabotaged. There is only one remedy: political correctness must be rooted out and reversed, in order that the universities first, and larger polity soon after, regain their health. This practitioner would gladly take the case, and treat the patient, while there is yet time.

I never foresaw that so much of my creative energy would be enlisted resisting the “velvet totalitarianism” of the contemporary academe.⁶ Having studied theoretical physics in Canada and Philosophy of Science in England, all during the 1980s, I was temporarily shielded from the neo-Bolshevik revolutions that had already swept university campuses, dethroning merit and cognate values, Bolshevizing humanities and campus culture alike. I first heard of affirmative action from American graduate students in the mid-eighties, and was immediately appalled by it, although I was at that time beyond its reach. A meritocrat born and bred, I have always defended equality of opportunity, and expected unequal outcomes, in any and every endeavor. My version of egalitarianism entails that no-one be disfavored on the grounds of race or gender, but by the same token that no-one be favored on those grounds either. I had evidently led a “sheltered life.”

By the early nineties, it came time for me to join the job-market for entry-level professorships, whereupon I found myself in the thick of anti-meritocratic politics. Canadian feminists had by now cloned affirmative action (they call it “employment equity”), hijacked the Canadian Philosophical Association, and implemented a set of hiring quotas which stipulated that females would hereafter be preferentially hired over males, regardless of (and with especial contempt for) criteria of objective merit. Carefully reasoned arguments against this lunacy were put up against a metaphorical wall and shot, much like the Tsar and his family. There was no going back.

Whereas I had left Canada to earn a Ph.D. in England as a Commonwealth Scholar, and therefore to become a custodian of Western civilization, I had returned, unwittingly but verily, an Enemy of the People. What can one do in the face of such inane political persecution? I applied for every conceivable (and not a few inconceivable) positions, and was fortunate to be offered a professorship in one of the last reactionary bastions of unadulterated reason in the American academy: the Philosophy Department of The City College of New York. I wanted to thank the Canadian feminist empresses and their palace eunuchs for rustivating me to Manhattan, so I penned them a farewell gift – *Fair New World* – a satirical novel steeped in such acid royal that it has been favorably compared with works by Swift, Huxley, Orwell, and Vonnegut. I had never aimed so high, until feminists stooped so low.

⁶ This phrase was originally coined by John Furedy. See <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1007487501100>

Writing charged political satire of this kind entailed a combination of dadaist non-conformism, hippie protest, and literary disobedience. All in all, it was dada as philosophical practice, and philosophical practice as dada. My departure from Canada was that of a political refugee, from a liberal fascism that declared that there were too many white male professors in the universities. Although of Ashkenazi Jewish descent, I was reclassified as “white” for the purposes of demonization and exclusion. I asked these liberal fascists where they were when Jews really needed them, in 1936, when the Nazis declared that there were too many *non-Aryan* professors in the universities. These feminazis could have explained to their mentors that Ashkenazi Jews are actually white.

My 1994 exodus made a splash in Canadian newspapers. *Fair New World* sold two thousand copies underground, from a post-office box in Vancouver. Canadian libertarian lawyer Karen Selick called it “the most politically incorrect work of art I have ever seen . . . hilariously funny and scathingly insightful” (Selick 1995, 46). Believe me, it is no mean feat to parody a farce.

Once in New York I lost no time seeking a literary agent for *Fair New World*, but was told confidentially by several male agents that anyone who represented this novel would be committing professional suicide. Recalling Hugo Ball, how’s that for “true perception and criticism of the times we live in?” Apparently a little too true, too perceptive, and too critical of our times to suit the politically correct tastes of mainstream American publishing, controlled by the same “progressive” sorority which had hijacked the Canadian Philosophical Association. *Fair New World* painted a mustache and goatee on militant feminism’s *Mona Lisa*: dada as philosophical practice qua political action.

Having escaped the fire of Canadian political correctness, I had landed in the frying pan of its American counterpart, on one of the most storied and subsequently politicized campuses in the entire American gulag:⁷ The City College of New York (CCNY). Founded in 1847 by Townsend Harris as The Free Academy of New York, with the mission of educating “the whole people,” CCNY offered first-rate higher education at no cost, mostly to children of impecunious immigrants. During its halcyon decades, the 1920s through the 1950s, CCNY earned the sobriquet “Harvard of the Proletariat,” numbering ten Nobel laureates to date among its distinguished alumni – more than any other public university in America. Competition to enter CCNY was fierce, and applicants had to sit entrance exams. Merit was the criterion of admission.

⁷ For a detailed treatment of the American gulag, see Marinoff (2007, chap. 11).

All this changed in 1961, with the birth of an educational monstrosity called “CUNY”: the City University of New York. CUNY amalgamated, swallowed, and politicized a number of formerly free-standing liberal arts institutions, including City College (its flagship), Hunter College, Brooklyn College, Queens College, and Lehman College. It also spawned a gaggle of community colleges and satellite schools.

CUNY disingenuously appropriated CCNY’s date of foundation – 1847. To this day that act of revisionist history is shamelessly promulgated to New Yorkers, from websites to parade floats: “CUNY, founded in 1847.”



CCNY: founded 1847

CUNY: incorporated 1961 (not 1847!)

What kind of university would cement a brazen historical falsehood into its very foundations? This is beyond even the *chutzpa* for which New Yorkers are renowned. It commingles *chutzpa* with hubris. A dadaist might call it “chutzbris.” More grimly, as George Orwell cautioned (1950), “Who controls the past, controls the future. Who controls the present, controls the past.”

By 1969, CUNY found itself at the leading edges of the culture and gender wars that had engulfed campuses from coast to coast. Craven administrators capitulated to a congeries of radicals, who demanded (among other things) that City College jettison standards and revert to open admissions. Virtually overnight, CCNY was transformed from one of America’s finest public universities to what Elie Wiesel described (he taught there in 1972) as “a bad high school.”⁸ There followed decades of

⁸ Private communication, 2003.