

# ASPCP Program at the World Congress

**Boston, MA  
August 10 - 16, 1998**

Program Organizer: Kenneth F.T. Cust  
Central Missouri State University  
President, ASPCP

**Thursday, August 13, 1998  
14:00 - 15:50**

## The Nature of Philosophical Practice

Chair: G. John M. Abbarno (D'Youville College)

- Tom Magnell (Drew University). "Philosophical Practice as Education"
- Kenneth F.T. Cust (Central Missouri State University). "The Private Practice of Philosophy"
- Elliot Cohen (Indian River College). "Conflict of Interest in Counseling and Psychotherapy"

**Friday, August 14, 1998  
12:00 - 13:50**

## Philosophical Counseling and Ethics

Chair: Paul Allen (East Stroudsburg University)

- Vaughana Feary (Fairleigh Dickinson University). "Feminine and Feminist Perspectives on Virtue Based Philosophical Counseling with Women Clients"
- Pierre Grimes (Golden West College). "The Moral Crisis in the Exploration of Philosophical Midwifery"

**Friday, August 14, 1998  
16:00 - 17:50**

## Issues of Philosophical Practice

Chair: Regina Uliana (U of Southern California)

- Louis Marinoff (City College of New York). "Inculcating Virtue in Philosophical Practice"
- Paula Manchester (President of Community Care Companions) and Steve Palmquist (Hong Kong Baptist University). "Kant's Architectonic Turn as a Model for Philosophical Practice: The Philosopher as Architect, Teacher, or Friend?"

**Friday, August 14, 1998  
18:00 - 19:50**

## Roles in Philosophical Counseling

Chair: Scott Martin (New York University)

- Peter Raabe (University of British Columbia). "Why Has God Forsaken Me? Philosophically Counseling A Crisis of Faith"
- Susan Robbins (Rowan University). "The Myth of Professional Neutrality"
- Wayne Shelton (Albany Medical College). "The Role of Philosophical Counseling in Clinical Medical Ethics Consultations"

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## Reykjavi Conference

The 12th Inter-Nordic Symposium on Philosophy was held in Reykjavik, Iceland, May 2 - 3, 1998. The general theme of the conference was "Philosophy with a Human Face." About 130 people attended, with 13 speakers, 3 of whom are fellow "philosophical practitioners." Professor Petra von Morstein (University of Calgary) gave a very interesting talk on "A Philosophical Investigation of Anxiety and Depression." She argued that ontological anxiety, which puts one face to face with one's potentiality, is indispensable to individuation and psychological development, whereas depression is the inability to accept oneself. Hence, "depression can be a painful holiday from anxiety," and "to move from depression to anxiety is like moving

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from a prison to an open space." Professor Warren Shibles (University of Wisconsin - Whitewater) gave a very insightful critique of the limitations of philosophical counseling in his talk on "Philosophical Counseling and the Emotions." He also explained the Cognitive Theory of emotions and argued that emotions are cognitions, and not just bodily feelings, and hence can be controlled by controlling one's cognitive processes. Professor Jess Flemming (Tamkang University, Taiwan) gave a talk on "The TAO of Philosophical Counseling-Practice," briefly introducing the history and theory of philosophical counseling-practice, and some fundamental concepts from Chinese philosophy of use in the theory and practice of philosophical counseling-practice. All three lectures were well-attended, with much lively discussion, and many philosophers from Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland showed an interest in learning more about philosophical counseling-practice. The meeting was held at the University of Iceland, and receptions were hosted by the Rector of the University (himself a philosopher), and the Mayor of Reykjavik.

by Jess Flemming  
Tamkang University, Taiwan

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## APA Eastern Division Meeting December 27 - 30, 1998 ASPCP Program

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### SESSION I

Topic: Presidential Address  
Chair: Kenneth F.T. Cust  
Speaker: Thomas Magnell, "The Task of Philosophical Practice"

Business Meeting

Affiliations:  
MAGNELL, Thomas, Drew University  
CUST, Kenneth, Central Missouri State University

### Session II

Topic: Normative and Moral Issues in Philosophical Counseling  
Chair: Roger Paden  
Speaker: Pierre Grimes, "The Moral Crisis in Philosophical Midwifery"  
Speaker: Jeffrey Maitland, "Radical Somatics and Philosophical Counseling"  
Speaker: Louis Marinoff, "What Philosophical Counseling Can't Do"

Affiliations:  
PADEN, Roger, George Mason University  
GRIMES, Pierre, Golden West College  
MAITLAND, Jeffrey, Rolfé Institute  
MARINOFF, Louis, City College of New York

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### Call for Nominations

The ASPCP is seeking nominations for 1) members of the Board of Directors (which are elected by the membership) and 2) President-elect (which is selected by the Board of Directors). All nominations should be sent to:

Dr. Kenneth F.T. Cust  
President, ASPCP  
Center for Applied & Professional Ethics  
Central Missouri State University  
Warrensburg, MO 64093

Email: KenCust@sprintmail.com

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### Call for Papers

The ASPCP meets in conjunction with the 3 divisional meetings of the American Philosophical Association (APA). Papers are welcome on any topic concerning philosophical counseling and the philosophical critique of counseling and psychotherapy, including philosophical counseling. In addition, contributors may submit proposals for workshops. If you are interested in chairing a session, serving as a commentator, or participating in some other manner, please indicate this in your letter. Finally, please indicate which divisional meeting your paper is submitted for. All submissions should be sent to the address below:

ASPCP  
The City College of New York

157th Street at Convent Avenue  
New York, NY 10031

**Theory and Practice: Shall never the  
twin meet?**

ASPCP Newsletter

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When Elliot Cohen, Tom Magnell and I founded the ASPCP as a special interest group meeting with the APA, our intention was to provide a scholarly forum for the philosophical analysis and critique of the theories and practices of the counseling professions and psychotherapy. Hence, the name of the society. However, it became quite evident very early that a significant number of the members we were attracting were interested in more than merely examining the theories and practices of other counseling professions: they were interested in establishing philosophy as a professional practice service in its own right. Many factors contributed to the encouragement of this focus including the publication of *Essays on Philosophical Counseling* (Lahav and Tillmanns, Eds.), the convening of the International Conferences on Philosophical Counseling, and growing awareness of the philosophical counseling movement in Europe. Previously unknown practitioners in this country began to make themselves known to and through the Society and began to look to it as a locus of professionalization. Consequently, it was not long before the ASPCP found itself caught up in a number of professionalization issues, including the adoption of a code of ethics and standards for certification. As most of you know these were (and are) not uncontroversial issues. Unfortunately, all this has contributed to a number of misunderstandings, contentious confrontations, and in some cases, ill feelings among some of our members. It became quite evident that there was something wrong when people began to question the name of the society, wanting to change it to reflect a more exclusive focus on "philosophical counseling." They were apparently unaware of the founding purpose of the Society as an organization of scholarly critique, viewing it instead as

one primarily for the purpose of advancing "philosophical counseling."

There are two related but very different *raison d'être's* here: 1) the scholarly analysis and critique of counseling and psychotherapeutic theories and practices and 2) the establishment and promotion of philosophy as just such a professional counseling service. It is my opinion that both are important and necessary to the responsible development and recognition of philosophy as a professional practice discipline. However, it is also my opinion that to have one organization pursue both goals is to court unnecessary conflict and to undermine the achievement of either.

No doubt some of you are already aware of the recently formed American Philosophical Practitioners Association (APPA), a non-profit educational institution legally incorporated in the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.). It is important that its founding not occasion misunderstandings or suspicions of "competition" among the officers and members of the ASPCP. My purpose here is to outline as clearly as I can my understanding of the nature, need, purpose, and focus of each of these organizations and their relation to one another.

First, some issues of practical reality: When the ASPCP decided to institute a program of "Certification," (recognizing some of its members as "Mentors," "Fellows," or "Associate's" of the Society), it did so largely in response to a concern that someone might try to use mere membership in the Society (open to virtually anyone willing to pay the dues) as a claim of authorization to engage in some form of professional practice "legitimized" by such a membership. While it was agreed that many of its members were (are) indeed appropriately qualified to offer such services, the ASPCP had no means of protecting itself or others from the possible adverse effects that might result from such practices, appropriate or not. Consequently, it adopted a program of certification (as a statement of its evaluation of the appropriate education and training of potential practitioners) and a code of professional practice (Code of Ethics) including the provision that no *member of the Society* is to hold himself or herself out as a philosophical practitioner counselor unless so certified by the Society. It was hoped that this would help provide both a means for peer recognition of the professional competence of potential practitioners as well as protection of the practitioner, the public and the ASPCP from unauthorized practitioners attempting to practice under the name of the Society. While the intent

was sound, we soon discovered that the legal standing of the ASPCP is insufficient for such a purpose.

The ASPCP has no legal status as an official organization other than that of an interest group meeting with the APA; it is not an independently legally incorporated entity. The fact of the matter is that as such, it lacks the legal powers and protection necessary to support the meaningful certification of professional practitioners. For these reasons, it has placed its certification program on hold pending resolution of these issues. In essence, the choice is either: 1) abandon the certification program as a function of the ASPCP or 2) legally incorporate the ASPCP as an independent professional association and purchase liability protection (malpractice insurance) for its officers, directors, and board members. To do the latter would require the expenditure of considerably more funds than the present treasury of the ASPCP can support. Hence the dilemma.

In the meantime, a few individuals (myself included) have founded at our own expense the APPA as just such a legally incorporated entity. Its purpose is to complement and complete the programs and efforts of the ASPCP in supporting the development and acceptance of philosophy as a professional practice service, not to compete with it. As stated above, I believe the existence and relationship of these two organizations to be absolutely essential to the responsible development of philosophy as an independent practice profession. Moreover, separating the scholarly critique function of the ASPCP from its recent *ad hoc* involvement with issues of professionalization will help to liberate it (and its members) from many of the kinds of rather unprofessional conflicts and concerns with which it has been recently plagued.

The ASPCP was founded to be an open forum for the scholarly consideration and debate of any and all points of view relating to its founding purpose. Issues such as "certification," "licensing," "professional codes of ethics" etc., while certainly appropriate grist for the critical mill, may be inherently restrictive if officially

adopted by the very body whose purpose is to critique such issues. This, I take it, was at least part of the concern of those members who have questioned the advisability of the ASPCP's ventures into such issues of professionalization. Yet, neither can the momentum toward the professionalization of philosophy be denied. What is needed is the separation of these two "not to be denied" functions into two (at least) independent but related organizational entities: one open, free, and without restriction for the scholarly critique of the theories and practices of the counseling professions (now including philosophy itself), the other focused on developing for philosophy the practical elements required of any profession attempting to establish and protect itself as a recognized professional practice discipline. How should they be related?

First, it certainly would not be expected that every member of the broader, more inclusive scholarly critique organization (ASPCP) would even want to be a member of any, or any particular, professional practice organization (APPA). However, the reverse would not be true. As an organization devoted to promoting philosophy as a professional practice discipline, it would be expected that the members of an organization such as the APPA would also be members of the ASPCP inasmuch as failure to be involved in the scholarly development, analysis, and critique of its theories and practices among a jury of its peers would be professionally irresponsible. In other words, the creation of organizations like the APPA does not threaten the status of the ASPCP; it strengthens it. Moreover, the creation of organizations like the APPA frees the ASPCP to function in its original founding role as critical observer -by subjecting the practice disciplines (including "philosophical practice") to critical scrutiny- without the threat of unnecessary internal conflicts of interest. It is for these reasons that I support the creation and development of both of these organizations and their importantly different but related functions in promoting the recognition of philosophy's value in helping to address the real issues we face in our everyday private and professional lives.

If indeed the ASPCP finds it advisable to relinquish its role of certifying potential philosophical practitioners to the APPA, as current Chair of the ASPCP Board of Professional Examiners and Vice President of the APPA, I would invite, hope and expect all those individuals who currently hold positions of responsibility relating to the code of professional practice and/or certification in the ASPCP to become and do so as members of the APPA. There is no hidden agenda here to exclude anyone who has contributed to

the professional advancement of philosophy thorough their work with the ASPCP. On the contrary, their service, dedication, and experience are and will continue to be appreciated as we work together to meet our common goals.

Professional and philosophical disagreements are to be expected and even welcomed. It is through such conflicts that people and professions grow. What is important is to provide a forum for such disagreement, not to stifle it. The ASPCP was created to be just such a forum. Freeing it from the potentially restrictive concerns of having to also establish "professional" standards and canons of practice will allow it to do so. I believe its future and the future of "philosophical practice" may depend on it.

by Paul W. Sharkey, Ph.D., M.P.H.  
Co-founder, ASPCP  
Vice President, APPA

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**On the ASPCP & the APPA**

Some members of the ASPCP have asked about the relationship between the ASPCP and the APPA. In addition, several potential new members of the ASPCP have asked about the future of the ASPCP's certification program, especially upon learning that the ASPCP certification program has been placed on hold. Others have voiced concerns about Louis Marinoff's claim in his May 22, 1998 mailing that "the ASPCP remains an open academic society, and continues to fulfill its foundational academic mission." This latter claim, some have argued, may imply that the ASPCP's foundational academic mission is now the only mission of the ASPCP. Such is not the case.

The APPA is an independent organization that has no official ties to the ASPCP. The ASPCP, while it may have placed its certification program on hold temporarily until the issues identified by Paul Sharkey in his remarks above have been satisfactorily resolved, has not relinquished and/or abandoned its recent

membership-sanctioned mandate to certify appropriately qualified members of the ASPCP. As Paul noted, in his remarks above, the ASPCP has two choices with respect to its certification program: 1. abandon the certification program as a function of the ASPCP or 2. legally incorporate the ASPCP as an independent professional association and purchase liability protection (malpractice insurance for its officers, directors, and board members." A preliminary investigation of this latter alternative suggests that such liability insurance for the directors and officers of the ASPCP would cost approximately \$1200 to \$1500 per year for a million dollars worth of liability insurance. If these initial figures prove correct, then while it would require the raising of additional funds from ASPCP members, it is not so onerous a financial burden upon the treasury of the ASPCP that it precludes the ASPCP from considering pursuing the matter further.

In the interim, and in the interest of determining what the majority of the ASPCP membership think about this matter, I would ask that ASPCP members who are concerned about the future of the ASPCP's certification program -- whether you are for or against it -- to make your views known by sending a letter to the *ASPCP Newsletter*. The results of these letters will be published in the next issue of the newsletter. A second alternative is to subscribe to the ASPCP's electronic discussion group and raise your concerns there. You can subscribe to the ASPCP discussion group by sending an email message to the following address:

listserv@emsuymb.emsu.edu

In the body of your email message, not the subject line, put the following command:

subscribe aspcp YourNameHere

Shortly after sending your request, you will receive a request for confirmation that you do want to subscribe to the ASPCP discussion group. Upon returning the confirmation request you will be registered with the server and you will then be able to send and receive messages.

by Kenneth F. F. Cust  
President, ASPCP

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**The Philosophical Value of Coffee-house Debates**

The latest issue of *Le Vilain Petit Canard*, a French monthly devoted to philosophical debates in public places, gives a list of 130 cafés, which, throughout France, offer havens for philosophical debates. The list reads like a newspaper theater listing: name and address of the café, day and time of the debate, and name of the philosopher who moderates the debate. From all accounts, all are doing very well; some, which turn away people each week, are doing extremely well. How can the success be explained?

My initial response is that a lot of people benefit from the experience. To begin with, the philosopher-animator, by accepting to submit his/her ideas to public scrutiny may discover that they need greater support; he/she may also gain both by attracting potential paying clients for private philosophical counseling, and by (sometime) getting remunerated for leading the debate. Then, there is the public who naturally benefits, otherwise it would not bother coming. It does not matter that the benefits are vicarious, genuinely intellectual, or social; the activity, albeit occasionally intellectual, is of an entertaining nature. Finally, I take it that the *café* owner must reap revenue and exposure from the gathering, and that's good for business. But if it seems fairly obvious that all these people clearly benefit from the experience, what shall be said about philosophy itself? Does it, or can it gain? If it does, what does it gain? If it doesn't, does it get damaged? In short, are the *d'bat de cafés*, as they are called overseas, what philosophy is supposed to be about? In this paper, I want to argue that there is a substantial gain for philosophy, and I'll explain in what consists the gain. Furthermore, I'll attempt to show that the *d'bat de café*, like a Phoenix, fuel and perpetuate the French *café*-culture out of which it was born. The *café* is to the French the social equivalent of what the agora must have been to the Athenians, or of what the baths must have been to the Romans, such that any culture interested in bringing philosophy to the public must do so in its social equivalent of the French *café*, the Athenian agora, or

the Roman baths. I'll finish by discussing some candidates for that social equivalent in North America.

I think that it is fairly uncontroversial to trace the origin of the *café-philos* to the late French philosopher, Marc Sautet. Marc Sautet was a Nietzsche scholar who was inspired by the works of Gerd Achenbach in practical philosophy. He left the *Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris*, where he taught from 1990 to 1997, and went on to pioneer what he called a *cabinet de philosophie*. Weekly debates in the back room of an average *Café* began what was to become a hearth of activities which defined the cabinet. The *Café* is the *Café des Phares*, a small unpretentious and rundown *café/bistro* that looks over the populist *Place de la Bastille*, one of Paris' most motley assemblage of social architecture. The famed Bastille prison once stood where now there is a large and bustling odd-shaped plaza easily identified by the July Column. The *Colonne de Juillet* is a 171 feet-tall bronze column that stands not quite in the center, and that supports the gilded figure of liberty. It celebrates all the Parisians who died toppling three monarchs of France, Louis XVI (1789), Charles X (1830) and Louis-Philippe (1848). Scattered around the column, one finds a modern Opera House (one of François Mitterrand's *Grand Projets*), a marina in a canal that berths work and leisure boats, a visible underground metro stop, a merry-go-round and other temporary children's rides, and both Hausmann-style and tenement-style buildings. When visiting Paris, one cannot help but be struck by the opposition between the asymmetry of the *Place de la Bastille* and the military symmetry of the *Place du General De Gaulle* (formerly *Place de l'Etoile*). Whether it was fortuitous or planned the choice was prophetic. It (over) dramatically signaled the "freeing" of philosophy from its regulated confines, and marked the beginning of a flurry of populist philosophical activities of a practical nature. Marc Sautet developed his practice, which, at the time of his death, included private counseling, hosting dinners with philosophical discussions, guiding tours to places around the world that have philosophical interest, leading debates on the Internet, holding seminars in businesses, and even authoring and marketing a philosophical game. He wrote about the beginnings and the experiences of his cabinet in *Un café, pour Socrate*, published by Robert Laffont in 1995, and he edited a newsletter called *Philos*. He died a young man in March 1998.

What Achenbach and Sautet did for philosophy is good for philosophy. Why and how? Philosophy is either a discourse restricted to professional philosophers or it is not. But can I characterize philosophy without

raising a philosophical issue? I'll try by giving a ultra-minimal characterization: doing philosophy consists in critically examining the foundation of our common sense beliefs before they cause conflict. Doing philosophy is a little bit like scratching where it does not itch; thus, whether one is a professional philosopher or not, doing philosophy requires disinterested curiosity, and courage; and in general, the more "knowledge" one has about a subject, the more courage it will take to examine it. If ignorance breeds audacity, erudition brings about caution. Thus, anyone who dares to look into, and challenge his or her system of beliefs is doing philosophy. In this sense philosophy is a kind of therapy for a way of life, for our common sense beliefs guide our lives. So understood, philosophy cannot be restricted to professional philosophers. Of course, in that sense, and at worst, the practice is likely to be wasteful, for the wheel may be reinvented many times; but no harm will ever be done, and occasionally some insights will contribute to the growth of philosophy.

Some professional philosophers may object to this lack of efficiency and insist that anyone pretending to do philosophy ought to be familiar with the *corpus* of philosophy. To this I respond that first of all it is unlikely that two philosophers will agree as to what constitutes the *corpus* of philosophy, and, supposing they do, they risk, by so restricting the discourse, to constrain it. The Scylla of reinventing the wheel makes way for the Charybdis of suffocating philosophy.

Philosophy, as the historians of the discipline are apt to remind us, is carved into schools which perished under the weight of their own arguments; the most dramatic example is furnished by the Scholastics ensnared in minute disputes until the Humanists came and liberated philosophy by taking a look at it from a different angle. That liberation paved the way for a revolution in the sciences. Every once in a while a great school needs to liberate itself from the constraints it imposes on itself, and generally this liberation comes from the outside. Furthermore, it is good to bear in mind that philosophy, like other arts and sciences, has no method of discovery. So that

discoveries are as likely to be the result of assiduous and focused research as they are to bob from the stream of consciousness of a public debate. Great schools of cuisine and music came about as a result of the creativity of common people and would die if they did not remain open to the creation of untrained cooks and musicians. The greatest composers owe the melodies they are so good at developing to folklore; the greatest chefs owe the basic combination of ingredients to families of farmers, fishermen and hunters. The same has to be true of philosophy: the insightful questions of philosophy are as likely to come from outsiders than insiders. Einstein himself thought that he could learn more from a child's question than from a colloquium assembling the best minds in physics. As the practice strives outsiders and insiders face each other, and either is bound to deliver the other of some potted belief. *Hon soit qui mal y pense!* Shame on the one who shouts sacrilege when an insider's debate is fueled by an outsider's insight! I do not see how philosophy could not benefit from, or be damaged by public debates.

Naturally the role of the animator is crucial. If he or she is a professional philosopher, he or she has to be able and willing to recognize the value of the outsider's insights. Not only ought the animator to stay clear of condescension, but he or she also must be able to step outside the dominant professional discourse, and be willing to put his or her "professional" beliefs to a series of severe Popper-style tests. The philosophical value of the *d'bats de café* rests on the ability of the animator to integrate the popular discourse into the professional one, even at the risk of displacing the latter. Furthermore, a conscientious animator, as Marc Sautet was, will, after each debate, write about the issues raised during the debate; issues and responses are now crafted into sentences and paragraphs by the philosopher. Isn't this the way philosophy gains?

Finally, there is another value to submitting the professional discourse to public scrutiny, and that is that it is likely to "sting" several participants and motivate them to become professional philosophers. Too many cooks may spoil a particular broth, but there can never be too many cooks working to improve the broth.

So, why is it that in France many professional philosophers, for the most part denizens of academic institutions, are reported to snub the practice? The same issue of *The Vilain Petit Canard* contains an editorial that attributes the success of *café-philos* to the failure of the mode of teaching philosophy in French schools, where philosophy classes mostly consist of authoritarian scholarly monologues, with nary an effort to open a

dialogue with the students. Although the explanation is a bit strong, for not all participants in public debates are frustrated French students, and public debates are increasingly becoming popular outside of France where teaching methods are less aloof and authoritarian than they are in France, it does reinforce my earlier point that doing philosophy requires courage, and it suggests the non-philosophical point that French teachers of philosophy are cowardly and avid of control. Professional philosophers, the editorialist suggests, react to an invitation to a *cafe-philos* the same way virgins react to an invitation out, “avec orgueil et effarouchement” (with pride and fright); and that if they condescend to attend they either remain silent or speak to correct or to give a name to what someone else has just belabored describing. The suggestion is misleading and the condemnation reads too much like a satiric echo of what conservative newspapers have said of the practice: they have denounced it as pseudo-intellectual mostly because it ignores the division between “high” and “low” art,<sup>1</sup> a division to which cultural elitists are sensitive. Obviously, if there is an intellectual elite, it is going to object to the popularization of philosophy; this is the principal activity of the elitist. However, that there is a successful movement making popular an institutionalized discipline attests to the minority status of the elite. It also attests to the end of the tyranny of the elite. Many of those who criticize elitism were once part of the elite. Most *cafe-philos* and cabinets were started by academic philosophers who remained academics. I suspect that a number of professional philosophers have adopted a wait-and-see attitude, or are too busy doing their professional duties, or just wait for the right opportunity to present itself. Public debates are still very young and there is no telling how many members of the academic establishment snubs them and how many support the idea.

Of course, a profession remains a profession by exercising caution in its endorsement of new practices. This does not imply an outright condemnation. There will always be professionals who will feel threatened by the practice the way some physicians are offended when patients argue their diagnosis, but neither the profession nor the practice need be concerned about their cries to sacrilege and their invocations to “high” art. I attended a few *cafe-philos* in France, and although the participants were for the most part non-professional, they were by no means exclusively non-professional. I also saw Marc Sautet debate Jean-Luc Marion, one of France’s foremost philosopher and member of the Sorbonne faculty, on the value of public debates in a television show hosted by the TV guru of French popular culture, Bernard Pivot. I sensed no outrage, neither *orgueil* nor *effarouchement*, in Professor Marion’s response to an invitation to debate. He may not be ready for the *cafe-debate*, but he certainly was present and an active participant in a popular TV debate. The editorialist’s concerns are not real concerns and I fear that its author is creating a straw-man in the hope of raising the status of public debates. He is looking for a monarch to topple, but the monarch is long dead. *Cafe-philos* and academic philosophy need each other and can complement each other: neither one ought to either destroy or outdo the other.

Marc Sautet reflects this mutual dependence by explaining that in his debates, he tries to strike a happy balance between two undesirable extremes, on the one hand wild therapy session (*seance de therapie sauvage*), and on the other something that would look like a professional colloquium (*un cercle d’inities*). Professionals and non-professionals are both welcome provided neither mistakes the floor for a dais or for an analyst’s sofa. The debates are structured and moderated so as to give as many participants as is possible a chance to air his or her beliefs. Topics of discussions are picked within a five-minute period at the beginning of the debate so that no one is tempted to brush up on the literature before hand and either crush the debates with rubbles of encyclopedic lore or smother it with impersonal criticisms.

The influence of Gerd Achenbach and Marc Sautet’s has reached America, thanks, in great part, to the efforts of the ASPCP (American Society for Philosophical Counseling and Psychotherapy). More and more devoted and courageous American philosophers try launching a counterpart to the French *cafe-philos* in

<sup>1</sup> In his book, *Un cafe pour Socrate* (Paris: Laffont, 1995), Marc Sautet quotes a number of negative comments from the French press. See the beginning of Chapter V.



their community. However, the success of *cafe-philos* in France is directly connected to the existing success of a café culture. America has many Cafes, but it does not have a *Cafe* culture in the sense the French have one. Now that I have argued that *Cafe-philos* are good for philosophy, I need ask what is the social equivalent of the French *Cafe* in America, for I seriously doubt that the movement can thrive without the support of an established social institution such as the Athenian agora, the Roman baths, or the French *Cafe*? The practice presupposes some social support.

It cannot be the French *Cafes* because although their designs can be imported the experiences cannot. French *Cafes* are socio-cultural events; they bring an entire community out in the open. Thus, they are places to see and be seen, and places to hide; places to read, to eavesdrop on other people's conversation, comment of their clothes, their dogs or their partners; they are places to discuss politics, the arts, television and the pedestrian who just passed by; they are places to display your indigenous status or conceal your strangeness; places to show off your originality in sartorial orchestration, in your choice of partner, or in your choice of *consummation*. It is the quintessential rendez-vous point. There is a long history of cultural movements taking shape in the openness of the *Cafe*. La Coupole and Le Dôme attracted artists in the 20's and 30's; the *Cafe de Flore* and Les Deux Magots attracted the existentialist writers of the 40's and 50's; Brasserie Lipp continues to attract politicians. What makes those *cafes* what they are is not so much their designs, but the group dynamics of their devotees. Their designs, in fact, are fairly uniform: an outside terrace that faces the sun, but that is heated in the winter and shaded in the summer. Its tables have small round marble tops girded by a wide brass rim; the tops rest on a single heavy cast iron leg with flowery motifs. The chairs are made of woven rattan, generally with a dominant beige color and accents of green, brown or red. A large bar with a top made out of some metal (brass or zinc) dominates the inside; it is both a coffee bar and a liquor bar. Seating consists in facsimile leather banquettes with high backs whose tops form a

ridge for the handy temporary storage of bags, books, newspapers, and whatever else. The floor is tiled and often has a wavy surface from the constant foot traffic of the wait staff. The bright lighting is assured by ceiling fixtures and wall sconces. There are wall mirrors hiding partitions. If culture has a favorite meeting place, the favorite meeting place of the French is the *Cafe*. In large part, it is the status of favorite meeting place that allowed the public debates to grow so rapidly. What is America's favorite meeting place? I came up with four candidates: the shopping mall, the coffee-house (individually-owned or chain-owned), the bookstore, or the Internet.

The Internet is a special phenomenon. It definitely contributes to the popularity of philosophy, but it does so without competing with the *Cafes*. There are numerous specialized lists to which anyone can subscribe at no cost. Any subscriber can join in the discussion. I am presently engaged in a world wide discussion of Descartes' *Regulae* with a list managed by Fred Wilson of Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, but the discussion is not like a *Cafe* debate. They are text rather than issue oriented, and non-philosophers rapidly drop out. I do not see how they can replace the *Cafe*; after all, part of Marc Sautet's cabinet includes a "chat" page on the Internet. The Internet strengthens the *Cafe* debates.

Bookstores seem to be ideal spots. They provide an atmosphere that encourages intellectual activities. Moreover, large chains of bookstores are turning the traditional bookstore into multi-storied friendly libraries where comfortable lounge chairs and carpeted floors beckon potential buyers. The mega-stores generally include a coffee-house and a small isolated lecture area where authors discuss their work. This is the context that Professor Louis Marinoff of The City College of The City University of New York has chosen. Once a month he animates debates on a topic selected at the beginning of the encounter. Participants sit on folding chairs forming an ellipse with Professor Marinoff as one of the foci. Although the arrangement is conducive to a lively and focused debate, its formality and its separateness robs the gathering of its voyeuristic social component; the lack of a social component inhibits the levity of the occasion. The participants are not caught in familiar surroundings; they force themselves into the ellipse. Once in the ellipse it is difficult to hide. It feels more like attending an informal seminar than socializing amid a formal discussion. Within this context, it will be hard for the movement to reach the kind of serendipitous popularity it needs in order to free and open up the philosophical debate.

I have unjustified cultural prejudices toward shopping malls. However, last summer, at the Third International Conference of the ASPCP, I heard Professor Peter March, of Halifax Saint Mary's University, enthusiastically describe his experiences animating philosophical debates at malls, terminals and parks. This led me to confront my prejudices, and I am glad I did. Why not the mall? It is an agora for non-Mediterranean climes. It has public meeting areas, and not every mall visitor is a shopper; some come to see and be seen, and to meet other people. Many come to have a drink, a meal or just a cup of coffee. Clearly, I must concede that the mall is a fit candidate, but what about odd cities, such as New York's Manhattan or San Francisco where the mall, if it exists, does not play the same social role as it does in the average American city? Will we, Manhattanites, have to wait for the malls to come? Hardly! I answer. Manhattan is a mosaic of gigantic open malls; they are called neighborhoods. Going to a Gramercy Park, East village or West Village coffee-house, bar or diner is like going to a coffee-house, bar or restaurant of the AYZ mall.

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I favor coffee-houses because of what they achieved in the 60's and 70's for folk music, jazz, poetry and political debates. Coffee-houses belong to American culture, and I see philosophical debates as contributing to this tradition, as well as I see the tradition benefiting from being identified with philosophical debates. The mark of the American coffee-house is informal hospitality; it is the place to "hang out," and strike a conversation with strangers or habitués, to put your feet up on a chair. They have no uniform designs by which they can be recognized. Professor Martine Lindquist of Stuyvesant High School has held at least one debate at such a coffee-house, the Northside Cafe in Brooklyn.<sup>2</sup> All kinds of coffee-houses

are opening everywhere in America. Their potential further growth has not escaped the attention of corporate America. Today, individual units of large chains of coffee-houses occupy every other block of neighborhoods and malls.

Whether a preference can be given to a chain-owned coffee-house or to an individually-owned one is not so evident. The former are inevitably more impersonal than the latter; one feels more "at home" in a place that is identifiable with a person who has permanence in the establishment. The rest is a matter of socio-cultural bias. The point is that coffee-houses, individually-owned or chain-owned, provide the basic social environment necessary to house the kinds of debates philosophy generates. Even if one goes to a mall for social entertainment, he or she will end up sitting down at a coffee-house. Public philosophical debates must continue to fuel the philosophical debates, and the American coffee-house provides the environment most conducive to the activity. I hope more philosophers (including myself) will find the courage to contact their favorite neighborhood coffee-house in order to persuade its owner or manager to host regular philosophical debates.

by Bernard R. Roy  
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#### New ASPCP Web Site

The ASPCP's new web site has an academic address: the web pages were written by Kenneth F. E. Cust and the site is hosted by Central Missouri State University. In addition to including the most recent information available about the ASPCP, program information at the APA division meetings, and ASPCP annual meetings the new web site has a dedicated chat server (Java based) that allows anyone to visit and chat in real time with other visitors. The ASPCP web site now includes the ability to register with the ASPCP List-Serv -- an electronic discussion group where registered users can discuss issues related to philosophical counseling and other related topics -- directly from the ASPCP web page. The instructions for registering with the ASPCP List-Serv are given on p. 5 of this newsletter; they are

<sup>2</sup> Marc Sautet commented on Professor Lindquist's debate in his organization's newsletter *Philos*. He expressed the wish that "*nos amis new-yorkais trouveront dans les semaines qui viennent l'occasion de donner la suite qui convient à ces premiers balbutiements.*" (our friends from New York will find the opportunity to give the needed follow up to these beginners' hesitations) December 1996, Number 52.

also available on the web site so I will not repeat them here. If, however, you have difficulty registering, please email me at the email address listed under the "Correspondence" section below and I will respond directly to your request:

Since the web site went up in January of this year it has had over 600 visitors. Check it out at the following address:

<http://www.cmsu.edu/englphil/aspcp.htm>

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**4th International Conference on  
 Philosophical Practice**

August 3 - 7, 1998  
 Bergisch Gladbach

Details of the program for this conference were provided in Louis Marinoff's mailing on May 22, 1998 and thus will not be duplicated here. However, if you want precise details about the conference you should contact Gerd Achenbach at the following numbers:

Ph: 49-2202-951995  
 Fax: 49-2202-951907

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**Bibliography<sup>3</sup>**

- Kenneth F.T. Cust (Guest Editor), "Introduction to Philosophical Counseling," pp. 1 - 4.
- Gerd B. Achenbach, "On Wisdom in Philosophical Practice," pp. 5 - 20.
- Eckart Ruschmann, "Foundations of Philosophical Counseling," pp. 21 - 35.
- Steven Segal "Philosophy as a Therapeutic Activity," pp. 36 - 47.

- Dries Boele "The 'Benefits' of a Socratic Dialogue Or: Which Results Can We Promise?" pp. 48 - 70.
- Jon Borowicz "Philosophy as Conversion," pp. 71 - 84.
- Vaughana Feary "The Role of Philosophical Counseling in Rehabilitating Criminal Offenders," pp. 85 - 99.
- David A. Jopling "First Do No Harm: Over-Philosophizing and Pseudo-Philosophizing in Philosophical Counseling," pp. 100 - 112.
- Pierre Grimes and Regina Uliama, (1998). *Philosophical Midwifery: A New Paradigm for Understanding Human Problems With its Validation*. Costa Mesa, CA: Hyparxis Press.

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**Submissions**

The *ASPCP Newsletter* welcomes articles (in English) on any aspect of philosophical practice. Authors submitting articles should send 3 copies prepared for blind refereeing. It is preferred that final copies be submitted on disk in one of the more popular file formats. In addition, the *ASPCP Newsletter* also welcomes letters to the editor, news items, book reviews, critical notices, and discussion notes on issues of interest to philosophical practitioners. Please send all correspondence to me at the address below

**Correspondence**

Contributions to the *ASPCP Newsletter*, as well as all other communications and/or inquiries, should be addressed to:

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<sup>3</sup> The first eight articles appeared in *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines* 17:3. The page numbers are given after each article. In addition, "all of the papers in this volume, with the exception of one, were originally presented at the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice held in New York City on July 22-25, 1997 at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The Conference, under the chief sponsorship of the Division of the Humanities at City College of New York, was organized by Louis Marinoff. Vaughana Feary's paper was originally presented at the 1997 Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association." *Ibid.*, p. 3.