

**Minutes of the AGM held at the University of Kent at Canterbury, on
Monday 12 July 2004**

Present: Helen Beebee, Thom Brooks, Robin Cameron, Peter Cave, Brad Hooker, Dan Hutto, Dudley Knowles, Michael Lacewing, Neil MacGill, Derek Matravers, Sean Sayers, Tom Sorell, Alessandra Tanesini, Tim Williamson, Jo Wolff.

The Chair, Onora O'Neill, was unable to attend. Jo Wolff was appointed to chair the meeting

1. Apologies: Stephen Clark, David Evans, Katherine Hawley, Stephen McLeod, Onora O'Neill, John Rogers, Roger Trigg

2. Election of Officers

Georgia Testa, the Returning Officer, gave the results of the election.

The candidates were: Stephen Clark, John Dupré, Matti Häyry, Dan Hutto, MM McCabe, Murali Ramachandran and Tom Sorell. Clark, Dupré, McCabe and Sorell were elected (to serve for a term of three years).

Returning Officer's Report:

221 members were eligible to vote and 101 of those individuals had voted.

All full individual members with an email address had been emailed with instructions and a ballot form, which could be returned by email or post. Four people were sent a ballot form and instructions by post. Two reminders of the deadline for the receipt of ballot forms were sent to all members with an email address. There had been no problems in authenticating emailed ballot forms as people had been instructed to either reply to the initial email circulating the ballot form or forward a completed form from the email address to which the initial election notice had been sent. Only one person asked for and was granted permission to return their ballot from a different address.

The ballot forms were emailed/posted 27 June and the deadline for receipt of ballot forms was noon Thursday 8 July, giving 11 days to vote. No voting was permitted at the AGM as sufficient time had been given to vote prior to the AGM.

The meeting gave its approval to conducting the election in the above manner and, in the light of there having been no problems, agreed that this procedure could be used in future elections.

3. Minutes of the October 2003 AGM

The minutes were approved.

4. Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

5. Chair's Business

The Chair, Onora O'Neill, was absent at short notice for personal reasons and so, unfortunately, there was no report to read to the meeting.

6. Treasurer's Report

This was circulated at the meeting. Dan Hutto reported that there were 221 full members, 26 associate members and 56 corporate members (44 departments and 12 learned societies). 21 departments and 2 learned societies (who had originally expressed an intention to join) had yet to become members. Income generated from these sources was £4889. Expenditure, however, is expected to equal or exceed this sum by the end of the first subscription year. Some learned societies (Mind, Analysis, RIP, the Scots Philosophical Club and the Aristotelian Society) have agreed to cover a shortfall of up to £4000 in the first year and up to £2000 in the second year. So we will call on their support once the subscription year is completed and expenses known.

At that stage we will also be able to calculate the levels of membership necessary to make the BPA

financially self-sufficient. It is expected that subscription income will increase (a) as a result of recruitment drives (all delegates at the Joint Session will have received a leaflet about and membership form for the BPA), (b) because those who subscribed at the discounted rate for 2003-04 will pay the full rate in the coming year, and (c) if the change to the individual membership qualification (see item 10 below) is accepted. Dan Hutto was concerned that departments might not see the need to become corporate members if individuals within a department had taken out membership. Therefore a more targeted approach to departmental memberships may be needed, with contact directly by the Treasurer to find out why they have not taken out membership and to explain the benefits of membership. Equally, we need to ensure that people are aware of the additional benefits of individual membership.

Matters arising:

It was agreed that charges for membership should be reviewed annually by the Executive Committee, prior to the AGM, and that any changes would be subject to approval at an AGM. Various possibilities for raising the profile of the Association were discussed; e.g. an annual newsletter to be sent with recruitment leaflets, outlining the activity of the Association and the benefits accrued for individual and corporate members; a higher profile at the Joint Session; meetings for members at other times of the year focused on particular relevant issues such as the RAE.

Jo Wolff reported that there is no room in the Joint Session programme for the AGM other than on the Monday if the meeting is not to clash with symposia and papers. Furthermore, when the Mind Association and Aristotelian Society used to hold their AGM's in the middle of the Joint Session attendance was still very low, even though no other meetings or papers were scheduled against them. So the Monday timing of the AGM at the Joint Session is not obviously a disadvantage from the point of view of attracting attendees. More significant might be the business to be discussed. However, confining discussion of important issues to an AGM at the Joint Session would disadvantage the large number of members who were not able to attend the conference. It was, therefore, decided not to make the AGM the main forum for discussion of important business or membership activity, but rather to have meetings on specific issues, such as the RAE, as and when such meetings appeared necessary and to increase the profile of the Association in other ways.

7. Secretary's Business

Jo Wolff reported the following:

- (a) Georgia Testa was appointed as Executive Secretary, with responsibility for day-to-day running of the Association, as well as organizing its general administration including membership matters.
- (b) A constructive dialogue had been opened with the Arts and Humanities Research Board on two related matters. The first concerned the nature of the post-graduate scholarship application forms, which many members thought imposed a disproportionate burden on departments this year. The second was to seek clarification on the training requirements which are required as part of a post-graduate degree. Emma Wakelin had agreed to consult as to how to make the procedure simpler once the current cycle of applications had been completed. In both cases communications from the AHRB were posted on the BPA website.
- (c) He had a met with the Better Regulation Task Force, where he presented the view that many departments feel that quality assurance procedures remain over-bureaucratic, as universities were still requiring departments to 'gold-plate' procedures so that they would pass any possible quality assurance inspection.
- (d) Helen Beebe had been in contact with the Learning and Teaching Support Network, and we have been seeking ways in which elements of national provision of post-graduate training can be provided in a helpful and constructive fashion, so as to provide skills specific to philosophy rather than generic skills across the humanities.
- (e) Tom Sorell had begun to investigate the teaching of Philosophy A level, with a longer term goal of seeing whether the BPA will be able to co-operate with the providers of the examination.
- (f) The Chair, Onora O'Neill, had engaged in a correspondence with the Vice-Chancellor of Swansea University concerning the proposed closure of the Department of Philosophy. We also

communicated with members of the department and students, offering advice and support, insofar as we were able.

(g) The BPA formed a strategy to offer departments confidential advice and help at an early stage if they felt under threat within their own institution.

Matters arising:

(b) A related problem was raised: that departments' rankings of applications for awards were often overridden. The possibility of moving to a quota system, which would allow departments to control the allocation of awards in accordance with their assessments of applicants, was discussed. This would have the advantage that scholarships could be guaranteed earlier than at present and so prevent promising students accepting places in the USA just because US institutions can guarantee funding at an early stage. It was recognised that quota systems have their disadvantages not least in often being conservative in operation. But it was noted that they might also result in a greater geographical dispersal of AHRB awards than at present. The meeting agreed that a mixture of quotas and an open competition would be a desirable way of reducing bureaucracy and uncertainty, and that this possibility should be suggested to the AHRB. Also, on the issue of training requirements, Jo Wolff explained that the recommendations of the Roberts Report that identified a deficit in literacy and report skills amongst engineering and technology graduates, had been universalised inappropriately to humanities students. When the AHRB were challenged on this they accepted that most philosophy research departments were providing the appropriate life and transferable skills as a matter of course. Their concern was with students whose research needs would not obviously be met by the department at which they wished to study.

(c) Jo Wolff explained that the BRTF is of the opinion that higher education is over-regulated, and were responsible for the abolition of the QAA subject review and the simplification of the RAE. However, the BRTF consults administrators rather than academics and so was unaware that the bureaucratic burdens of regulation had not been lessened as expected with the abolition of QAA subject review.

(d) LTSN – Helen Beebee explained that HEFCE gives the LTSN funds and that, therefore, the profession should engage with the LTSN to ensure that the money is spent wisely. However, she accepted that they have an image problem within the profession, and so proposed to explain to them that in order to be effective and use their funds well they need to avoid imposing plans on the profession and move to being steered by them. Dan Hutto commented that the LTSN could help the profession by coordinating and advising on the creation of progress files and, further, that their endorsement could help with applications to HEFCE by smaller departments for funds.

(e) Michael Lacewing, who composed a report on Philosophy AS and A2 levels for the Executive Committee, was at the meeting. He advised approaching the AQA to discuss the syllabus and examining as the professional body for Philosophy in the UK. It was noted however, that there may be legal restrictions on changing the syllabus within a given number of years and so the AQA may not be able to make any beneficial changes even if they were in principle willing. It was agreed that the BPA should see if it can co-operate with the AQA to develop Philosophy A level provision and meet with the AQA to open discussions. It was also agreed that we would have greater influence if we had A level teachers among our members and possibly on the Executive Committee. Moves are planned in this direction. A decision will be made by the Secretary Jo Wolff and by Tom Sorell as to who should act as our representative to the AQA.

8. Timing of future AGM's

The constitution (paragraph 15 (i)) requires a two-month period to be set for AGM's. The Executive Committee proposed and the AGM accepted that this be July-August.

9. Procedure for voting in absentia on resolutions to change the constitution

Section 19 (i)(a) states that 'members or, in the case of corporate members, their representatives may cast their vote on the resolution either in person at the meeting, or in advance of the meeting under a procedure which shall at an annual general meeting have been approved for the purpose of voting on such resolutions'.

No procedure had yet been approved at an AGM. The Executive Committee proposed and the AGM accepted the following:

Individual full members will be invited to either (a) email their votes from an/the email address given in their membership application or one that can be clearly identified as their email address, or (b) send a signed vote by post, so that their signature can be validated against their membership form. Corporate members will be invited to send (by post or email) a vote from someone within their department/society who clearly has authority to make such decisions on the part of the department/society. Posted votes must be signed. Prior to each AGM a deadline for receipt of votes in advance will be set and circulated to members.

10. Amendment to the constitution on membership criteria

The Executive Committee proposed that the criterion for full individual membership (section 5, (ii), (a)) be made more permissive to include teachers of philosophy A-level and research students. This is likely to help with any future application for charitable status and is desirable in itself.

The existing criterion was that full individual membership be open to anyone who has (a) been appointed to a post in Philosophy at higher education level, the primary duties of which are the teaching of philosophy at least up to undergraduate degree level and/or the pursuit of research in Philosophy or (b) is qualified by training and experience to occupy such a post.

The proposed criterion was that full individual membership be open to individuals who are competent to teach or pursue research in Philosophy, as demonstrated by their training or achievements.

This would mean that associate membership would be confined to members of learned societies which are corporate members of the BPA and who are not eligible for full individual membership in their own right.

Furthermore, the Executive Committee proposed that research students pay at a reduced rate for full membership equivalent to the rate paid by associate members.

The amendment was accepted by the meeting.

11. Amendment to the constitution on responsibility for membership decisions

The constitution states at 5 (ii) that 'It shall be for the Executive Committee to determine whether any individual does or does not meet the eligibility requirement for individual membership... and to determine whether any department, or any learned society, does or does not meet the eligibility requirement for corporate membership.' The Executive Committee proposed and the AGM accepted that this authority be vested in the Treasurer to ensure that decisions are made speedily.

12. AOB

There was no other business. The meeting closed at 11am. The next AGM will be held at the University of Manchester on Monday 11 July 2005.