

British Philosophical Association

British Philosophical Association Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held at UCL on 10 November 2004, 2pm

Present: Helen Beebee, Stephen Clark, John Dupré, Brad Hooker, Dan Hutto, M.M. McCabe, Onora O'Neill, Tom Sorell, Georgia Testa (minutes), Jo Wolff,.

The meeting was chaired by Onora O'Neill until 4.10pm, after which it was chaired by Jo Wolff. The meeting closed at 4.30pm.

1. Apologies: Robin Attfield, David Evans, Katherine Hawley, Dudley Knowles, Tony McWalter, Tim Williamson.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 22 April and in July at the Joint Session were approved and signed by Onora O'Neill.

3. Matters arising

- a) Success stories: few had been received as a result of a request sent to members. However, some names were offered at the meeting. It was decided that Georgia Testa should email departmental secretaries with a request for information on philosophy alumni.
- b) Statistics: little progress had been made on getting reliable statistics on application trends. It was agreed that statistics posted on Philos-L by Julian Baggini could be helpful but would need cross-checking. Jo Wolff suggested that statistics gained by UCL as part of an equality initiative could also be used.
- c) FISP – David Evans was in the process of contacting FISP (Federation of International Societies of Philosophy) to initiate the process that would lead to the BPA becoming a member.
- d) Changes to membership criteria: it was suggested that the new criterion for full membership agreed at the AGM did not make clear whether MA students would be eligible. It was decided not to be restrictive with our membership policy and so to accept MA students.

4. Employment of the Executive Secretary

Georgia Testa had been employed to put the BPA on a sound administrative footing. Her contract was initially for one year, ending in April 2005. While she left the room it was decided that an extension to her contract was needed to continue the smooth running of the administrative side of the Association.

5. Co-option

Stephen Houlgate and Bob Stern had declined an invitation due to pressure of work. It was decided that it would be desirable to have someone who could represent continental philosophy on the Executive Committee. Three names were proposed. The issue of co-opting an A level teacher was discussed. The Committee decided that it would be better to wait until after discussions with the AQA had taken place. They were also mindful of the fact that it might be harder for a teacher to take time off to attend meetings and that teachers in different education sectors (sixth form colleges, state schools and independent schools) might have different issues which needed to be represented.

6. Treasurer's Report and Membership Drive

a) Treasurer's Report

For the 2003-04 academic year there was income of roughly £5000 and outgoings of roughly £4000. There will be an expected increase of circa £500 if all those who paid the discounted rate in their first year then renew their subscription and so start to pay at the full rate. There were 32 new full membership and 2 new associate membership applications. This represents an additional £489 of income if all subsequently pay their dues and so become members. There is expected to be an increase of expenditure for 2004-05 of circa £550 associated with office costs and the production of the newsletter. Also, as the Executive Secretary will continue in post after April, there will be an

additional cost of £2250 for her wages.

As of 9 November: there were 8 associate members with 10 still to renew; 202 full members with 55 still to renew or pay by standing order; 29 departmental memberships with 15 still to renew; and 9 learned society memberships with 3 still to renew. There was one new departmental membership (Middlesex) and two further new requests for membership (Keele and Roehampton). One new learned society – The Forum for European Philosophy – had become a member.

Discussions with CUP for discounts on selected journals are ongoing. OUP have reduced their discount, available on their full philosophy catalogue, from 25% to 20% and have set up a dedicated web page for BPA individual members.

Some learned societies had agreed to collectively cover a shortfall of up to £4000 in the income of the Association in its first year (the Mind Association, the Analysis Trust, the Aristotelian Society, The Royal Institute for Philosophy and the Scots Philosophical Club). As the finances of the Association showed a small surplus, this support will not be called on. However, the Association has no reserves and is expected to only break even in its second year. This means it has no financial flexibility and might be hampered in future attempts to aid departments, as these exercises can be time-consuming and costly. Furthermore, there might be times when issues facing the profession would be most effectively addressed through the calling of conferences or consultations etc. with members or the profession at large. These would likely create a burden on the Association's resources or even exceed its financial capacity and so seriously hamper its effectiveness, given the limited funds available to the Association. Therefore, it was decided to approach the learned societies, who had previously offered support, for a one-off grant to create a reserve for these purposes. Responsibility for this fell to Dan Hutto and Brad Hooker. It was agreed to ask each society for a sum proportionate to its reserves in the hope of raising an amount roughly equal to two years expenditure.

b) Membership Drive

70 flyers were sent to the Ratio conference at Reading (April 2004) at a cost of £35 but no new memberships resulted. A flyer was included in the delegate packs at the Joint Session (Kent, July 2004) at a cost of £80 but only 2 new memberships resulted. However, the campaign to recruit teachers was more successful. 3000 flyers were sent to A level teachers in September at a cost of £414 and 22 new memberships resulted, which represents new income of £330. A similar mail shot is taking place in November.

It was agreed that flyers are not very successful as a recruitment method and that a personal approach to specific individuals might be more effective. The Committee decided to take on responsibility for talking to members of their own departments and departments in which they had contacts. This would also facilitate the production of a network that might alert the Committee at an early stage to problems within specific departments that might place them under threat, so allowing the Committee to offer timely help and advice. It might also enable us to find out whether failure to take out membership was a matter of inertia or due to a positive resistance to the idea. Knowledge of the latter might help us to target a membership drive more effectively or even influence how the Committee conceives of its role and activities. It was agreed that Helen Beebe would draft a recruitment letter for individuals which could also be posted on the web site. A recruitment letter had been sent to non-member departments in September which had resulted in three requests for membership. A recruitment email sent to Philos-L on 3rd November had resulted in a request for membership from the Forum for European Philosophy.¹

7. Newsletter

There had been favourable feedback on the newsletter. It was decided that the next edition should aim to contain information on a) research grants available for departments, b) which of these have been applied for successfully and c) what departments did in order to make successful applications.

8. Higher Education Academy

Helen Beebe had produced a report on the work of the PRS (the Philosophy and Religious Studies

¹ A letter was subsequently sent to 11 other learned societies in December.

Subject Centre) which was part of the LTSN (Learning and Teaching Support Network) and is now part of the HEA (Higher Education Academy), and funded by the Higher Education Funding Councils. The PRS is keen to foster a relationship with the BPA in order to realise its aim to provide a service that is used and valued by the philosophy community. A supportive attitude might include providing suggestions concerning which services the PRS spends its money on, and occasionally participating in, or encouraging colleagues and graduate students to participate in, PRS-organised events. As the PRS is funded by HEFCE, it is reasonable to suppose that HEFCE pays more attention to the views of the PRS than the BPA. Therefore, collaboration with the PRS, by, for example, providing joint responses, might increase the chance that the voice of the philosophical community is heard. There is also scope for some collaboration between the BPA and the PRS concerning departments at risk. The BPA is in a better position than the PRS to identify such departments and to discuss with them how to improve their situation. But the PRS is well placed to advise on whether such departments might apply for, for example, CETL funding, and help them with any applications.

It was agreed that the BPA should engage with the PRS to identify and pursue issues of joint concern (especially as the PRS is open to suggestion as to how it should spend its money to benefit the profession), and to ensure that the BPA and PRS do not brief against each other. It was suggested that PRS could investigate the following: 1) which or whether A level (or similar) examinations better prepare students for the study of philosophy at degree level; 2) how ethics/philosophy is taught in medical schools and what needs might exist in this sector; 3) how or what philosophy is taught in Schools of Education. Finally, it was agreed to invite Clare Saunders of the PRS to the next Executive Committee meeting to explain how the subject and its needs are perceived by the PRS and to discuss the issue of second and third year teaching progression.

9. A Level Teaching

The AQA had received Michael Lacewing's report and circulated it internally. The BPA Executive now need to follow up what, if anything has happened as a result. A new Chief Examiner is being appointed and expected to be in post in December. At that stage Jo Wolff will make contact to request a meeting.

10. Philosophy in Birmingham

Jo Wolff and David Evans had given written comments on various materials prepared for the review of the department. The department's problem had been caused by senior members leaving, and low RAE and QAA scores. So there was a need for rejuvenation. The department had produced plans as to how this could be achieved. However, the financial case seemed to be against keeping pure philosophy and more in favour of amalgamating philosophy with other departments (such as Medical Ethics and Global Ethics). Jo Wolff would be speaking again to Iain Law, the acting Head of Department, and would circulate details of that discussion.

11. AHRB – postponed due to lack of time.

12. Use of Web Site – postponed due to lack of time.

13. QAA – postponed due to lack of time.

14. RAE 2008

The British Academy agreed with the BPA view that the panel should be as large as possible as this reduces the workload on the individuals involved and reduces the likelihood that subjects will not be represented. However, they adopted only a subset of the list of nominees suggested by the BPA. There was a concern that comparative philosophy, with special reference to Indian philosophy, might not be represented. Lack of time curtailed detailed discussion but it was agreed that the panel needs to be lobbied on the issue of justifying a lower number of submissions when caused by such things as maternity leave. It is still unclear how the RAE will assess the quality of departments.

15. Journal Editorial Policy

A discussion on Philos-L revealed that some journals were taking an unacceptably long time to make decisions. It was agreed to ask the membership whether they were of the opinion that the BPA should

formulate policy on such issues, before drawing up a voluntary code of practice and inviting UK journals to subscribe to it.

16. Philosophy Career Guide – postponed due to lack of time.

17. Accountability, regulation, funding regimes – postponed due to lack of time.

18. AOB

A member of the BPA had sent a short document on the issue of the gender deficit in philosophy. Their view was that the BPA is uniquely placed to tackle this issue. The Committee is already concerned that, for the RAE, maternity leave could count against the assessment of a female academic's work, given the focus on quantity of work produced. This raises the more general issue of career breaks which affects both women and men, although it affects more women than men. It was agreed to ask the membership whether they were of the opinion that the BPA should formulate policy on such issues.

19. Future meetings

Next meeting – 1st March 2005 (London), 10th July 2005 (at the Joint Session, Manchester). AGM 11th July 2005 at Manchester (immediately following the Joint Session).