

BRITISH PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION

Executive Committee meeting

Tuesday 27th May 2014, 1.00-4.00pm
Room 102, Senate House, Malet Street, University London

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Mark Addis, Anita Avramides, David Bain, Michael Brady, Kimberley Brownlee, Sam Coleman (representing Brendan Larvor), Tim Crane, Angie Hobbs, Sarah Johnson, Michael Lacewing, Joe Morrison (attending as incoming BPA Director), Neil McDonnell, Tom Sorell, Bob Stern, Alessandra Tanesini.

1. Apologies

John Callanan, Havi Carel, Alessandra Tanesini, Tom Stoneham

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Approved.

3. Matters arising (MB)

Item 3/3/7, AQA/Philosophy in Schools: issues surrounding the new specification for the Philosophy A-level will be discussed under item 7 below.

Item 3/5 (c), AHUG: TSo will attend the next meeting of AHUG on 20th June, at the RHS offices, UCL.

Item 3/5 (e), online presence: SJ reported that she is planning to set up a Twitter feed for the BPA, with the aim of posting items news articles and topics of interest to philosophers; all Exec members will have access, so anyone can post. AH to help SJ set this up.

Item 3/8, recruitment drive: MB encouraged those who haven't yet done this to do so.

Item 3/9, SAPERE: the A-level issue and syllabus took up much of our time since November, so MB, ML, and TS didn't meet with SAPERE. But ML and TS plan to do this soon.

Item 5 (a): The 'Informed Choices' guide has been updated. Philosophy is still not in the list of facilitating subjects, but reference to the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' subjects has been removed. There are no changes to the list of 'useful' A-level qualifications for Philosophy, and the report does not include more of the traditional or 'hard' qualifications. MB will write to Russell Group HoDs to encourage them to contact their admissions officers, and stress that philosophers would be happy to give advice to careers people about the value of philosophy and the philosophy degree.

Item 8, Good Practice Scheme: The Good Practice documents are being discussed at many departments. A list of participating institutions will be available on the BPA website from September 2014. TC noted another reason to sign up to the scheme, which is that this can be an action point for departments seeking the Gender Equality Mark. MB will check with Helen Beebee as to whether Learned Societies have been asked to sign up to the Scheme. MB also reported that Amy Ferrer, who is Executive Director of the APA, has been in touch about adopting a version of the Scheme in the US, and is currently in contact with Helen Beebee and Jenny Saul about this.

Item 9, Open Access and Subject Repository: MB contacted David Bourget and David Chalmers at PhilPapers to discuss the possibility of the site playing the role of recommended subject repository for philosophical research. TC reported that all published items to be submitted to the 2020 REF will have to be placed in an Institutional or Subject repository in order to meet requirements for open access, so it is important that we look into this possibility. Both were very positive about the suggestion, and said that they hoped the site could play this role. One complication is that PhilPapers is currently in the process of moving to a subscription model for institutional users, to generate the finances so that the site can continue. But they also plan that the PhilPapers archive remains open access, and so are planning to set up a separate site where open access content can be searched and browsed separately. MB and JM to keep in touch with them about progress on this.

Item 10, Black and Minority Ethnic representation: issues surrounding underrepresentation of Black and Minority Ethnic philosophers will be discussed under Item 9 below.

ACTION: MB, AH, SJ, ML, JM, TS

4. Committee members and officers 14-15 (MB)

HC and TC are leaving the Executive Committee, and the Committee expressed its gratitude for all of their hard work and valuable contributions over the years.

The votes in the recent election to the Executive Committee were as follows:

Anita Avramides (Oxford) - 68 votes

Sorin Baiasu (Keele) - 35 votes

Cristina Chimisso (OU) - 42 votes

Simon Kirchin (Kent) - 55 votes

Joe Morrison (Queen's, Belfast) - 49 votes

This means that the four spaces on the Exec will be taken by Anita (re-elected), Cristina, Joe, and Simon. Joe Morrison is taking over as Director, and the Exec expressed thanks to Joe for accepting this position. The Executive Committee endorsed the appointments of two further people as co-opted members: Sarah Johnson, who takes over from Herjeet Marway as Executive Secretary, and Neil McDonnell, who is President of the BPPA and is the new PG representative on the Committee.

Looking ahead: DB, KB, ML, BL, and BS's terms are up in 2015. JM will liaise with all closer to the time to see if they would like to stand again.

ACTION: JM

5. Director's report (MB)

(a) Philosophy A-level: A very important item of business this year has been the changes to the A-level syllabus. As reported in the previous minutes, the AQA have been pressing for changes to the content and marking scheme for the A-level, and Alison Wood was given the task of producing a new curriculum, and addressing worries about content and assessment. Alison, BS, TSo, TSt, and MB met in December 2013 to discuss these changes and to work through the materials for the new curriculum. After discussion and revision these were sent to Ofqual, and the BPA sent a letter (drafted by TSt) stating the importance of the A-level and offering our general support for the changes made. After the changes were announced, the letter of support was also circulated, explaining the BPA's role in the consultation process, and support for the changes. This was posted to Philos-I, the Leiter Blog, and online, with AH doing sterling work circulating this on Twitter. On 10th February Alison received notification from Ofqual that the revised A-level in philosophy has been accredited, and that the syllabus and sample assessment materials went straight through without comments. This is a major achievement, and the Exec would like to thank Alison for all of her work on this issue.

(b) Women in Philosophy meeting with HoDs: There was a very successful meeting of HoDs on January 10th at Senate House, University of London. This was organized by the BPA/SWIP Women in Philosophy Committee, and focused on a number of talks on issues facing women in the profession. Helen Beebee and Jenny Saul explained the details of the Good Practice Scheme, and there were talks by Shannon Dea, Rae Langton, and Paul Lodge.

JM will organise a meeting with HoDs later in the year, to discuss a number of important issues in the profession, including the aftermath of the REF process and results – the Chair of the Philosophy sub-panel, Alexander Bird, could be invited to speak to the meeting; open access publishing; and the changes to the Philosophy A-level.

ACTION: JM

6. Finance report (MA); Executive Secretary Role (SJ)

MA reported that membership and income were stable, and had changed little since this time last year. There was a general discussion on how to attract more members. MA thought that membership isn't likely to increase, but ways of expanding and diversifying membership were discussed. (On the former, MB reminded the Exec about the recruitment drive, and asked those who haven't yet contacted their departments to do so.) It was proposed that the BPA should have more of a presence at conferences and workshops, and in two ways: (i) SJ could attend major conferences to talk about the work that the BPA does and to try to increase membership numbers and increase diversity of members – for instance, SWIP and PG conferences; (ii) we could produce a leaflet, describing what the BPA is, our activities, and ways in which we need support, to send out to conferences for inclusion in the conference materials. In addition, members of the Exec attending major conferences – such as How the Light Gets In – could distribute flyers and talk to delegates about the BPA, and in other ways try to let more people outside academia know of our existence. Although the BPA is a representative body for academic philosophers, we might gain support from the general public who recognize the value of the subject and the work that the BPA does.

The Exec formally welcomed Sarah Johnson as the new Executive Secretary, and SJ gave her perspective on what is working well, what might be improved, and raised a number of issues for

discussion. One problem is that it is at present impossible for SJ to send out bulk emails to our 350 members. MA will check on software solutions; one suggestion was to use Mailchimp; another is for us to contact the Aristotelian Society to see how they email their members. A second problem concerns membership spreadsheets, which are difficult to negotiate quickly. One possibility is that we move records to a database; MA to investigate.

SJ raised the possibility of moving to online banking. This would remove the need for SJ to wait for bank statements, would allow payment of expenses by bank transfer rather than the current system of posting/walking to the nearest branch, and in other ways prove to be more efficient. MA reported concerns about this, given that we are frequently targets of fraud. One way around this would be to no longer have our account number publicly available on the website, and switch to PayPal (or similar). SJ/MA to discuss this with Chris Tebb.

SJ will set up a BPA twitter account, and liaise with AH about how best to use and expand our social media presence. SJ will set this up so that all members of the Exec can post items of general interests to the profession, rather than restrict postings to particular items of BPA business. In addition, we should think of updating our website. AH knows a PG student who would be ideal for this; SJ, MA, and AH to liaise on this.

ACTION: MA, AH, SJ

7. AQA & Philosophy A-Level (Alison Wood, AQA)

Alison Wood from the AQA spoke to a paper on how universities might help to produce materials to help teachers and students working on the new A-level syllabus. The basic issue is that teachers need focused help on support materials for the A-level. In particular, teachers would welcome (i) the identification of key passages from the texts in the new syllabus, (ii) the production of materials focused on the arguments in these key passages, (iii) materials which teachers can use to help their own engagement with the philosophical ideas and texts – for instance, as to which articles and books in the secondary literature are, from the standpoint of colleagues in higher education, philosophically credible, and (iv) materials or seminars on the nature and key techniques of *philosophical* argument. AW noted that there are particular concerns about philosophy of mind; epistemology and philosophy of religion were thought to be rather less problematic.

AW noted that some university departments are already producing materials; and the AQA wants to support colleagues in getting materials, and in supporting seminars and teacher events. ML said that he would be happy to share the manuscript of his textbook which will be used to support the syllabus; this could help to avoid duplication of materials, and ensure that anything others did would be complementary. The Exec thought that this would be very helpful. BS noted that the REF panel took school engagement seriously, and assisting the AQA in this way could help to provide the required link with research for impact cases.

There were a number of worries raised. AH was concerned about shifts in content and emphasis between the materials, which could lead to confusion on the part of teachers; TC raised more general worries about an archive of materials which could be used as a central resource to support teachers. How will this collection be managed? Where should the collection be located? Who will be responsible for checking quality and editing this?

The Exec decided that the best way to take this forward is to discuss the issue, and raise these sorts of questions, with HoDs – both because they might provide helpful feedback and answers to the questions raised, but also because they will be aware of and have access to the kinds of materials that might be helpful – for instance, first year lecture handouts, podcasts, and other resources. JM to discuss this with HoDs, and liaise with AW and the Exec to take this forward.

ACTION: JM

8. PG matters (NMcD)

The Exec formally welcomed Neil McDonnell, who is Director of the BPPA, and the new PG representative to the BPA. NM raised a number of issues for discussion. (i) It would be valuable if HoDs could encourage PG students to join the BPPA and ensure better representation at its meetings and conferences. (ii) The BPPA conducted a survey of philosophers to gather information about gender, ethnicity, career trajectory – for instance, how many publications were required for interview, how many fixed-term teaching jobs did people have before permanent positions, etc. The results have yet to be published; before they are, NM would like to increase the survey and gather more information, and wanted to know how the BPA might help to do so. NM will liaise with AH about this. (iii) The BPPA would like PG students to have better access to information on academic journals, such as acceptance rates, turnaround times, etc. At present they (and we) have anecdotal evidence about these, although DB pointed out that some journals will supply this information if asked. We decided to work with the APA to ask publishers of the major philosophy journals to give us this information, and to publish this on the BPA website. JM to contact Amy Ferrer, Executive Director of the APA, to discuss this.

ACTION: JM, NMcD

9. Black & Minority Ethnic representation (MB)

In March 2014 MB conducted a survey of HoDs to address the question of the representation of BME philosophers in the profession. There were 14 responses to the survey, and the findings, concerning numbers or percentages of BME philosophers working in the UK, were as follows:

Staff (4 responses): Professorial – 1 Asian, 1 White and Asian; Lecturers – 1 White and Asian, 1 Mixed White European.

Postdocs (1 response): 1 Asian.

PhDs (3 responses): Percentage of BME students was 14%, 19%, and 42%.

PGT & PGR (3 responses): Percentage of BME students was 11%, 16%, and 28%.

UG (5 responses): Percentage of BME students was 11%; 18%; 22%; 25%; 26%.

We decided that the number of responses was too low, and the information received too little, for useful analysis of the data, and for practical suggestions to be raised. So MB and JM will ask HoDs again, with the hope that more reply, and that the BPA get a better picture of the representation of BME philosophers in the UK. This is an important issue, but we need more data before we are able to take this forward.

ACTION: MB, JM

10. AOB

This was MB's last meeting as Director, and the Exec expressed their thanks to him for his work for the BPA, and presented him with a very generous leaving present. MB expressed his thanks for this, and to the Exec for all of their work and support in the past three years.