

Royal College of Psychiatrists
Philosophy Special Interest Group
Annual Report to Council: May 2005

The Philosophy Special Interest Group (PSIG) has continued to thrive, with several new members joining the Committee for the annual committee meeting, which was held in the College on 1st April 2005.

The finances of the PSIG are in good order and we have had discussions concerning how to use the surplus. Three plans are being considered. First, our local groups might occasionally require support. Secondly, it would be good to encourage young Philosophy graduates to attend conferences and meetings pertinent to the Philosophy of Psychiatry. Finally, we are pursuing the possibility of a prize essay to encourage psychiatrists who are interested in deepening their appreciation of the conceptual basis of clinical practice.

Regional groups, such as that at the Institute of Psychiatry (represented by Dr. Matthew Broome on the Committee) and such as the Scottish Group (still led by Dr. David Findlay and Professor Eric Matthews (who also serves on the Committee)), continue to be active. We have been delighted to have formed a link with HUMAN, a multidisciplinary group involving users of mental health services, which meets in Nottingham to discuss issues relating to mental health from a philosophical and humanistic viewpoint. Represented by Dr. Neil Nixon on the Committee, HUMAN is undertaking research to discover and map the teaching of Philosophy for trainees in Psychiatry. The PSIG is supportive of and grateful for this useful work.

The PSIG has continued to provide, through its Committee, academic support to various meetings and conferences. A highly successful 7th International Conference on Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology, entitled "Time, Memory and History" took place in Heidelberg in Germany in September 2004. Many members of the PSIG attended and spoke at the

conference thanks to the publicity given via the Committee and thanks to the continuing academic links with the International Network for Philosophy and Psychiatry. Members of the Committee have also continued to speak at regional and national meetings of the College, including at the annual conference in Harrogate in 2004. Our academic co-sponsorship of the 3rd R D Laing Conference, entitled “Madness and Civilisation”, helped to ensure a successful continuation of this series of conferences, with a number of eminent speakers.

At the annual meeting in Edinburgh in June 2005 the PSIG is running a one-day training course on values-based practice, led by Professor Bill Fulford. We continue to update the PSIG page on the College’s website. And a PSIG newssheet is planned for the near future. At the recent Committee Meeting of the PSIG it was agreed to establish more formal links with the Philosophy and Humanities Section of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA). We are also hoping to host a joint meeting with the Dutch Foundation for Psychiatry and Religion.

It was with a degree of dismay that the Committee learned that the College’s conference office is no longer able to support the PSIG as it once did. Nevertheless, the PSIG Committee is exploring ways to continue to provide conferences and meetings of a high quality for the benefit of the College’s Members and Fellows. We hope to be able to continue to foster the good name of the College on a broader platform relevant to both academics and those involved – from various perspectives – in practice. In this regard, the new Oxford University Press series, International Perspectives on Philosophy and Psychiatry, which is now well under way, will form a useful resource for psychiatrists and those in related disciplines. Members of the PSIG are contributing to the series and the Committee benefits from having one of the series editors (Professor Bill Fulford) as its Secretary.

Dr. Julian C Hughes

Chair

Philosophy Special Interest Group