

Report on the Mississippi Philosophical Association meeting of the Spring of 2008

A) The 58th annual meeting of the Mississippi Philosophical Association was a one-day event held Saturday, February 23rd, 2008 at the University of Memphis, in conjunction with the MidSouth Philosophy Conference. This marked the first time in many years that the MPA met outside of the state of Mississippi, and also the first time in many years it met in conjunction with another conference. These changes were prompted by the desire (expressed at the business meeting of the 2007 MPA annual meeting) to boost attendance at and interest in the MPA program over what they have been recently.

The effort had mixed success. The total number of people who attended some MPA session or another was around 20. This was comparable to the attendance figures for the 2007 meeting. However, given the ability to attend other talks, the attendance at any particular paper session averaged about 8 people. It was widely agreed that the quality of papers read was quite good. We also attracted some new people to the group, especially faculty and students from schools in Arkansas.

B) The program was as follows:

Chuck Hodgins, Department of Philosophy and Religion, University of Mississippi
“The Need for Natural Theology in the Life of the Theist” – **graduate prize winner**

J. Aaron Simmons, Department of Philosophy, Hendrix College
“Opposition or Interlocutor: New Possibilities for Contemporary Continental Philosophy of Religion”

Eric Weber, Department of Public Policy and Leadership, University of Mississippi
“ ‘Stop him!! He stole my internet connection!!’: Hume, Hegel, and Dewey on the Historical Origins of Political Concepts”

John Sylvia IV, Department of Philosophy and Religion, University of Southern Mississippi
“The Success of Modal Fictionalism” – **graduate prize winner**

Jim Shelton, Department of Philosophy and Religion, University of Central Arkansas
“Beauty, Play, and the Meaning of Life”

Morgan Rempel, Department of Philosophy and Religion, University of Southern Mississippi
“Dying at the Right Time” – **2008 MPA Presidential Address**

C) In the business meeting, Steven Skultety (University of Mississippi) ascended to President for 2008-9. Eric Weber (Department of Public Policy and Leadership, University of Mississippi) was elected Vice-President after having been nominated by Robert Barnard (University of Mississippi) and having his nomination seconded by William Lawhead (University of Mississippi). Neil Manson (University of Mississippi)

was retained as Secretary-Treasurer. Also present at the business meeting were Steven Smith (Millsaps College) and Morgan Rempel (University of Southern Mississippi).

Vice-President Steven Skultety noted that the number of paper submissions from graduate students (8) was higher this year than in the past. There was speculation that this increase was attributable to the MPA's meeting in conjunction with the MidSouth. Steven Skultety also noted that we only had one submission from a philosopher within the state of Mississippi. This was attributed to the fact that those in attendance had all read papers at recent MPA meetings, as well as to the fact that Memphis is pretty far away for most Mississippi philosophers. However, Steven Smith noted that 4 MPA members were giving papers at the MidSouth, suggesting that the distance to the conference was not the problem.

Various suggestions were made regarding strengthening participation in future MPA meetings.

Steven Smith suggested that if we again met in conjunction with another conference, we should have a shortened program (three papers total) that met in the afternoon only, so as to ensure that attendees attended the entire MPA program.

Robert Barnard suggested that if we again joined up with another conference, we time our papers around the keynote speaker of the other conference.

Steven Skultety suggested that we not meet annually and that we make the holding of the MPA meeting contingent upon a minimum number of submissions from in-state faculty members; Robert Barnard objected.

Eric Weber suggested expanding the meeting along the model of the Tennessee State Philosophical Association, and also suggested meeting in the fall. Neil Manson objected that, due to the small size and population of Mississippi compared to Tennessee, the MPA confronted structural problems with funding and with the potential number of in-state participants.

Steven Smith suggested that having a conference theme would attract specialists to submit papers. He also suggested that a call for papers be put out on an Internet notice board such as Fritz Allhoff's "Philosophy Updates" web service.

Robert Barnard suggested that we ask Mississippi State University to host the next meeting of the MPA. Steven Smith suggested that we might attract the newly hired philosophers of science at Mississippi State University to the next meeting of the MPA if we made philosophy of science the theme.

William Lawhead suggested that if we again meet in conjunction with another conference, and if an MPA member is also giving a paper at the host conference, then we leave open the corresponding time slot in the MPA program so that we do not compete against that member for an audience.

Eric Weber suggested we find a facility at a pleasant location – possibly the Gray Center, a retreat in central Mississippi, or possibly some place on the Mississippi Gulf Coast – to attract potential participants with a "getaway" atmosphere. He also agreed to take over responsibility for maintaining and upgrading the MPA web site from Steven Smith.

The business meeting concluded with the agreement that Eric Weber would look into arrangements for next year's MPA. In addition to the above suggestions, it was noted that in 2007 we considered meeting in conjunction with the Alabama Philosophical Society. It usually meets in Orange Beach, Alabama – another nice getaway spot.

D) The Treasurer's Report is as follows:

OLD BALANCE

as of February 1, 2008: \$279.83

EXPENSES

2008 student prizes: \$250

INCOME

dues collected at 2008 MPA: \$90

NEW BALANCE: \$119.83

E) Members are encouraged to renew their MPA membership by sending \$10 to the address below. Provide a return address and I will send a receipt. Cash is acceptable, or send a check written out to the Mississippi Philosophical Association.

submitted by

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