Bylaws

of the

Metaphysical Society of America (MSA)

Article I

Descriptions of Executive Council Office Holders

A. The **President** serves a one-year term beginning at the end of an annual MSA conference and continuing to the same time at the subsequent MSA conference. The MSA President takes office following a year as Vice-President/President-Elect.

The principal duties of the President are to host the annual conference. The President shall:

1. select the annual theme of the conference.

2. deliver a plenary session Presidential Address at the conference. (Because the address is typically published in the *Review of Metaphysics*, the address should not be committed to another outlet.)

3. select, secure, and arrange a plenary speaker or similar plenary event at the conference.

4. direct and have oversight of all local arrangements for the conference—including a conference hotel (or similar facility), conference meeting rooms, opening reception on the first evening of the conference, concluding banquet dinner on the final evening of the conference, and conference publicity, program, and related activities and materials.

5. compose the program for the annual conference on the basis of the program rankings and selections determined by the Executive Council Board members.

6. announce the winners of prizes at the annual banquet.

Because the President selects the annual conference theme, the President shall not participate in any way in the selection of submissions to present at the annual conference.

In addition to hosting the conference, the President shall:

1. preside over meetings and deliberations of the Executive Council—in consultation with the Secretary, who sets the agenda—and work closely with this group to advance the mission of the Society.

2. consult with the Graduate Advisory Board (GAB) on matters relevant to promoting, supporting, and sustaining graduate student interest in the MSA. In addition, the President shall ensure that any GAB members cycling off the Graduate Advisory Board

are replaced by new graduate students.

3. serve a three-year term, commencing one full year after the President's term in office, on the three-person Nominating Committee, composed of past presidents.

B. The **Vice-President** serves a one-year term beginning at the end of an annual conference and continuing to the same time at the subsequent conference—at which time the Vice-President becomes the President. The Vice-President shall:

1. receive electronic submissions for the annual conference and provide them in a timely manner in anonymous format to the Executive Council Board members for review, ranking, and selection for both the conference and the determination of paper prizes.

2. facilitate the submission and prize selection process undertaken by the Board members of the Executive Council and provide this information to the President, who then forms the program organization and schedule of sessions.

3. plan and determine the annual theme, location, local arrangements, and funding/ institutional support for the conference at which s/he/they will be President so as to be able to announce this information in broad terms at the business meeting at the end of the Vice-President's term and the commencement of the presidency.

4. introduce the President at the annual conference.

C. The **Board** of the Executive Council is a six-person group elected by the vote of the MSA general membership. Board members are appointed for a three-year term, with appointments staggered such that two new members join (and two prior members depart) each year. Board members may serve indefinitely multiple terms but shall not serve consecutive terms. A minimum of one year must pass from the end of a term on the Board before any person is eligible to be a candidate for an additional term. Board members shall:

1. attend the annual conference, for which they will form the program selection committee.

2. review, evaluate, and rank submissions for the annual conference program and provide this information to the Vice-President by the agreed-upon due date. The Vice-President will then, in a timely manner, present the collective results to the Board for the purpose of helping the Board to determine ultimate acceptances and rejections.

3. work generally to advance the mission of the Society.

4. consult and work closely with all MSA standing committees, prize committees, and ad hoc committees so that they may operate successfully and meet their organizational charges.

5. consult and work closely with the MSA officers as well as persons who hold other MSA positions (such as the ACLS Delegate and the MSA Webmaster) to ensure that both the

Society's communications and its finances are transparent and as strong as possible—including nominations and elections as well as any in-person or online official activities of the MSA.

6. attend the business meeting at the annual conference.

D. The **Secretary** is elected by the vote of the MSA membership and serves a four-year term, with election staggered by two years with the position of MSA Treasurer. The Secretary shall:

1. provide and ensure timely email correspondence with members and followers concerning all matters relating to MSA events, dues, and initiatives.

2. maintain records of paid members and paid conference registrants.

3. attend MSA conferences and set the agenda—in consultation with the President, who presides over meetings—for the MSA's Executive Council and general membership business meetings, which typically take place during the conference.

4. take and keep minutes of said meetings as well as records of Executive Council business enacted via email, including any vote results.

5. arrange and execute the annual election of MSA officers, which includes working closing with the Nominating Committee (composed of past presidents).

6. keep tabs on the MSA's scheduled awards, e.g. the Findlay Prize and the Founders Medal, and work with the other members of the Executive Council to form ad hoc committees for these awards.

7. work closely with the President concerning the annual conferences.

8. work closely with the Executive Council Board concerning issues that may arise throughout the year (e.g. ACLS events or new MSA initiatives).

9. work closely with the MSA's Treasurer, as some responsibilities intersect.

E. The **Treasurer** is elected by the vote of the MSA membership and serves a four-year term, with election staggered by two years with the position of MSA Secretary. The Treasurer shall:

1. submit an interim financial report at the MSA meeting (usually in March) and a completed/final annual report at the end of the fiscal year (sometime in early summer after May 31st).

2. attend annual MSA conferences and preside over discussion of Treasurer's reports at the Executive Council and general membership business meetings.

3. make payments on behalf of the MSA, This includes:

a. writing checks for conference prizes and honoraria,
b reimbursing travel expenses and any other conference costs that are not covered by the host institution (where applicable), and
c. paying annual ACLS dues.

4. review monthly statements from the MSA financial accounts and keep the books balanced on, at minimum, a quarterly basis.

5. work closely with the President concerning the annual conferences.

6. work closely with the other members of the Executive Council concerning issues that may arise throughout the year (e.g., ACLS events or new MSA initiatives).

7. Work closely with the MSA's Secretary, as some responsibilities intersect.

Article II

Participant Selection Process for Annual Conference

A. The Vice-President/President-elect provides a Call for Abstracts (CFA) at the business meeting of the conference that takes place during her/his/their term as Vice-President. (The CFA is later posted on the MSA website.) The CFA announces and describes the conference theme (if there is one) and specifies the requirements for submission, including due date (typically September 1st), abstract length (typically around 500 words), and paper length for prize consideration (typically 3,750 words).

B. Following said conference, the now President designs the upcoming conference program and determines the number of slots available for accepted submissions in advance of the work of the selection committee. Because an important aim of the conference is to promote participation and robust discussion, at least 24 slots should be made available for accepted abstracts and/or prize papers. In light of factors such as tie scores among abstracts or presence or absence of prize-winning essays, the President may adjust the number of available slots after abstracts are selected for acceptance or rejection. The President shall not change the program so as to exclude any papers that were accepted by the selection committee on the basis of the original number of slots. The President may expand the program but shall not include any abstract that scores lower than an abstract that was rejected.

C. Selection of abstracts and prize papers is to be done according to principles of anonymous review. The Vice-President collects abstracts, renders them anonymous, and submits them in a timely manner to the selection committee.

D. The President establishes, within limits, a list of criteria for evaluating submissions and provides simple scoring criteria. The list should be brief and straightforward and must not skew results in such a manner that papers in agreement with a given philosophical position take

precedence over papers that disagree with said position. A recommended example of simple and straightforward scoring criteria is the following: 1) clarity of thesis and argument; 2) promise of scholarship; 3) relevance to conference theme – with each given a score of 1 (non-satisfactory), 2 (satisfactory) or 3 (excellent).

E. The Board of the Executive Council serves as the selection committee. Board members score submissions for the purpose of acceptance or rejection and papers in consideration for prizes. Scores are collected by the Vice-President and reported back to the Board for consideration and ultimate determination of acceptance or rejection. The awarding of prizes is optional and depends on the perceived quality of submissions in a given year. The results of the Board's deliberations are then reported to the President.

F. The Board will be given sufficient time to review the submissions (typically 4-6 weeks). Board members who submit abstracts for consideration are not to review their own submissions or any submission for which they possess an obvious conflict of interest (e.g., the submission of either a spouse or a student whose work was produced in a Board member's course and can easily be identified as such by that Board member).

G. Because of recusal requirements regarding submissions, the Vice-President collects scores from every Board member and averages (does not sum) the scores for each submission.

H. However submissions are evaluated, inclusion in the program is to be determined such that no submission is accepted if there is a higher rated submission that is rejected.

I. In cases where authors of accepted submissions are unable to present at the conference, available slots will be filled in accordance with the ratings provided by the selection committee. No one shall be invited by the President to present at the conference who has not already submitted work via the usual process, save any specifically invited plenary speaker(s) established in advance and unrelated to any spaces reserved for regular conference presentations.

Article III

Graduate Advisory Board

The mission of the Graduate Advisory Board (GAB) is to advise the President on a range of issues that include (but are not limited to) the following: how the MSA can better achieve its existing aims; whether the MSA should include new aims and how best to achieve these ends; how the MSA can identify and seize new opportunities and extend its reach; how the MSA can serve and advance the professional interests, as well as the intellectual ones, of graduate students; how the MSA can make better use of multiple communication platforms; and how the MSA can speak to, inform, and develop the interest of a multiplicity of different graduate students with interests at least in part metaphysical.

The GAB is made up of four members each serving two-year terms, which are staggered so that two members are appointed each year. All appointments are renewable.

Article IV

Prizes

At regular intervals, the MSA awards three prizes and a Founder's Medal. Despite the typical time frame for the awards described below, prizes may not be given in cases where no eligible candidates are determined or no submissions deemed worthy. The awarding of the Findlay book prize and the Founder's medal (each awarded every four years) is staggered bi-annually.

A. The **Aristotle Prize** is awarded annually to the best paper deemed worthy by the Board and submitted for presentation at the MSA's annual conference by a matriculated student without a Ph.D. Only complete papers shall be considered, and the paper's length must fit the presentation time allotted (typically one-half hour and around 3,750 words). The prize carries a cash award of $500, inclusion in the program, and assistance with costs for attending the annual meeting.

B. The **Plato Prize** is awarded annually to the best paper deemed worthy by the Board and submitted for presentation at the MSA's annual conference by those who have received their first Ph.D. within six years of the conference date. Only complete papers shall be considered, and the paper's length must fit the presentation time allotted (typically one-half hour and around 3,750 words). The prize carries a cash award of $500, inclusion in the program, and assistance with costs for attending the annual meeting.

C. The **John N. Findlay Book Prize in Metaphysics** is awarded every four years to "the best work in metaphysics" as determined by the Nominating Committee composed of past presidents. The prize carries a cash award of $500 and a plenary presentation at the next scheduled annual conference.

D. **The Paul Weiss Founders Medal** "recognizes a lifetime of work that engages classical or contemporary problems of metaphysics in innovative ways that transform our understanding of those problems and open new possibilities for their solutions. The most important criteria for the award are the (1) quality and content of the work and its (2) innovativeness. The prize committee is also looking to recognize those whose work has had (3) an impact on metaphysics, such as changing the direction of metaphysical thought or recovering it, and (4) provoked other philosophers to do creative work in metaphysics. Additionally, (5) concrete activities that have promoted metaphysical research, such as, organizing conferences and leading societies and, more specifically, (6) active participation in the Metaphysical Society of America are noteworthy qualifications for the award, though neither necessary nor sufficient in themselves." The Founder's Medal is awarded every four years. Recipients are determined by the Nominating Committee composed of past presidents.

Article V

Conflict resolution

A. The process and roles delineated in Article II notwithstanding, the Executive Council reserves the right to vote on any matter involving the annual conference—theme, location, plenary speaker(s), selection criteria, meeting cost to the organization, etc.—that is relevant to the well-being and reputation of the organization. A 2/3^{rds} vote shall prevail.

B. On any other matter pertaining to the function, reputation, and well-being of the MSA where there is disagreement among any members of the Executive Council (e.g., regarding the proper carrying out of job descriptions as articulated in the MSA Constitutions and/or Bylaws), the Council shall hold a vote on the matter. Any member of the Council may call for a vote. Unless the disagreement arises during an in-person meeting, votes shall be carried out in a timely manner by email as per the requirements stated in the MSA Constitution, with the Secretary managing the voting process. A simple majority shall prevail.

C. Where serious concerns arise regarding the ability or willingness of an officer to carry out his/her/their responsibilities, a vote of no confidence may be called for by any member of the Council. The officer under consideration may vote, and a simple majority shall prevail.

D. If a vote of no confidence in any officer is successful, the matter proceeds to the general membership via the listserv so as to ensure maximum awareness and participation among MSA members. The Secretary announces the results of the vote of no confidence (but does not disclose how each member voted) and calls for the membership to vote on removal from office. Discussion of the matter for a period of up to two weeks may take place before any vote is taken. After three weeks, a vote is held. Two-thirds of the membership shall be a quorum and simple majority among voting members shall prevail.

Article VI

Amendments

Amendments to these bylaws may be proposed by the Council or by petition of any ten members and shall be adopted if accepted by two-thirds of those replying within one month of the inquiry being sent out to all members.

Article VII

These bylaws are to be binding if accepted by the majority of those voting on it within two weeks of date of mailing. Voting may take place by postal ballot, e-mail ballot, or by other means deemed appropriate by the Executive Council.