

Committee on Non-Academic Careers

2015-2016 Membership

Amelie O. Rorty, chair (2018)

Clifton Guthrie (2016)

John Shook (2016)

David W. Chambers (2017)

Henrique Schneider (2017)

Aine Donovan (2018)

Jennifer Faust (2018)

Report on the work of the APA Committee on Non-Academic Careers, 2015-2016
Amelie Rorty

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1. Summary of accomplishments :

Beyond Academia: Professional Opportunities for Philosophers –a radically revised and enlarged successor to the APA’s *Non-Academic Careers in Philosophy* (1984 and 1999)—has been prepared and circulated. This brochure is intended to provide guidance—resources, information, and advice— to philosophers who are interested in exploring a wide range of professions outside of academia . It includes biographies of philosophers who chose to leave academic life and who found—and in some cases invented—productive and rewarding work that called on their philosophic talents and insights. It provides links to resources for a search into non-academic careers; it lists contacts for graduates wishing to maintain connections to philosophers and philosophy departments. Most importantly, it offers suggestions to Department Chairs and Placement Officers for ways to support those of their graduates who are considering taking professions outside the academy.

The Committee reviewed submissions the *Journal of Value Inquiry Prize*. and helped to review proposals for the APA’s *Small Grant Awards*.

2. Summary of failures:

We had hoped to offer panels on non-academic careers at meetings of each of the Divisions. Aine Donovan (Dartmouth) asked a number of philosophers who are now happily and successfully employed outside the academy to do presentations at the Eastern Division Meetings this winter. It should not be surprising that she was unable to persuade any of them to join the APA and to travel to Baltimore in January for a panel discussion. Our attempt to recruit Chairs for panels at the Central and Pacific meetings met with similar failures.

3. Summary of plans:

I have contacted Jack Weinstein (University of North Dakota and the Institute for Philosophy in Public Life), who hosts a well-established public radio program where he interviews philosophers on their work. (See <http://www.philosophyinpubliclife.org/Why/Home.aspx>). I hope to enlist him to do a series of broadcasts with –and about-- philosophers who are engaged in work outside the academy.

4. Suggestions for reflection:

1. Mightn’t we be well-served to merge the Committee on Non-Academic Careers with either/or both the Committee on Career Opportunities and

Placement and/or the Committee on Public Philosophy? The distinctions between “academic philosophy,” “non-academic philosophy” and “public philosophy” are misleading. Many institutions outside the academy—the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institutes of Health, judicial and financial departments of government—promote philosophical research. Many professional schools and university-based institutes and centers operate as liaison “bridges” to private and governmental agencies. Some of the most visible public philosophers – e.g. Sen, Dworkin, Rawls, Nozick, Nagel, Nussbaum— all are/were academics. Lawyers and judges hold academic positions in law schools, while hospitals and pharmaceutical companies standardly standardly invite academic ethicists and moral theorists to serve as consultants.

As I understand it, the Career/Placement Committee presently has several sub-committees. The ‘placement’ section of the committee on non-academic careers could then serve as another one of those sub-committees. The advantage of this is that the APA Central Offices and University Career Offices—both of whom have access to many relevant resources-- could coordinate both functions. Similarly the concerns and interests of the Committee on Public Philosophy also overlap with those of the CNAC.

2. It is not clear whom the Committee on Non-Academic Careers is meant to represent, or whom it is meant to serve. Do we represent recent philosophy graduates who are considering leaving academia? Do we have any statistics about whether this population are APA members? Do we represent philosophers who work outside the academy? In view of our difficulties in arranging for a panel of speakers for the Division meetings, it seems that philosophers employed outside the academy are at present not likely to be APA members. We might hope that they would join us –but there’s nothing about the work of the Committee on Non-academic Careers that would enhance that possibility.
3. What sort of organization is the APA? Is it a professional organization designed to serve academic philosophers, to facilitate communications among them, to provide a forum for their professional concerns as academics, to provide a venue for the presentation and discussion of their work as teachers and department administrators? Or is it an organization designed to provide a venue for discussion among philosophers wherever they may be and wherever they may be employed? The place and role of the committee on non-academic careers –and of course much else about the organization-- would be very different on the two models.
4. If the Committee remains in its present form, might future Chairs consider publishing a Newsletter –or better, developing an internet blog site — for non-academic philosophers to exchange news and views?