

Thanks to all of you ladies and gentlemen, for coming tonight. I realise that the patriots amongst you are making a considerable sacrifice to be here, and I am grateful for that. Of course, I appreciate how difficult it was to give up your invitations to the Queen's 80th birthday celebrations; but I'm sure she was very understanding. Others might be postponing the agony of watching England lose yet another football match. Some people may – inexplicably – have stayed away to watch the match. On the University of London's intranet, there is a page called 'world cup advice for managers'. One piece of advice is: 'try not to jump to conclusions about the reasons for sickness absence or late arrival at work'. So I won't. Actually, when I was organising the date and time for this event some time ago, I did of course consult FIFA about whether the planned date would conflict with any England football fixtures. They assured me that it would be very unlikely that England would even qualify for the world cup, so not knowing much myself about football, I took their word for it. Anyway, for those of you who are masochists, or do not have any self-control, or do not own a VCR, Shahrar has arranged for some information about the game to be discreetly conveyed in a side room after I finish my 90 minute speech.

The creation of an Institute of Philosophy is the realisation of a long-standing ambition or dream for the philosophical community in the university of London. When I first came to the University of London in 1989, I remember Mark Sainsbury mentioning a number of times that the University ought to have its own institute; Mark has told me that he had got the idea from Stewart Sutherland, former professor of philosophy of religion, principal of King's College and former Vice-Chancellor of this University – and this is appropriate since Stewart (now Lord Sutherland of Houndwood) is now the chair of the Institute of Philosophy's Advisory Council. The size and strength of the London philosophical community and the wide interest in various kinds of philosophy provide an obvious rationale for the creation of such an institute, and we might all wonder why it has not been done before.

What we were missing in London struck me forcefully when I visited the research school of the social sciences of the Australian National University in Canberra in the mid-1990s. Those of you who know the philosophy programme of this great institution will know how they manage to attract a constant flow of high-quality visitors and research fellows to Canberra, creating in a relatively small and very remote space an intellectual atmosphere which still has no real rival in the philosophical world for the quality of research environment it provides. When I returned from Canberra, I wondered why we have nothing like this in London. Many philosophers want to visit London – and without wanting to insult anyone, there are so many more reasons to come to London than there are to go to Canberra (let's face it). And yet – with the exception of the LSE's excellent centre for the philosophy of natural and social science – the facilities which we could offer visitors and research fellows were quite feeble. Yet here we were in one of the world's great cities, with one of the country's best universities, one of its best universities – and yet we could barely organise a conference or two. I think many of my colleagues and I felt at that time that an opportunity was being missed.

Things started to change with the creation of the School of Advanced Study in 1994 – I believe when Stewart Sutherland was Vice-Chancellor – and the subsequent creation in 1995 of the Philosophy Programme by Jo Wolff of UCL, at the suggestion of the then director of the Institute for Classical Studies, Richard Sorabji. I think the creation of the Philosophy Programme is only one of the many things that London philosophy has to be grateful to Richard for. (I also owe a personal debt to Richard because he appointed me to my first job in London at the Kings Centre for Philosophical Studies.) It's a pleasure that he was able to come tonight and I'd like to thank him for setting the whole thing in motion.

The design of the Philosophy Programme was the product of the energy, ambition and vision of Jo Wolff, who was director of the Programme for the first three years of its existence. I think that Jo invented the Programme's distinctive 'product' – so to speak – the provide-your-own-lunch one-day conference, which has since been copied by philosophers all over the country. During the 10 years of the programme's existence, it held 83 conferences, 20 public lectures, 11 seminar series and 24 visiting fellows (who came from the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and well as from the UK). During this time Jo and I were helped by the tireless effort, enthusiasm, efficiency and good humour of Shahrar Ali, who did a full-time job on a very part-time wage and never complained.

The Philosophy Programme collaborated successfully with many organisations. I'd like to thank in particular Peter Momtchiloff of OUP, Sam Guttenplan and the editors of *Mind and Language*, Simon Glendinning and the Forum for European Philosophy, and Anthony O'Hear of the Royal Institute of Philosophy for their help in these collaborations. (The Royal Institute of Philosophy is an independent charity based in Gordon Square; Anthony and I think of our relationship as being like that between the Bank of Scotland and the Royal Bank of Scotland.) In addition, John Armstrong ran an active aesthetic programme for some years and gave the programme some much-needed financial support during this time. Tony Bruce of Routledge helped us to launch the book series London Studies in the History of Philosophy; we are grateful to him. (Here I would also like to thank Tom Pink and Martin Stone for their work in founding this series and keeping it going.) I would also like to thank our loyal and devoted individual members of the Programme for their regular attendance and support.

The Philosophy Programme received financial and other support from the School of Advanced Study and its first Dean, Terry Daintith. His successor, Nico Mann, has also been very supportive to us and extremely helpful in the transition to institute status; I'd like to take this opportunity to thank him warmly for all he has done for us. I would also like to thank his exemplary assistant Sandrine Alarcon – although she cannot be here tonight – and the registrar of the School, Tony Bell, a man who is rumoured to do the jobs of five people (and that is only in the daytime). During the period of the Programme's existence we were very fortunate to have the unconditional support of the directors of the other institutes of the School. I hope it will not be invidious to single out for special thanks Warwick Gould, the director of the Institute of English Studies, who sat on our management committee for many years, has shared his knowledge and experience of the university with us, and has always been exceptionally encouraging to us in all our plans.

The creation of the institute in 2005 would not have been possible without the creation of the Philosophy Programme, and as I have already said, this itself would not have been possible without the vision, dedication and effort of Jo Wolff and Richard Sorabji, and the tireless work of Shahrar Ali. But I would also like to emphasise that it would not have been possible without the creation of the School of Advanced Study and (*a fortiori* as we say) the existence of the University of London. A lot of things are said these days about the University of London – some of them true, some of them very silly – but what is certainly true is that it is the existence of the university as it now is that makes London the philosophical centre of activity that it now is. The Philosophy Programme relied on the established patterns of collaboration in teaching and research between philosophers in the Colleges: Birkbeck College, King's College, Heythrop College, the LSE and UCL. Without the existence of these real established collaborative links between the colleagues in these places, and the sense of a common purpose underpinned by our common teaching programme and our history, the Philosophy Programme would have been nothing more than headed paper. In addition to this, the departments provided financial support during the lean years; I hope we made good use of it. I'd like to thank my philosophical colleagues in the university for all their support over the years in attending and organising conferences and giving papers, and in this way putting the Philosophy Programme (and now the institute) on the map. I'd particularly like to thank Barry Smith here who has collaborated closely with me in the development of the institute plans and did such an excellent job as deputy director of the institute in 2003-4.

The Philosophy Programme was inaugurated in 1995 with a public lecture by John Searle. John Searle joked at the beginning of his lecture that he thought that the University of London had had a philosophy programme for many years. This remark indicated a difficulty with the whole phenomenon of the Philosophy Programme: what exactly was it? The word was awkward, but we could never really find another one which was more suitable. The obvious answer to the question – from our point of view – was that it was a fledgling institute of the university, but understandably enough the university was unwilling to create new institutes without some guarantee of their long-term sustainability. Yet the programme was being run on an unworkably tiny budget; I could not see how it could either be turned into a proper institute or continue to exist in its current form.

Shamil Chandaria solved this problem for me during (what would not be an exaggeration to call) a momentous conversation in early 2003. Shamil was then a part-time MA student at UCL, having spent most of his working life in finance after having obtained a PhD at the LSE. In an act of exceptional generosity and foresight, he pledged to give a significant amount of money to provide seed funding for an institute of philosophy. A condition of his donation was that matching funds would

be found by the university; the vice chancellor, Sir Graeme Davies, immediately and generously agreed to match Shamil's offer from his development fund. It goes without saying – this is one of those phrases which mean the opposite of what they say – that I am deeply grateful to Shamil and to Sir Graeme for the confidence and vision that they showed in giving us these donations. This is not the kind of opportunity which comes one's way very often in university life; it's a nice alternative to all the gloomy whingeing stories one reads about in the THES.

The institute was founded in 2005 after two years of planning and negotiation. I realise I have not yet said anything about what the institute does. Without wanting to take you away from the television and the football for too long, I need to say a few words for those of you are not so familiar with our activities. Our activities may be divided into three kinds: events (including conferences, public lectures and seminar series), fellowships (visiting fellowships and research fellowships) and what can be labelled research support: providing information about philosophy through our website, which is set to develop in all sorts of innovative ways in the coming months (I'll keep you in suspense about this...). All our activities and events are open to everybody. In this way, the Institute of Philosophy is different from the ANU's research school, and from many institutes of advanced learning in the world. This is because of the distinctive role of its parent institution, the School of Advanced Study. The School is a unique institution which serves a national and a public role, and receives state funding partly because of this role. The Institute of Philosophy plays its national role by enabling all philosophy departments in the country to become institutional members (we expect to have all departments as members by the autumn of 2006) and giving them a say in what goes on in the institute; in addition, the institute offers various forms of facilitation for philosophical activity throughout the country: for example, enabling overseas visitors to visit the whole of the UK through the institute, developing new electronic resources and collaborating on research projects and conferences.

I won't go on now about all the things we are planning to do. But perhaps I should say a brief word about philosophy itself. WV Quine famously said that logic is an old subject and since 1879 it has been a great one. Whatever the truth of this, it is not controversial that Philosophy too is an old subject and has been great since the fourth or fifth century BC. At the institute we do not have any programme for philosophy; we do not think that philosophy is only one kind of thing, or that it has only one method, or only one set of canonical texts and problems. We don't think that all philosophy *must* be relevant to other things; but nor do we think that it *cannot* be. As well as being the oldest intellectual tradition of our civilisation, it is also the most diverse, and at the institute we want to reflect this diversity. Despite what some newspapers, cynics (and even some philosophers) like to say, philosophy is not dead, and academic philosophy has not given up the search for the answers to the big questions. Academic philosophy today is in a historical tradition which stretches back to Plato; although some of the answers it gives to the big questions today are complicated and require hard work to understand, the same is true of the answers given to these questions by Aristotle, Plato, Kant and Hume. At the Institute of Philosophy our aim is to make philosophy of the highest quality available to the widest audience inside and outside the university. This is our mission statement! Making it available and accessible will not mean dumbing it down; I hope that those who have already taken advantage of what has gone on at the institute will appreciate what this means and to what extent it can be done.

The phenomenon of *acknowledgements* has really started to get out of hand in philosophy and other academic subjects recently. I've just been asked to review a book in which the acknowledgements section alone is 12 pages. I fear I may have fallen victim to this new disease; so let me conclude by thanking again four people who have done so much to make this possible. First, to Jo Wolff for starting the Philosophy Programme and for his unstinting support and generosity; to Barry Smith for all he has done for the institute in its initial years and his dedication to the project; to Shahrar Ali for giving so much of his time and energy over the years and for his single-minded loyalty and devotion to the programme and the institute; and to Shamil Chandaria for making the institute possible. Many thanks to you all.

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