

International Philosophy Olympiad

I. History of the IPO

National philosophy olympiads have been held in Bulgaria since 1988, organized by the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University. On the initiative of the Bulgarian Committee of the (national) philosophy olympiad, the event was opened for international participation in the early 1990ies, resulting in the:

- I. International Philosophy Olympiad (IPO) held in Bulgaria in 1993.
- II. IPO: May 1994, Petric, Bulgaria. Participants: Bulgaria, Rumania, Turkey, Poland, Germany.
- III. IPO: May 1995, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. Participants: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Poland, Germany.

During the III. IPO, the “International Organizing Committee for IPO” was created with the adoption of a Letter of Intent. Its secretariat is located at Sofia University (Prof. Ivan Kolev).

At a meeting of experts of philosophy education held at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in February 1995 in connection with UNESCO’s project on “Philosophy and Democracy in the World,” it was decided to promote the organization of national and international competitions along the lines of the philosophy olympiads with the aim of “encouraging the practice of philosophical, critical thinking and stimulating, through competition, the interest of young people in philosophy.”

- IV. IPO: May 1996, Istanbul, Turkey. Participants: Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Germany.

Unesco declares the IPO as “perfectly consonant with the organization’s concerns.”

- V. IPO: May 1997, Warszaw, Poland. Participants: Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Lithuania, Germany, Turkey, Poland.
- VI. IPO: April 1998, Brasov, Romania. Participants: Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Turkey, Germany, Hungary, Ukraine, Albania.

- VII. IPO: May 1999, Budapest, Hungary. Participants: Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Turkey, Romania, Ukraine, Germany, USA, Argentina, Italy, Slovenia.
- VIII. IPO: May 2000, Münster, Germany. Participants: Argentina, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, USA.
The Organizing Committee elaborates a new statute, on the basis of which the IPO will in future be organized under the auspices of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de Philosophie, FISP).
- IX. IPO: May 2001, Philadelphia, USA. Participants: Argentina, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Uruguay, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.
- X. IPO: May 12-16, 2002, Tokyo, Japan. Participants: Argentina, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine.
- XI IPO: May 7-10, 2003, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Participants: Argentina, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, USA.
(based on information provided by Dr. Gerd Gerhardt and Prof. Katalin Havas)
- XII IPO: May 19 – 23, Seoul, South Korea, Participants: Argentina, Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay
- XIII IPO: May 19 –23, Warsaw, Poland, : **in organization**

II. Regulations Concerning the Organization of the International Philosophy Olympiads

Preamble

The International Philosophy Olympiads (IPO), which is a competition for high-school pupils, first took place in 1993, through an initiative from a group of teachers of philosophy. The founding members are: Ivan Kolev (Bulgaria), Gerd Gerhardt (Germany),

Katalin Havas (Hungary), Wladislaw Krajewski (Poland), Florina Otet (Romania), Nuran Direk (Turkey). These Olympiads have also been welcomed by UNESCO (see "Conclusions of the International Study Days Philosophy and Democracy in the World", February 15-16, 1995).

The International Philosophy Olympiads will be organized from now on under the auspices of FISP and UNESCO Division of Philosophy & Ethics.

These Regulations were prepared following the wish of the International Organizing Committee of IPO to cooperate with FISP in the organization of the Olympiads, expressed in its letter of May 9, 1999, and in accordance with FISP Statutes (art. 2/f). They were approved by the IPO Organizing Committee in its meeting held in Münster on May 5, 2000, and subsequently by the Steering Committee of FISP in its meeting held in Istanbul on September 16, 2000.

Objectives

1. The objectives of IPO are:

- to promote philosophical education at secondary school level and increase the interest of high-school pupils in philosophy;
- to contribute to the development of critical, inquisitive and creative thinking;
- to promote philosophical reflection on science, art and social life;
- to cultivate the capacity for ethical reflection on the problems of the modern world; and
- by encouraging intellectual exchanges and securing opportunities for personal contacts between young people from different countries, to promote the culture of peace.

Organization

2. The IPO are organized every year in May, by one of the participating countries. They are open to high-school pupils from every country in the world. Organizing Committee may decide to adopt a leading theme of the Olympiad. Such a theme, however, will be used **only** for the series of lectures offered to the participants and should not be a dominant accent in the contest topics.

3. Each country can participate with one or two pupils, with the exception of the host country which may participate with a maximum of 10 pupils.

4. The selection of the pupils who will participate in an International Philosophy Olympiad is made after competitions organized at national level; but in exceptional cases other methods may be followed subject to the approval of the Steering Board of the IPO. Normally each national competition is organized by, or is held under the auspices of, a national philosophical society which is a member of FISP.

But if the Steering Board of the IPO gives its approval, other methods of organising a national Olympiad may also be followed: for instance in cases where no national society is a member of FISP, or where the national society is unwilling to organise the competition, or where another tradition of organising the national Olympiad already exists.

The Competitions of the IPO

5. Each international competition involves the following:

a) Contest's themes

It has been agreed in Seoul in 2004, that – **by the end of February** of the next year - all members of the jury will send their proposals of the topics for the contest directly to FISP (in 2005 to Prof. Bhuvan Chandel) and FISP will make a choice and prepare the sealed set of 4 topics which will be opened just before the contest.

b) The writing of essays

- i) Every student writes an essay on one of the four topics given to them.
- ii) The essay must be written in one of the following languages: English, German, French; however it must not be written in the mother tongue of the student (e. g. a German does not write in German).
- iii) The time of writing is 4 hours.
- iv) The names of the authors of all essays are encoded and not known to the assessors until the final ranking is fixed.

c) The grading of the essays

- i) There are three stages of this grading.
- ii) The criteria of evaluation are: coherence, persuasive power of argumentation, philosophical knowledge, originality, and relevance to the topic.
- iii) Each assessor gives his or her marks on a scale of 10 points.

8-10 points means: I propose that this essay be selected for the next stage.

6-7 points: I hesitate to propose that this essay be selected for the next stage.

1-5 points: I propose that this essay be not be selected for the next stage.
- iv) At the first stage each essay is marked by at least three assessors. If there are more than 4 points of difference among the individual marks, the Steering Board of the IPO decides which marks to retain. At the end of the first stage all the essays which have received an average of at least 7 points are selected for the second stage.
- v) At the second stage each remaining essay is marked by at two additional assessors. The average mark of an essay is calculated on the basis of all the marks it has received – both the marks of the assessors at the first stage and the marks of the two assessors at the second stage. At the end of the second stage the Organising Committee of the IPO selects the best essays for the third stage.

- v) At the third stage the Steering Board of the IPO selects the best 3 from among these last essays and decides their final ranking.
- vi) In the case of any extraordinary development in the process of grading the jury may decide by simple majority voting about additional measures to secure the just evaluation of the essays.

Administration of IPO

7. The administration of the IPO is carried out by the following bodies:

- a) The International Committee: It consists of:
 - i) one philosophy teacher from each participating country; these members constitute the link between the national institutions and the Organizing Committee of the IPO and they will make the first assessment of the papers;
 - ii) the founding members of the IPO and the Presidents of the Organizing Committees of the countries which have already organized an international Olympiad; these members will make the second assessment of the papers and will forward the six best of them to the Steering Board of the IPO for final evaluation.

The International Committee of the IPO will meet every year on the occasion of the Olympiads, and will discuss the measures to be taken for the future development of the IPO. It is chaired by the President of the national society member of FISIP that is organising the International Olympiad in that year or, if such a society does not exist, by the President of the Organizing Committee of the IPO.

- b) The Organizing Committee of the IPO: It consists of
 - i) the founding members of the IPO and
 - ii) a representative of each of the countries which have organized the IPO during the past three years.

It is presided over by the representative of the host country.

- c) The Steering Board of the IPO: it consists of

- i) Representative of UNESCO
- ii) the President of FISP or his/her representative,
- iii) the Chair of FISP ad hoc Committee for the Teaching of Philosophy,
- iv) the President of IPO Organizing Committee and
- v) the President of the previous Olympiad.

It is chaired by the President of FISP (or his/her representative).

The Steering Board of the IPO collaborates with the Organizing Committee of the IPO for the successful preparation and realization of the competition. In particular it

- helps with the diffusion of information, through the FISP News-Letter and in other possible ways,
- helps the Organizing Committee of the IPO to find international financial support for IPO,
- selects the topics of the competition from among those proposed by the Organizing Committee of the IPO,
- supervises the evaluation of the essays and decides the ranking of the first three,
- in case of any dispute takes the final decision,
- prepares the final report to be submitted to the Steering Committee of FISP and to other sponsoring bodies.

Other Points

7. The date of the International Philosophy Olympiad is announced and communicated every year by the President of the Organizing Committee to all participating countries before October 1. He or she also sends the letter of invitation to those who express their intention to participate in the Olympiad of that year.

8. The host country undertakes to provide the accommodation expenses (including meals) for two pupils and one teacher from each country, as well as for members of the Steering Board and the Organizing Committee of the IPO who are not otherwise covered.

9. The host country decides about the value of the prizes to be offered to the winners of the competition.

10. The Secretariat of the Organizing Committee of the IPO is located in the Department of Philosophy of Sofia University, Bulgaria. It is charged with the task of preparing and maintaining the following archival records:

- a) the list of topics used at the Olympiads,
- b) the essays written by the participants,
- c) the minutes of the Olympiads,
- d) Internet resources for the Olympiads,
- e) all other relevant material.

It also prepares the Bulletin of the IPO.

11. These Regulations may be revised by the consensus of a combined meeting of the Steering Board and the Organizing Committee of the IPO.

12. The website of the IPO (<http://www.philosopiad.org>) will be created and administered by the Korean National Committee.

Past Essays Topics

1993 (Bulgaria):

- Home is far more a state of mind than landscape. (*G. Bachelard*)
- Children are antiquities. (*G. Bachelard*)
- Everything we see could be otherwise. (*Wittgenstein*)
- Without „now“ there wouldn't be time and without time there wouldn't be „now“. (*Aristotle*)

1994 (Bulgaria):

- Der Mensch ist für den Menschen ein "Gott". (*Spinoza*)
- Wo ist die Zeit geblieben? Bin ich nicht in einen tiefen Brunnen gefallen? Die Welt schläft. (*Nietzsche*)
- Wenn Beine und Arme einen eigenen Willen hätten, wären sie nicht (in der Lage der) Glieder geblieben. (*Pascal*)

1995 (Bulgaria):

- Everyone is someone else and no one is himself. (*M. Heidegger*)
- Actually it is impossible for us to consider ourselves non-existent. (*M. Unamuno*)
- Should we start from the premise that one is totally forbidden to do injustice, or should we consider that under some circumstances that is permitted? (*Plato*)
- To be a philosopher means to travel all the time; questions in philosophy are more essential than answers. (*K. Jaspers*)

1996 (Turkey):

- Nothing is true, everything is permitted... (*Nietzsche*)
- The evil in the world originates always from ignorance, and good will may cause as much damage as malice, if it is not enlightened. (*Camus*)
- The limits of your language are the limits of your world. (*Wittgenstein*)
- So act that you treat humanity in your person, as well as in the person of every other human being, also as a goal, never as a means. (*Kant*)

1997 (Poland):

- Is philosophy a science?
- Der Künstler läßt uns durch sein Auge in die Welt blicken. (*Schopenhauer*)
- Justice without force is powerless, force without justice is tyrannical. (*Pascal*)
- The idea that one should seek the truth for its own sake doesn't make sense to us pragmatists. We cannot regard the truth as the aim of an investigation. The aim of an investigation is rather to come to an agreement between people about what to do and about the intended ends as well as the means, which we can realize these ends with. [...] All the descriptions we can give of things are descriptions which conform with our ends. [...] All we have to know is whether there are competing descriptions which are more useful to our purposes. (*Richard Rorty: Relativism: To discover and to invent. In: Information Philosophie 1/1997, p. 14-16*)

1998 (Romania):

- Tatsächlich haben wir zwei Arten von Moral nebeneinander: eine, die wir predigen, aber nicht praktizieren, und eine andere, die wir praktizieren, aber selten predigen. (*B. Russell*)
- Wir sehen die Welt so, wie wir sie sehen wollen. (*Schopenhauer*)
- Der Mensch wird durch die anderen geschaffen. (*Montaigne*)
- Übrigens ist mir alles verhaßt, was mich bloß belehrt, ohne meine Tätigkeit zu vermehren oder unmittelbar zu beleben. (*Goethe*)

1999 (Hungary):

- It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will. (*Immanuel Kant*)
- Desire is the essence of the human being. (*Benedictus Spinoza*)
- What we call 'laws' are hypotheses or conjectures which always form a part of some larger system of theories and which, therefore, can never be tested in isolation. (*Karl R. Popper*)
- Is knowledge power?

2000 (Germany):

- Time is not something which exists of itself [...]. Time is, therefore, a purely subjective condition of (human) intuition [...] and in itself, apart from the subject, it is nothing. (*Immanuel Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, B 49 A33 / B 51 A35*)
- The passing from the state of nature to civil society produces a remarkable change in man; it puts justice as a rule of conduct in the place of instinct, and gives his actions the moral quality they previously lacked. (*Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Social Contract*)
- A process which led from the amoeba to man appeared to the philosophers to be obviously a progress – though whether the amoeba would agree with this opinion is not known. (*Bertrand Russell*)
- All men naturally desire knowledge. (*Aristotle, The Metaphysics, Book I. 980a*)

2001 (USA):

- The laws of conscience, which we pretend to be derived from nature, proceed from custom [...]. (*Michel de Montaigne: Essais. 1595, chapter XXII*)

- If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them. (*K.R.Popper: The Open Society and its Enemies. Vol.I. Routledge, London 1945, p. 265*)
- I just had to consult myself about what I want to do, everything I feel to be good is good, everything I feel to be bad is bad... (*Rousseau*)
- Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition, which is called war; and such a war as is of every man, against every man. (*Hobbes, Leviathan, Ch. XIII*)

2002 (Japan):

- So you would have us qualify our former notion of the just man by an addition. We then said it was just to do good to a friend and evil to an enemy, but now we are to add that it is just to benefit the friend if he is good and harm the enemy if he is bad? (*Plato, Republic*)
- Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. (*George Santayana 1863-1952, The Life of Reason, ch.12*)
- But to be able to say that a point is black or white, I must first know under what conditions a point is called white or black; in order to be able to say: “p” is true (or false), I must have determined under what conditions I call “p” true, and thereby determine the sense of the proposition. (*L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*)
- It is another paradox, but God as the true absolute must be Satan too. Only then can God be said to be truly omniscient and omnipotent. [...] The absolute God must include absolute negation within himself, and must be the God who descends into ultimate evil. (*Nishida Kitaro, 1870-1945, Last Writing – Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*)

2003 (Argentina):

- The laws of conscience, which we pretend to be derived from nature, proceed from custom. (*Michel de Montaigne, Essais, 1595, chapitreXXII*)
- The maxims of the philosophers on the conditions under which public peace is possible shall be consulted by states which are armed for war (*I. Kant, Perpetual Peace*)

-The existence of this inclination to aggression, which we can detect in our selves and justly assume to be present in others, is the factor which disturbs our relations with our neighbour and which forces civilisation into such a high expenditure of energy. In consequence of this primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilised society is perpetually threatened with disintegration. (*Freud, Civilisation and its Discontents*)

2004 (South Korea)

1. The decisive argument which is employed by common sense against freedom consists in reminding us of our impotence. Far from being able to modify our situation at our whim, we seem to be unable to change ourselves. I am not "free" either to escape the lot of my class, of my nation, of my family, or even to build up my own power or my fortune or to conquer my most insignificant appetites or habits.

(Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*)

2. The will to truth requires critique - let us define our task in this way - the value of truth must for once, by way of experiment, be called into question ...

(Friedrich Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 3-24)

3. In fact, history does not belong to us, but we belong to history.

(Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, 1989)

4. Does science need philosophy?

III. Framework Schedule of the IPO

The IPO takes place every year in May and lasts four to five days:

- 1st day: Arrival, welcoming and introduction of all delegations. Meeting of the International Committee and organizing the work of the jury
- 2nd day: Essay-writing (four hours). In the afternoon: sight-seeing for the students. Assessment of the essays. (1st lecture on the theme of the IPO)
- 3rd day: Guided tour for all participants. (2nd lecture)
- 4th day: Award ceremony. – Farewell party. (3rd lecture)
- 5th day: Departure

On the 3rd or 4th day there should be time to discuss the theme of the IPO.

IV. Past Cooperating Institutions

- UNESCO (e.g. in Poland, Japan /UN University/, Argentina and Korea),
- Ministry of Education (e.g. in Poland, Romania, Hungary, Germany, Argentina, South Korea),
- Foreign Office (e.g. in Germany),
- Regional Councils (e.g. in Germany),
- Universities (e.g. in Bulgaria, Poland, Germany, Japan),
- Grammar schools and Colleges (e.g. in Romania, Turkey, USA),
- Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs (e.g. in Turkey, Germany),
- Banks (e.g. in Germany).

(Updated by Jozef Niznik on December 4, 2004)