

Editorial

From the campus to the classroom: University philosophy outreach programs

University philosophy outreach programs are proliferating. On campuses across the world, students and staff are taking philosophy out to the wider community, and especially to children and young people in schools. Their mission is to engage the public in philosophical discussion and to make a notoriously abstract and arcane subject accessible, meaningful and useful.

As yet, there is little published research on these programs. They give rise to two clusters of questions deserving of scholarly attention. First, there are questions about the rationale for philosophy outreach. What is the purpose of taking philosophy into the community? What are the intended benefits of these programs, to the children and young people who participate in them, to the students and staff who lead them, to society at large, or to the discipline of philosophy itself? How do these aims inform the selection of philosophical topics, texts, tools and techniques? The second group of questions have to do with the success of philosophy outreach. What attempts have been made to evaluate these programs and their outcomes? Do they, in fact, yield the benefits intended by those who design and deliver them? Are there any drawbacks to participation, or benefits other than the intended ones? What challenges (financial, institutional, pedagogical, psychological) have been encountered by those engaged in philosophy outreach and how have they been overcome?

These are the questions that animate this double special issue on university philosophy outreach programs. The tremendously positive response we received to our call for papers, from contributors in Europe, North America and Australasia, confirms our impression that these questions are ripe for scholarly attention. Here, in Issue 10(1) we present the first tranche of papers; the next tranche will follow later this year, in Issue 10(2).

The collection begins with 'The early years of Philosophy in the City: A retrospective dialogue', by Alexis Artaud de La Ferrière and Joshua Forstenzer. Philosophy in the City (PinC) is an award-winning outreach programme led by student volunteers from the University of Sheffield's Philosophy Department in the UK. It aims to bring philosophy out of the university and into the wider urban community, stimulating young and older minds through events and activities organised with local partners. Since its inception in 2006, the project has seen hundreds of student volunteers engage

in philosophical conversations with thousands of local residents from a wide variety of backgrounds. The paper takes the form of a retrospective dialogue between the authors, who both participated in the foundation and early development of PinC. In the course of their dialogue, the authors revisit the initial motivations and ambitions undergirding the project, discuss the obstacles faced throughout their respective tenures of leadership, and analyse the evolving mission of the project against the backdrop of historic changes in English higher education during this period.

The second paper is ‘The virtues of Ethics Bowl: Do pre-college philosophy programs prepare students for democratic citizenship?’, by Michael Vazquez and Michael Madden Prinzing. The National High School Ethics Bowl (NHSEB) is a large-footprint outreach program headquartered in the Parr Centre for Ethics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the US. The authors explain the democratic foundations of Ethics Bowl and reflect on the civic and intellectual virtues the program might promote. They then describe their efforts to empirically assess the impact of NHSEB on students’ civic and intellectual virtues—including a pilot study that lays the foundation for an ongoing, quasi-experimental study of NHSEB events across the US. They offer a number of suggestions for future research, including alternative outcome measures and study designs.

Next up is ‘Philosophical inquiry in a culturally diverse, faith-based community’, by Kwadwo Adusei-Asante, Kaz Bland, Nin Kirkham, Douglas Nelson and Stella Tarrant. The paper reports on some research undertaken as part of a University of Western Australia outreach project with the African Australian Christian Impact Centre. The researchers wanted to know whether the collaborative philosophical inquiry methods they use in their university teaching might be beneficial outside a formal educational setting, for members of a culturally diverse, faith-based community. The aspect of the research discussed here concerns the extent to which participation in a series of Community of Inquiry sessions improved participants’ self-assessment of their competence and confidence in communicating with others. The study finds that facilitated philosophical discussions led participants to reflect insightfully on ‘speaking out’ and ‘listening’, particularly with respect to their experiences of cultural and generational differences.

The fourth paper is ‘Impacts of a university philosophy outreach program at Kailua High School’, by Amber Makaiau, Chad Miller, Jane Chung-Do, Amber Ichinose and Jianhui Zhang. The Uehiro Academy for Philosophy and Ethics in Education at the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa supports and sustains Philosophy for Children

Hawai'i (p4cHI). Here the authors report on a qualitative study of the impact of the Uehiro Academy's philosophy outreach program at Kailua High School (KHS), a public secondary school on the Hawaiian Island of O'ahu. They find that p4cHI at KHS has (1) contributed to a schoolwide learner-centred pedagogy, (2) made the school a place for learning more than just academics, (3) helped to build a community of diverse and connected individuals, and (4) nurtured a commitment to professional growth for the purpose of a better world. The paper concludes with some reflections on the benefits and challenges of philosophy outreach programs.

Caroline Schaffalitzky's 'Philosophy outreach through teacher education' describes the inception and development of the Philosophy in Schools outreach program at the University of Southern Denmark. The author charts the history of the initiative, attending, in particular, to two shifts in focus that made the program stronger in terms of impact and research. First, the program team moved away from sending university students into classrooms to providing in-service training for teachers in the facilitation of philosophical inquiries. Second, they realised the most interesting research questions were not about cognitive gains but about peer interaction, learning environments, teacher roles and facilitation techniques. The paper assesses research outcomes from the first six years of the program and identifies some future challenges and opportunities.

Finally, it's back to Hawai'i for 'The philoSURFERS: Reflections on utilising pre-collegiate students as Philosophers in Residence to support the p4c Hawai'i movement in our public schools', by Chad Miller, Benjamin Lukey, Katie Matsukawa, Cheriesse Shiroma and Emily Fox. The philoSURFER internship project is an initiative of the Uehiro Academy at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where pre-college students intern with university Philosophers in Residence and assist teachers in doing philosophy with students. Since 2015, 151 philoSURFERS have supported over 65 teachers at eight schools, engaging thousands of students in philosophical inquiry. Here the authors share the lessons they have learned with a view to encouraging other universities to involve pre-collegiate students in making philosophy an integral aspect of schooling.

In recent years universities have come under increasing pressure to demonstrate impact beyond the research community, to engage with new audiences in more accessible ways, and to give something back to the cities and regions in which they are located. Philosophy departments now have little choice but to engage in outreach of one kind or another. The papers collected here offer a searching and illuminating

set of reflections, grounded in empirical evidence and first-hand experience, on some interestingly different ways of taking philosophy from the campus to the classroom.

Michael Hand and Jane Gatley

Guest Editors