

LETTER *from the* FOUNDER

Every year when I receive the new issue of *Stance*, I think about what a windfall the whole thing has been for me. Having merely gotten the ball rolling, I now get to sit back and enjoy the fruits of all the talent and ingenuity that have been invested in it since. *Stance* has changed so much since its humble beginnings that it seems disingenuous to regard myself as its founding editor. But I'll take the honor, with gratitude to all those whose hard work makes it such an honor.

In its very earliest days, *Stance* was in real danger of being called something far less dignified: The Original Position. The idea wasn't that we would specialize in Rawls scholarship—I knew we needed to cast a far wider net than that—but that we would publish original work defending substantive philosophical views: not just any positions; we would publish original positions! The connection with Rawls's original position contracting device wasn't meant to be deep; it was just a cute little tribute.

Going into our first meeting, I had such courage of conviction! I knew some of my teammates had a different idea about what the journal should be called, but they would see reason. My case was meticulously prepared, and I looked forward to the challenge—and the satisfaction—of

winning them over. Now for the anti-climax: ultimately, it was me who was won over. I remember well the experience of realizing they were right. Starting *Stance* was my thesis project, and yet theirs was the better idea. Imagine that.

There's plenty to value about collaboration: it can legitimize the ultimate decision, secure buy-in for its implementation, and make people feel invested. Thick-headed go-getter that I am, I too often discount a different kind of value: collaboration helps us learn, and it helps us do better work. It certainly isn't costless. It's often slow and messy. It can make us feel irritated and insecure. And, plausibly, we would sometimes do better to work alone. *Stance* made me think about collaboration more carefully than I had before: how do I weigh the uncertain gains of collaboration against its probable costs of time, messiness, and frustration? My experience suggests that I am far likelier to go wrong by avoiding collaboration than by embracing it. Beginning with Ball State philosophy and *Stance*, I've enjoyed a wealth of opportunities to see how others' contributions make my work better. It's easy to forget, given the popular image of the solitary philosopher, that this project we're involved in is a thoroughly collaborative one. We think about our own writing and our own thinking and our own

teaching and learning, but what makes all of these worthwhile is the role they play in the conversation we're having together. We participate by reading and studying others' ideas, and by talking together—in classrooms and at conferences and in journals—about what we can learn from those ideas, where they fall short, and how they might be made better. We share our own ideas, and others return in kind. And very slowly, we make progress together.

With a lot of luck and a lot of hard work, some of us get to make a job out of participating in this conversation. But there's plenty to take away and plenty to contribute, even if we're involved only for a little while. Stance would have been The Original Position had my teammates not been there to think with me. Congratulations to all of us, past and present Stance team members and contributors, for building something that's equipped so many of us to learn and think together. Of all the things about Stance that make me feel proud, this one stands out: you've built Stance into a bit of evidence that kind, careful, and constructive collaboration can make philosophy better.

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