

Editor's Introduction

Diverse Approaches to Dialogue in Public and Precollege Philosophy

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PRECOLLEGE PHILOSOPHY AND PUBLIC PRACTICE (P4) was founded to support philosophical, empirical, and interdisciplinary research on precollege and public philosophy. In establishing P4, my colleagues and I set out to provide a home and institutional support for the great diversity of research that currently falls under the broad banners of precollege and public philosophy—research that, more times than not, does not fit neatly within one discipline or one tradition.

We are living in an exciting time for public-facing philosophical work, both in K-12 classrooms and well beyond. Many more philosophers are now seeking to engage, in diverse ways, with the communities in which they live and work: in schools and prisons; in nonprofits and community-based organizations; and through media such as podcasts and op-eds, and more. Our aim in this inaugural issue of P4—“Diverse Approaches to Dialogue in Public and Precollege Philosophy”—is to capture some of the diversity, creativity, and transformative potential of these projects, as well as the reciprocal relationship of theory and practice (*praxis*) that informs them.

In “Liberatory Dialogue,” Myisha Cherry sets an initial foundation for this issue, developing a useful taxonomy of dialogue-types. Based in her extensive public-facing work—both as host-producer of the *UnMute* podcast and as the author of over thirty op-eds—Cherry offers a theoretical framework (liberatory dialogue) according to which public philosophers can engage participants in philosophy respectfully, as collaborators, and as active subjects in a process of humanization.

The interconnected themes of dialogue and humanization also appear in Kyle Robertson’s, “Inside Conversations: Ethics Bowl and Transformative Dialogue in San Quentin,” and Amy Reed-Sandoval’s, “Can Philosophy for Children

Contribute to Decolonization?” In “Inside Conversations,” Robertson discusses the *transformative* impact of philosophical dialogue in Ethics Bowl programming with incarcerated students. Discussing his Ethics Bowl initiative in San Quentin State Prison, Robertson explains the procedural elements of leading a prison-based Ethics Bowl while also illuminating the educational, psychological, and ethical values of this project for inmates.

Reed-Sandoval articulates the threat of *coloniality* (in the form of socio-political and epistemic legacies of colonialism) in philosophy for children (P4C) classrooms and literature. She devotes careful attention to decolonial critiques of P4C practices and, informed by her precollege philosophy initiatives with youths at the Mexico-U.S. border and in Oaxaca City, Mexico, argues for the need to reform. Dialogue and open questioning (key elements of P4C practice) can support a decolonizing methodology in work with children but, Reed-Sandoval shows us, must include an understanding of the ways in which (unquestioned and uncritical) “neutrality” in the P4C classroom can reinforce oppression, silencing, and power-imbalances.

In “The Kids are Alright: Philosophical Dialogue and the Utah Lyceum,” Kristopher G. Phillips provides an example of innovation in precollege philosophy initiatives, discussing the Utah Lyceum, a philosophy summer camp for middle and high school students. Phillips co-created this program and articulates its core focus, as influenced by Michael Pritchard, in the form of *reasonableness*—the social disposition to actively listen and engage in genuine dialogue—thereby cultivating and contributing to an active community of inquiry. Like Cherry, Phillips provides a useful taxonomy of dialogue (*interpersonal*, *intratextual*, and *intertextual*) that, when emphasized in our pedagogy, can help to develop reasonableness in young philosophers.

In “From Peer Discourse to Critical Moral Perspectives: Teaching for Engaged Reasoning,” Robyn Ilten-Gee and Larry Nucci present additional goals for dialogic education: civic engagement and the development of a critical moral orientation. Drawing on the work of philosophers Anthony Laden and Mikhail Bakhtin, as well as their own extensive research and practice with classroom teachers, Ilten-Gee and Nucci discuss the importance of supporting an engaged and *dialogic* (as opposed to *monologic*) mindset in students that actively invites others to share information and embrace multiple, varied voices. Ilten-Gee and Nucci also point to contemporary examples of youth activism, detailing the ways in which young people are not simply sitting on the sidelines in contemporary political and social media movements, but rather are engaging in dialogue and moral and social reasoning in novel ways.

Our final articles provide important context both on the historical roots of public philosophy, and on the means for advancing effective philosophical communication with the greater public in the present. In “Dialogue and Next Generation Philosophy,” Adam Briggie contrasts public philosophy with the

disciplinary form of philosophy that emerged in the twentieth century, aligned with the formation of the modern research university. Developing an account of public philosophy informed by Thomas More, Hegel, Arendt, and others, Briggles moves beyond the disciplinary conception of philosophers as experts speaking only within the academy to consider *field philosophy*—a form of public philosophy that examines philosophical issues in a context-sensitive, bottom-up way with relevant stakeholders.

In “The Use of Narrative in Public Philosophy: A Diagrammatic Guide,” Barry Lam, founder and producer of *Hi-Phi Nation*, argues for the use of storytelling as a means to increase audience engagement with contemporary academic philosophy. Distinguishing between the structures of contemporary academic and public-facing writing, Lam illustrates (in word and diagram) the power of using *narrative* in our work as public philosophers. As Lam reveals, the human mind is disposed to engage with storytelling and the narrative form. Thus, as we continue to expand public-facing philosophy, we should consider ways to harness this disposition in the service of public philosophy, giving the public a greater stake in and motivation for philosophical questioning, exploration, and action.

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