

Editorial and Introduction

Alexander Wang

Philosophy is not a commonly taught subject at the secondary level (or even at the university level, for many students who simply choose not to take philosophy courses). For high school students, philosophy *as a discipline* is often viewed only from afar, relegated to the ancients or behind the walls of academia. And yet, this fact does not stop adolescents from being passionate about philosophy. It has been our experience that students are not only curious but have something genuine to say about the kinds of philosophical questions posed by life, lack of formal experience notwithstanding.

The quote that “all philosophy begins in wonder” has been variously attributed to Plato and/or Aristotle (if not others). Regardless of its veracity or original meaning, the spirit of the quote persists: philosophy is inextricably related to a sense of curiosity, awe, and questioning. Who better, then, to philosophize than children, with their sense of wonder? The belief that the youth share an affinity with philosophers is, we believe, far from uncommon. We firmly hold that this philosophical instinct remains alive and flourishing among high school students. Unfortunately, unlike other subjects, philosophy does not have anywhere close to the amount of extra-curricular (or curricular) opportunities. Especially given the fact that philosophy is often (but not always) done by way of writing, there is a dearth of avenues for students to engage in philosophical dialogue—to voice their arguments, receive feedback, and hear the perspectives of their peers.

This journal seeks to address this critical gap between the philosophical instincts of students and their ability to engage the academic discipline of philosophy. Our goals are multifaceted. We aim to create an outlet for students already interested in philosophy to test their writing and voice their ideas, a showcase for curious students to see philosophy as a youth-accessible and worthwhile area to pursue, and a channel where this group’s unique insights and perspectives may assist peers and others alike.

In this inaugural edition, we are incredibly grateful to the authors, reviewers, and friends who made this endeavor possible. We have attempted to include a diverse set of papers from a diverse group of authors, which we believe showcases the best of youth philosophy. We begin in epistemology, with Christopher K. Morris’s paper, “Can Foundationalism Survive Revision.” In it, Morris observes that neither the strong, classical variety of foundationalism, nor modest foundationalism are adept at handling the challenges posed when we revise our beliefs. He argues that because we commonly revise our beliefs, including supposedly foundational beliefs, classical foundationalism cannot accurately describe our *actual* belief processes, and modest foundationalism becomes essentially a disguised coherentism. In the end, then, all epistemic theories of our *actual* beliefs are, at core, theories of how willing we are to revise our beliefs.

Next, Jackson Newton provides a refreshing analysis of the college admissions system (or “game”), through the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis. In his paper, “‘We Regret to Inform You’: College Admissions Angst in the U.S. through a Lacanian Lens,” he shows how the college admissions process creates a foreboding anxiety where students wonder what the Other (college admissions offices) want. Using Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Newton unveils the power behind the commonplace discourse of the college admissions system—master signifier phrases like “holistic review”, etc. What’s more, Newton argues, following Zizek, that the rejection letters only worsen the blow. Their couched language subtly reinforces (their power and) the belief that students are *solely* to blame for their rejections, which are for their own good. Ultimately, the analyst and student may reclaim their power through a Lacanian method.

The next paper, “*Thus Spoke Zarathustra: Widening the Bounds of Philosophy*,” by Max Lan, argues that our current conception of philosophical method as being relegated to only that of academic papers is severely limited. Instead, he takes inspiration from Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, reading Nietzsche as espousing a pragmatic theory of truth. For Lan, a natural result of being pragmatic about truth is that *stories* and *context* become essential to and inseparable from any ‘argument.’ Thus, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* becomes a case study for a new method of literary philosophy, stretching the bounds of philosophical method as appropriate for innovative ideas. Here, its literary elements do not detract from but constitute the philosophical argument and merit. Lan further reads *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to have on loneliness and the eternal recurrence, with the book subtly arguing for an active readership, encouraging readers to take their individual burdens of value-seeking.

We then move to the philosophy of religion in Alexander Wang’s paper, “Is It Reasonable to be Grateful to God for Protection from Natural Evil He Caused?”. In this paper, Wang argues that gratitude is fundamentally about intentions: whether or not your benefactor acted with a benevolent intention towards you. With this in mind, he argues that even in cases where God is, in some senses, responsible for natural evil, it is still nonetheless reasonable to thank Him when He protects us from said evil. To make his argument, Wang takes a Thomist stance on divine action, arguing for a distinction between primary and secondary causes. I make note here that this paper was authored by one of our editors for the journal. However, we also add that it was blind-reviewed like all other papers.

Continuing on, we enter the domain of ethics and justice with a paper by Anupam Panthi, entitled “Moral Accountability and the Need for Rehabilitation.” The central claim of this paper is that we have a moral duty to rehabilitate criminals, not just punish them. Panthi argues that our moral duty to rehabilitation is not just utilitarian; it stems from the same fact about human rationality which justifies retribution for Kant. To establish his argument, Panthi traces the arguments for punishment under a Kantian, Social Contract, and Utilitarian theory of justice, before turning his attention to rehabilitation. Here, he adds another prong to the argument, observing

that if fault can be ascribed to society writ-large for, in a sense, producing crime, then it must also bear the responsibility for rehabilitating criminals.

Finally, we end with Paolo Passalacqua's piece entitled "Recontextualizing Kant in a Seemingly Anti-Enlightenment Age." It is no surprise that our (post)modern age is rife with misinformation, fake news, and a slew of content that seeks to obscure the truth—if *one* even exists. Passalacqua marshals a Kantian critique and analysis of these phenomenon, drawing from Apel's reading of Pierce, Habermas, and Deleuze. He provides insight into how exactly contemporary developments in information obscure Enlightenment independence, making a critical observation on the increasing relevance of a *public* and *communicative* sphere.

As with starting anything new, we have faced many challenges in creating this journal. Most of all, we have faced the hurdle of simply lacking experience. However, what was *truly* unexpected for us was the sheer number of quality papers we would receive! This is, in our opinion, a vindication of the belief that there exists a flourishing philosophical spirit among the youth, and has given us the (fortunate) quandary of having to reject papers despite what we can see is significant hard work. We would like to formally encourage those who were not part of this current issue to resubmit their papers (especially those who we were able to pass along feedback/edits for). We look forward to future submission cycles, in which we are confident we will receive more high-quality papers (and perhaps be required to raise our judging criteria yet again)!

We hope you will enjoy reading the culmination of many months of work.

Sincerely,

The Editors