

History of 'Teaching Philosophy'

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The founding and establishment of the international quarterly journal *Teaching Philosophy* amounts to the creation of a seldomly recognised facet of scholarly work, namely the gravely needed field of scholarship on teaching. It was started at the University of Cincinnati by Arnold Wilson of the University College when he was in his first year of teaching, with the support of Alison Jaggar, William Todd, and Robert Faaborg of the Department of Philosophy at the College of Arts and Sciences, and George Thompson of the University's Institute for Research and Training in Higher Education.

Arnold enlisted an international editorial board, published calls for papers, and won money from the University Educational Council for two years' printing as a semi-annual. It took a year to assemble and edit enough good material for the first issue. It contained ten articles and over 20 reviews. The article topics ranged broadly, discussing aims, issues, topics, methods, and tips for philosophy education. Although some of the authors were relatively unknown, some of the very best minds in philosophy supported the effort to make the teaching of philosophy a scholarly enterprise.

It will be of interest to UK readers that Antony Flew contributed a review-article on 'Issues in Teaching Contemporary Ethics' to the first issue; Godfrey Vesey contributed a two-part article on 'Teaching Philosophy in Britain's Open University' to the first two issues; Dan Dennett, Margaret Wilson *et al.* reviewed various of the Open University Press films, books, and audios in the second issue; Timothy Sprigge was a frequent book reviewer; and Mark Fisher of Middlesex Polytechnic (later of the University of Hong Kong) served on the Editorial Board (1975-90).

One of the first problems the editor faced was that few philosophers had much idea of how to write usefully for their colleagues about their teaching. Almost 90% of submissions were rejected in the early years. Many were just 'credo' papers, with little reflection and no ideas on how to achieve lofty aims. Many had to do obeisance to Socrates before proceeding. But the few papers published, after much editorial prompting and revisions, gave others models of teaching scholarship. Soon they were rejecting only 80%, and authors began responding to and citing previous articles.

Then came a great period of inflation in the printing trades in the late '70s. The journal had sold two-year subscriptions at rates it could not cover through the second year. Against advice that he fold the journal -- it was bankrupt -- Arnold went begging for help. Ultimately he was offered a 'sweetheart' contract with the highly respected Philosophy Documentation Center, because the journal's high quality and promise were obvious in its first several issues. It soon became a showcase publication for this non-profit institution committed to scholarship and bibliography in philosophy.

But there was trouble at home. Arnold had enjoyed a reduction from the University College's standard twelve-hour

teaching load to six, in order to edit the journal. University College budget cuts were now said to require that he return to a twelve-hour load. A contingent of philosophers could not persuade the College Dean to be more sparing. The University President said he couldn't help. The journal, at best, would be allowed to purchase a three-hour reduction for the editor. To reduce the editorial load, a book review editor (with released time!) was found at Toledo, and later Miami University (Ohio).

Early on, Arnold had begun several features that became regular items for the journal. One was to encourage a philosopher interested in certain issues or topics to get up a call for papers on that topic, with the journal offering prize money and publication, often in accord with presentations at meetings of the American Philosophical Association. This maximised interest in a topic and gave it all the cachet of prize money, conference presentation, and publication in a scholarly journal. Hence, special issues on teaching philosophy of science, on dealing with declining literacy, on critical thinking, on computer-assisted instruction in logic, on new ideas for teaching history of philosophy, and improving student writing. The journal received the first Ohio Program in the Humanities publication grant for a double issue on teaching outside the academy.

Another feature was lengthy review-essays dealing with several new texts in a developing field, such as children's rights, or nursing ethics. Another was case studies with paired commentaries on ethical issues in the teaching profession, such as professor/student relationships, poor preparation, selling textbook review copies, and so on. Wherever possible he challenged authors to think more deeply and reflectively about their aims and the significance of their teaching efforts for their students and their own persona as philosophy educators.

To measure the impact of *Teaching Philosophy*, we must acknowledge that without it there would be no 'scholarship of teaching' in philosophy. There would be not be 25 years of material for new and seasoned philosophers to draw on to better develop as confident instructors, and no way for an instructor to share ideas on teaching with the discipline as a whole. The great majority of the almost 2000 articles and 1400 reviews would never have been written. The authors would hardly be prompted to think of their own teaching as deserving philosophical analysis and reflection, and less of engaging in that analysis and reflection with their peers. There do exist newsletters, and now even more specific teaching journals, e.g., *Teaching Business Ethics*, but these have piggybacked on the long tradition that *Teaching Philosophy* has modelled and established, that is, a pursuit of excellence in teaching through a heads-up scholarly approach to issues, topics, and resources.

In 1988, Arnold published an anthology of papers, mostly from *Teaching Philosophy*, entitled *Demonstrating Philosophy: Novel Ways to Teach Philosophical Concepts*. It has received good reviews, and he's now working on another, more ambitious book that would draw together material and articles suitable for a graduate seminar on teaching philosophy. It will be entitled *Teaching Philosophy: A Guide to Topics, Issues, and Resources*. The aim is of course to help beginning teachers, but even more, to locate that concern for better teaching in the graduate philosophy departments. It is there that the scholarship of philosophy teaching can and should begin.

Other disciplines are lucky if they have resources comparable to the breadth and depth of *Teaching Philosophy*. It was started when the American Philosophical Association lacked even a Standing Committee on Teaching, and many were hostile to the idea. But idealism and hard work have won out. The light has passed from Arnold's hands to those of Michael Goldman of Miami University, and it will be a growing and permanent beacon for philosophers.

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