Editorial

Much ink has been spilt on the question of *how* philosophy might be taught in schools—on the forms of pedagogy appropriate to the subject, the levels of abstraction at which children can think, and the philosophical problems most likely to inspire their interest. Rather less attention has been given to exactly *why* it should be taught. Perhaps, to most philosophers involved in classroom experimentation, the benefits of acquainting children with philosophy have seemed self-evident and the burning question has been how to go about it. But, in fact, the benefits are not self-evident. And even if they were, it would remain to be shown that they are equal to or greater than the benefits of the other subjects and activities vying for space in the school curriculum.

Indeed, as a practical matter, arguments for teaching philosophy in schools must meet a more exacting standard. In most of the English-speaking world, the curriculum is built around a well-established core of academic subjects—English, maths, science, history/geography/social studies, modern languages—that are politically non-negotiable. The question is not 'If one were designing a curriculum from scratch, would philosophy be among the subjects one selected for inclusion?', but rather 'Is there any good reason to expand the existing academic curriculum to include philosophy?' An affirmative answer to the former does not entail an affirmative answer to the latter. Even if educational goods delivered by the study of maths, say, could be delivered more efficiently by the study of philosophy, a curriculum that includes maths anyway may not be much enhanced by the addition of philosophy. So making the case for philosophy in schools is a tall justificatory order.

Such reasons as there are for teaching children philosophy would be worth articulating even if there were no realistic prospect of their influencing the design of school curricula. There is a place for quixoticism in educational theory. But, in fact, efforts to bring philosophy into the classroom are gathering political steam in a number of countries. In the UK, A.C. Grayling and John Taylor are leading a national campaign for the introduction of a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in philosophy (https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-views/philosophy-needs-be-given-its-proper-place-heart-uk-education). In Ireland, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has just introduced a short course in philosophy for the Junior Cycle (the first three years of secondary education), though this is optional for schools (http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/Philosophy). In

Australia, the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA) lobbied hard for the inclusion of philosophy in the National Curriculum during its last formal review (http://fapsa.org.au/curriculum/national-curriculum). And in New Zealand, the Ministry of Education has recently drawn up a set of Teaching and Learning Guidelines for the subject (http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/Social-sciences/Philosophy). In light of the political headway being made in these countries and others, there is particular urgency to the task of explaining clearly and cogently why philosophy has educational value.

The contributors to this special issue of *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* take up this challenge. Their remit was to advance and defend answers to the question 'Why should philosophy be taught in schools?' While the contributors differ in their conceptions of philosophy and their reasons for championing it, their arguments are largely complementary and make a compelling cumulative case for the inclusion of philosophy in the school curriculum.

The first three essays explore aspects of the idea that an education in philosophy better equips people for ethical life. The thought here is not, of course, that there is a straightforward correlation between acquaintance with philosophy and ethically good conduct: philosophical training is no inoculation against vice. The point, rather, is that there are deliberative and reflective dimensions of moral and political life for which children are best prepared by philosophical inquiry. So, in the opening essay, Michael Hand argues that philosophy furnishes children with the means to tackle problems of justifying subscription to moral, political and religious standards—problems he takes to be urgent and inescapable for human beings. In the second essay, Angie Hobbs proposes that ancient Greek philosophy, which is 'unashamedly bold about tackling the big questions with gusto', helps children get to grips with such fundamental ethical concepts as goodness, justice, pleasure and flourishing. And in the third, Gil Burgh contends that to involve children in collaborative and deliberative philosophical inquiry just *is* to involve them in the practice of democratic citizenship.

The next two articles in the collection focus on the familiar suggestion that philosophy improves the quality of children's thinking. Again, caution is needed here: it is plain that philosophers have no monopoly on good thinking, and most school subjects aim to improve thinking in their respective domains. Doubtless philosophical inquiry improves *philosophical* thinking, but to argue for philosophy in schools on *that* basis would rather beg the question. If it is to carry justificatory weight, the suggestion must be that good thinking in all domains has certain generic

features, and that these generic features are better cultivated by philosophy than by other subjects. To that end, Phil Cam offers a fresh defence of Matthew Lipman's claim that philosophy has a special role to play in developing children's higher-order thinking and discursive reasoning. Then Pete Worley looks through a Platonic lens at the nature and value of metacognition, arguing both for its place in good thinking and its intimate connection with philosophical inquiry.

The final two articles root justifications for teaching philosophy in aspects of existing educational provision. Laura D'Olimpio and Andrew Peterson build their case on the fact that narrative artworks with rich philosophical themes already feature prominently in the school curriculum: educators, they contend, 'have a responsibility to engage children in specifically philosophical questions about the stories they hear, read, share and explore'. And Carrie Winstanley focuses on the efforts of schools to meet the needs of highly able children: because philosophical questions have 'high ceilings', in the sense that they can be tackled at ever higher levels of abstraction or sophistication, they are ideal for providing more able pupils with the challenge they need.

I am grateful to the editors and editorial board of *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* for supporting this special issue. It is my hope that the essays collected here will be not only of theoretical interest, but also of practical use to those actively campaigning for curriculum reform.

Michael Hand

Guest Editor