

Editorial: Philosophical Style

This issue of *Philosophy* is strongly focused on the activity of philosophy itself, the practice of philosophy, that is, as much as the content. In our studies and seminars those of us who are engaged professionally in the subject tend to overlook the nature of the activity we are engaging in, its style and its warp and woof, and even more, the ways the activity itself changes and develops with time and fashion.

We hope that this issue of *Philosophy* might help to raise readers' eyes a little from the page and the published paper or book to take a sideways look at the context, personal and institutional, from which what is printed or electronically transmitted has emerged. We will then be led to contrast the somewhat well-upholstered, even gentlemanly, atmosphere of philosophical conferences in the 1920s and 1930s, as described by Louis Arnaud Reid, with the bracing asperity of John Searle's Oxford of the 1950s. Then Oxford really was the centre of the philosophical universe and the publication of a book was regarded as a vulgarity. We will consider a tantalising reading of Socrates and Wittgenstein as promoting a very particular type of self-examination from Sebastian Sunday Grève, the winner of our 2014 prize essay, and, with John Kekes, we will take a critical look at more recent conceptions of philosophy, as scientific on the one hand or humanistic on the other. And, at a time when philosophical impact is much to the fore, in Lillian Alweiss's discussion of Heidegger and in the consideration of Hannah Arendt in 'Booknotes', we may be led to feel that, sometimes anyway, the less impact some philosophers' thoughts have the better.

What does all this history have to do with us? Is there an essence of philosophy which somehow emerges through all these stylistic and institutional transformations? We may, of course, think that none of it is to do with us, that we have reached a point at which style has been pared away to the core. But maybe a more philosophical, reflective approach would be to ask ourselves whether, in a few decades or so the über-professional life of the philosopher of today, with all of his or her publication, footnotes, technicality, jargon, self-referential impenetrability and apparatus, to say nothing of the quest for 'impact' (surely far more vulgar than the solecism of publishing a book in the 1950s), might not come to seem as dated as the conferences so charmingly described by Reid seem to us today. Some indeed, looking at the scene as it is today, might devoutly wish that it would be so.