



PESGB Newsletter

2024-2025

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Welcome to the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain's newsletter



The Society was formed in 1964 to promote the study, teaching and application of the philosophy of education. The Society holds an annual three-day national residential conference, other regional conferences and local branch meetings. The Society's primary publication is the internationally renowned Journal of Philosophy of Education (JOPE).

Administrative enquiries concerning the Society and its activities should be addressed to Stephne Graham at pesgb@sasevents.co.uk

Contact Stephne at this address if you have a notice you wish to circulate to the membership.

Readers might like to pass this Newsletter to education students and professionals, or direct them to the Society's website at <https://www.philosophy-of-education.org/>

I put together this brief commentary as Chair of the Society close to an important date in the Scottish and UK PESGB calendar: an event hosted by the flourishing local branch at the University of Strathclyde (my alma mater, as it happens), in which the branch will welcome celebrated theologian, philosopher, and literary critic Prof. Catherine Pickstock of the University of Cambridge. I single out this occasion taken from our 60th Anniversary Distinguished Lectures Series-because, for me, it captures much of the satisfaction of chairing the PESGB in these academically volatile times.

First, there is the health, vitality, and diversity of the local branches, several of which I have visited since my (unexpected) term of office commenced. The branches are, as ever, the backbone of the Society: recruiting and supporting members; organising fresh and stimulating programmes of events; reaching out beyond disciplinary and subject confines to share the philosophy of education in all its richness with widening circles of colleagues and audiences. It is often from such everyday activities of the branches that new ideas and projects are developed: new kinds of grassroots collaborations leading to new PhDs, to the co-writing of conference papers and journal articles, to partnerships for grant applications or seminar series-to the creative synergies that both preserve and renew a learned Society with a history reaching back over a period of 60 years.



Secondly, the Strathclyde event captures another aspect of PESGB vitality in times of great change. Few of us can have failed to notice, in the UK and elsewhere, the severe and intensifying pressures on university humanities in general and philosophy of education in particular. While there may be localised and contemporary inflections of this, it is a pattern that reaches back over a lengthy period in several of the Anglophone strongholds of the discipline. Whether its impact be temporary or enduring, we face challenges in 2025 that echo some of the most demanding effects of the austerity contractions of 15 years ago. Indeed, for some commentators, the present is in full continuity with the past in these regards.

However, as in 2010, the energies of the Society and the discipline are rising to meet some of these demands with considerable invention. The Distinguished Lecture invite to Prof. Pickstock typifies this resourcefulness of the membership and their organisations, reaching out across the often-artificial boundaries of subject labels to communicate fruitfully with Humanities colleagues tackling many of the same questions and dilemmas in the theory and practices of education, against a shared background of dramatic change, uncertainty, and often startling inequity of provision.

This is surely one of the routes by which philosophy of education will not only survive but also prove its fitness and importance in the address of universities to the threats that the sector currently faces in many jurisdictions.

When I became Editor of *JOPE* in 2011, it was very much in a similar climate of constraint and retrenchment. With the close assistance of an Editorial Board made up of members, both established and new, I resolved on a course of action in response to these circumstances that was unreservedly committed to growth.

I believed that the sources of this growth would come from a range of origins: the international market, where the expansion of philosophy of education was burgeoning despite the global economic context; the increased openness of the humanities to alternative knowledge systems and experiences of education; the internal diversification of the subject through outreach to academic allies across the curriculum in areas ranging from general philosophy, through history of education, cultural studies, literary criticism, digital humanities, etc.; and a renewal of our compact with educators everywhere to engage with and explore systematically the philosophical issues central to their daily labours.

Our combined efforts reaped many rewards, expanded the reach and breadth of the journal, and strengthened the resilience of the Society in weathering economic turbulence and even major academic realignments.

Last academic session I took part in a PESGB branch seminar at the Institute, which precisely illustrated some of the additional opportunities that have come the way of our area by virtue of this same spirit of outreach and collaborative working. I shared some of the early findings from a major three-year ESRC project on Digital Citizenship, underlining to a lively audience the centrality of the philosophy of education strand to the initial success of the grant application and then to its subsequent fieldwork in schools.

A research project spanning some of the central questions of the digital society today, and its implications for young people and their education, had assigned key roles to philosophers of education not simply for prior conceptual clarification but for the full spectrum of the project tasks—from methodology to fieldwork co-production, analysis, and reporting.

The appetite for philosophical reasoning within funded initiatives of this kind highlights a source of opportunity of which the Society and its members could conceivably take greater advantage as the profile of the discipline alters again in our institutions.

Of course, the structures of the Society also need constantly to adapt and evolve in these shifting contexts, whilst continuing to prize, and to operate in accordance with, the core values and heritage of PESGB. In the virtues of affirming both tradition and renewal, I think we have, over the decades, proved adept.

For most members, the tasks of becoming an Incorporated Society may have appeared esoteric and somewhat “under the hood.” But this was, in fact, a landmark development in the life of PESGB, bringing us into line with many other learned societies, streamlining our structures of democratic decision-making, and protecting the interests of the individual office-bearers who give so much of their time and energy in serving us.

In the work of Incorporation, I personally was only a late extra, and full thanks must again be offered to Michael Hand and the team who piloted through the complex legal and organisational changes, for the most part before my appointment. We believe we have created a lasting and robust foundation for taking the Society forward confidently into the future.

Ratification of our new arrangements came at the memorable 60th Anniversary Conference in Oxford, a celebratory occasion that showcased so much of the achievements of PESGB past and present. It was also a landmark for me personally: it marked the 30th anniversary of my first attendance at the PESGB National Conference and my first encounter with its special brand of hospitality and debate.

Once again, the 2025 conference planning and organisation team, and the sterling support shown to us by SAS Events Management, cannot be praised enough. The diet of papers, keynotes, music, and performance looked both back and forward, reminding us of our obligations to multiple communities of educators nationally and internationally—especially those so often marginalised, minoritised, or excluded from mainstream educational thinking and policy-making.

The programme also reflected the diversity of perspectives and practices that has been an enduring strength of the Society and its events and outputs over the decades. We are, in numerical terms, a relatively small Society, and it is a tribute to our inclusivity and collegiality that so many different strands and traditions of philosophical reasoning and deliberation can figure in an annual conference (as in our publications) noted for its culture of sociability, discussion, and free exchange.

These assets and these principles will surely also prove vital to the future flourishing of PESGB over the next six decades and beyond.

60 years and counting

Good accounting

John White's recollection of R. S. Peters ends, in verse, with the lines "A beacon still. Wherever would we be / If he'd not stepped across to IoE?" A rhetorical question, and by no means an exaggeration. Although others contributed to the establishment of the PESGB, Peters' initiative was born out of his exceptional energy, personal drive, and commitment to the subject. Or to be more precise, his commitment to the new incarnation of the subject that he took to be his mission. There is no doubt that for many, academic colleagues and students alike, this was a stimulus and an inspiration.

His timing was perfect. His development of the subject coincided with the time when teacher education was being expanded and extended, with longer courses with more substantial content being deemed necessary in the education of teachers, in colleges swelling with the post WWII baby-boom generation, and with an economy that enabled expansion and new thinking in higher education.



Opportunities and funding were there. 'You've never had it so good' was the celebrated phrase of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan (1957-1963) – 'Supermac', at least to the Tory faithful. More substantial academic education for teachers meant a new need for those who would teach the teachers, staff whose expertise would most likely be in one of the education's foundation disciplines – history, psychology, sociology, and philosophy of education. Hence, the new demand for MAs in these disciplines, of which the London Institute of Education became the foremost provider. Peters was in a leading position at this time of change.

•••

The humorous touch to John's versifying captures something of the energy and the hard work that characterized Peters' regime, as well as some of its frustrations too. In due course, Peters' endeavours became more frenetic, and from the mid-1970s the main burden of the work, in the Society and in the subject, passed to others whose efforts have generally been under-acknowledged.

Ill health brought Peters' career to an earlier close than might have been expected. Robert Dearden, the third in the collaboration of three leading the way, also suffered from ill-health and retired before time. Paul Hirst remained active into old age and continued to be a beacon for the field. John White himself and Patricia White, a younger generation, have been obvious inheritors of this mantle, and of course there are others in the UK and around the world, too numerous to name.



Peters' energy and initiative in the subject, and the most significant period of his influence, spanned a period of only some fifteen years, but he certainly left an indelible mark on and through the Society he created. In the 1980s it was sometimes said that philosophy of education, at least as far as its British influence went, was really just "footnotes to Peters". Times have changed since then, but no one should be in doubt that John's remark is apt. Where would we be if Peters had not left Birkbeck for the IoE? The Society, this Society anyway, simply would not exist. We have every reason to be grateful for the steps he took into the "Ministry of Truth"!

Recounting

About fifteen years before Peters' entry into our field, A. J. Ayer was walking over these same pavements, though in a different direction. He was attending an interview for the Chair in Philosophy at University College London, which had been vacant since 1944, when John Macmurray, having held the post for sixteen years, left it for Edinburgh University. Ayer did not know how many other candidates there would be, but as it turned out there was only one. He describes his interview as a reasonably friendly experience, and in the end, he was offered and accepted the job.

But, so he was later told, he had not been the preference of the philosophers on the panel, who had advised that the other candidate was the better philosopher, even if he was not the livelier man. The other candidate was Louis Arnaud Reid. He already held a chair at Newcastle University and had established a career of some distinction, with interests in aesthetics and epistemology, as broadly conceived. He represented a style of philosophy somewhat different from Ayer's, with influences from idealism as opposed to the prevailing logical positivism.

Quite soon after this, however, Reid was approached, to his amazement, about the new Chair in Philosophy of Education that was being established at the Institute of Education. He was not initially inclined to apply for the job: he had his own philosophical projects to pursue, and they did not explicitly include education. Through the efforts of George Barker Jeffrey, Director of the Institute from 1945–1957, however, he was persuaded, and in 1947 took up the post. He proceeded to write a series of articles and books about education, and indeed was the author of the first paper in the first issue of the *British Journal of Educational Studies*.

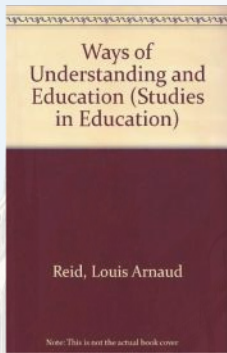
His earlier books included *Knowledge and Truth* (1923), *The Rediscovery of Belief* (1930/1946), *A Study in Aesthetics* (1931), *Creative Morality* (1937), and *A Preface to Faith* (1939). After coming to London, he wrote *Ways of Knowledge and Experience* (1961), *Meaning in the Arts* (1969), and *Ways of Understanding and Education* (1986), published in the year he died. His unpublished memoir, *Yesterdays Today: A Journey into Philosophy*, later came into print in a version edited by his grandson Nicholas Reid (2013).



Reid's work has, however, come to be neglected, even for many to be invisible, in our field. John and Patricia White, in a thoughtfully balanced recollection under the title 'Richard Peters and his legacy' (London Review of Education, 20/1), have described the way that when, at Reid's retirement in 1962, the Chair in Philosophy of Education passed to Peters, he and his former colleagues were to some extent side-lined: Reid remained active until he died in 1986, but he was made to feel more welcome in the Art Department at the Institute than in Philosophy of Education; his former colleagues were encouraged to leave.

Furthermore, in familiar narratives of the growth of the philosophy of education, he is scarcely mentioned: he seems to have disappeared under the weight of those 'footnotes'. Such accounts need to be revised, and there is good reason to return to Reid's work.

Ruth Heilbronn's piece in this Newsletter (p.18) includes the First Executive Committee of the Society. The minutes show that Reid was the first President of the Society. Yet it seems improbable that he would have created it. For that we must indeed be grateful for the dynamism of Peters, the livelier man.



Counting (without counting)

We all want what we do to count in some way. The Society wants to count, and it can do this only through its members. One way to do work that does count is to win contracts for research, and as we all know, this is not generally easy if your work is primarily philosophical in kind. The default assumption amongst many funding bodies, and assumption widespread in educational research, is that inquiry into education necessarily requires empirical research – not necessarily counting things but gathering and evaluating evidence in some way or other. Philosophy may come into it, but it cannot be primarily philosophical in any case. But there are exceptions amongst the funding bodies, and there is one fund in particular to which the Society contributes. This is the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grants Fund

(<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/funding/schemes/ba-leverhulme-small-research-grants/>).

The scheme offers funding of up to £10,000, and awards are open to postdoctoral scholars (or equivalent) who are ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom. Applications require the approval of the applicant's employing institution but are not limited to those of any particular status (e.g. Lecturer, Professor etc). Application may be made by independent scholars (who should choose 'independent scholar' as the relevant choice from the list of organisations in Flexi-Grant). Co-applicants may be from anywhere in the world, but the Principal Applicant must be ordinarily resident in the UK.

What counts as far as the PESGB is concerned is that applications should be for projects that are not empirical but philosophical in substance. The British Academy wants to work with PESGB in supporting projects of this kind, and that is the basis upon which the collaboration has been developed. The funding is not large scale, but this is a good opportunity to set up a study that might be a stepping-stone to larger projects.

Applications must be made direct to the British Academy. We strongly encourage those who are interested to apply. British Academy awards are highly regarded, and this may be a way of making your work count.

**British
Academy/Leverhulme
Small Research
Grants**

It is a pleasure to bring together the thoughts, reflections, and contributions of members and teacher-scholars in this issue of the *PESGB Newsletter*, published at the particularly significant moment of the Society's 60th anniversary and during a period of important legal and organisational change, in which the Society has become a 'person in its own right' (Hand, 2025, p. 25).

This issue offers a historical overview of PESGB, brings together feature articles and reports from its committees, and reflects the work of members, many of whom have been important pillars of the Society for over six decades.

We hope this issue provides readers with insight into the important work undertaken by philosophers of education and the significant impact they have on teacher education, teaching, and learning in educational settings. Details of how to join, support, and contribute to the work of the Society can be found on page 79 of this newsletter.

The Society's affairs are managed by a Board of Trustees comprising the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Conference Chair, Editor of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, and two additional elected Trustees. Further details of the current office holders can be found on the following page.



Current Office Holders



Chair
Bob Davis – University of Glasgow



Secretary
Chris Winch – King's College London



Conference Chair
Laura D'Olímpio - University of Birmingham



Additional Elected Trustee
Andrea English – University of Edinburgh



Grants Committee Chair
Joris Vlieghe



Communications Committee Chair
Alex Nikolaidis



Vice-Chair
Michael Hand – University of Birmingham



Treasurer
Richard Davies - University of Central Lancashire



Editor of the Journal of Philosophy of Education
David Bakhurst – Queen's University, Canada



Additional Elected Trustee
Ruth Heilbronn – UCL Institute of Education (IOE)



Development Committee Chair
Adrian Skilbeck



Inclusion Committee Chair
Oli Belas

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Bath and Bristol

Bedford

Birmingham

Cambridge

Devon and Cornwall

Durham

Edinburgh

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Netherlands and Flanders

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Sheffield

Ansgar Allen

South East

Karl Bentley

South Wales

Jane Gatley

Strathclyde-Glasgow

David Lewin & Ruth Unsworth

Warwick

Matthew Clayton & Emma
Williams

Winchester

Alexis Gibbs

Yorkshire

John McCall

The Founding of PESGB - *Ruth Heilbronn*



Discussions around founding a Society in the UK took place at the Institute of Education (IoE) in London, where the archives of the Society are housed. PESGB was officially inaugurated in 1964 at *Uplands House* in High Wycombe, UK. The following year, the first Annual Conference was held at *Beatrice Webb House* in Surrey, followed in 1966 by the publication of the first *Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain*. This would later become the *Journal of Philosophy of Education*.

First Executive Committee

The Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain having been founded on Sunday, December 13th, 1964 at 'Uplands', High Wycombe, the following were elected members of the Executive Committee:

President	:	Professor L.A. Reid
Chairman	:	Professor R.S. Peters
Secretary	:	Mr. P.H. Hirst
Treasurer	:	Mr. K. Neuberg
		Miss H.M. Adams
		Miss P. Higginbotham
		Miss B.H. Hosegood
		Mr. C.R.A. Cunliffe
		Mr. H. Entwistle
		Mr. M. Skilbeck



First Executive Meeting-

Signed May 1965

The Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain

Meeting of the Executive Committee held

on Sunday, December 13th, 1964

at

'Unlands', High Wycombe

MINUTES

Present: Professor L.A. Reid (President), Professor R.S. Peters (Chairman), Mr. P.M. Hirst (Secretary), Miss Adams, Mr. Entwistle, Miss Higginbotham, Miss Hoogood, Mr. Skilbeck.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Cunliffe and Mr. Somborg.

1. It was agreed.....that the Society should hold five meetings for discussion following the five Public Lectures in Philosophy of Education to be held at University of London Institute of Education on January 12th, January 19th, January 26th, February 2nd and February 9th, 1965. These meetings would take place in the Institute of Education at 7.15 p.m. and it was hoped that in each case the lecturer would be present.
2. It was agreed.....that there should be one meeting of the Society in the Summer Term, 1965. Mr. M. Skilbeck, M.A., Lecturer in Education at the University of Bristol Institute of Education agreed to read a paper on 'Some concepts of man in educational theory' at 2.30 p.m. on Saturday, 15th May 1965, at the University of London Institute of Education.
3. It was agreed.....to hold a meeting of the Executive Committee at 12 noon on Saturday, 15th May, in Room 365 at the University of London Institute of Education.
4. It was agreed.....that for the purpose of collecting subscriptions the Society's year should be regarded as a calendar year, first subscriptions to the Society falling due on January 1st, 1965.
5. It was agreed.....that the Chairman and Secretary should explore the possibility of announcements of the Foundation of the Society appearing in the British Journal of Educational Studies, Mind, Philosophy, Education for Teaching, and The Times Educational Supplement.

R.S. Peters

May 15th 1965

60th Anniversary

ETHICS AND EDUCATION

R. S.
PETERS

SECOND EDITION, 2011



READING
R. S. PETERS TODAY
Analysis, Ethics, and the Aims of Education

Edited by Stephen E. Capperaud and Christopher Morris

WILEY-BLACKWELL

EDUCATION AND THE
EDUCATION OF
TEACHERS

R. S. Peters

INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE
PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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The PESGB is closely associated with Richard Stanley Peters (1919–2011), who, along with Paul Hirst and others, was instrumental in establishing the Society in the early 1960s.

60th Anniversary

Sixty Years Ago - John White

Richard Peters, as some, but not all, will know, was born in India in 1919, studied as a boarder at Clifton College and was tutored by George Orwell in the holidays. The latter, it is said, taught him *inter alia* how to blow up frogs with a bicycle pump. After WWII, Peters studied and then taught philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London. A colleague there was philosopher Cyril Joad, famous on wartime BBC *The Brains Trust* for the catchphrase "It all depends on what you mean by..." In 1962 Peters moved – a few yards – to the Institute of Education, then housed in the University of London's Senate House. This was the model for Orwell's Ministry of Truth in his 1984. Beveridge Hall was and is Senate House's lecture hall for mass audiences. In 1964, in pursuit of the ideal of teaching as an all-graduate profession, the BEd degree was introduced. This came to replace the two-year teacher's certificate course then taught in training colleges.

Sixty years ago

Gifted son of Clifton, conchie through the war,
More and more uncertain what our life is for,
From lodestar Joad – his colleague – gleans
'It all depends on what that question means.'

His spell at Birkbeck was for RSP
A stepping stone across to I of E:
A section of the Ministry of Truth.
(George Orwell was his tutor in his youth).

Once there, once Chair, in ceaseless rush,
He swept away the heaving heaps of mush
In training college labelled 'phil. of ed.',
Bringing in the *bona fide* sort instead.
Appointing staff, side-lining some in post,
He made old *modi operandi* toast,
Curing a perceived paralysis
With doses of conceptual analysis.



Like bones to dogs, he'd toss his staff a word
For each to pick at as a worm for biff.
One got 'training', one 'habituation'...
For all, it was a painful situation,
But for the bloke proposing 'blackboard'
It was a joke he wished his boss ignored.

The prince of concepts, 'education',
He excluded from this allocation.
Unfit alike for novices, those on the shelf,
He kept this sovereign trophy for himself.
Paul Hirst, his partner, chose another way,
With theories more substantial to convey:
And in a flash his forms and fields of
knowledge
Were notions known in every training
college.

For those were changing fast. They, no longer steeped
In lethargy and long, long lunches, reaped
The whirlwind of the Petrine revolution,
Seeing for themselves the sole solution
Now lay in rising from long-rested asses
And signing up for evening classes
In Phil and Soc and Psy of Ed,
Abandoning the idle lives they'd led.

For Peters' concept-clarifying team
It meant an end to their collective dream
Of dedicating every second to pure thought.
Instead, dead weary, frazzled, battered,
fraught,
They taught MPhils, Diplomas and MAs
Each weekday evening, frequent weekday
days.
Add PGCE commitments to all these
And by week's end they're on their knees.
Seminars, lectures, one-to-one tutorials
Now crowd out writing – even editorials.

Mention of PGCE recalls
All those Fridays spent in Beveridge Hall
Sitting with six hundred bored trainees,
Dozing, flirting, doing what they please,
Anything but listen to some sage
Declaiming away on a far-off stage.

Their loss. Exams will mean regurgitating
Misquotes and jottings, speculating,
Confusing names. (Of those I know, the
worst was
Collapsing 'Hirst' and 'Peters' into
'Hirsters').
Their loss – however will they teach 4A
With hazy concepts all in disarray?

So back to Peters' colleagues and their
woes.
Their leader keeps them on their toes
Teaching those who, part-time, full-time,
Pour in from London and from every clime
Between Saskatchewan and Oz,
Chock-full of fervour for the cause.
Their teachers have no time to think or
write
– Except, perhaps, the small hours of the
night.

They have as well to give away weekends
Reserved for slumber or for fun with friends,
For every class has its own conference,
At which staff must, in truth or in pretence,
Look totally absorbed and sometimes speak,

Fraternise with students, brash and meek.
A country house, of course a modest one,
High Leigh, e.g., not far from Hoddesdon,
Is venue for these weekend jamborees.
For one, too, grander than all these,
An annual one, thanks due to RSP,
The moot of new PESGB,
Where, hidden in a winged and frayed
armchair,
An ancient prof's long snores rise through
the air.

Thrice worse, for Peters' battered,
shattered friends
Is one whole week, not only odd weekends,
At the Easter School of Philosophy.
Schoolteachers come to slake their
curiosity,
To hear the topmost scholars in the land.
And then –in seminars with those less
grand,
At lunch and supper, breakfast too-
Relentlessly pick through their every view.
The afternoons are free. Most colleagues go
to bed.
But one is pressed to schlepp to Beachy
Head
With a well-known philosopher of mind
Dead keen to see the view before he dined.



Declining coffee, saying no to a nap,
Peters drives off to hone his
handicap
With niblick, putter, iron and wood,
At last unwinding as he knows he
should.

For Peters needs more time, he
needs more space
To let up from his restless pace.
He asks a lot from colleagues, to be
sure,
Yet from himself he always looks for
more:

No ear for music, no time for television,
Committing every minute to 'The Mission',
Teaching, marking, writing and revising,
Accepting keynote invites and advising,
Founding a Society and its journal,
Choked by workloads quite infernal,
Attending endless key committees...
(You'll get from this how grim it is.)

Demanding, certainly, and often feared,
Pipe-smoking pioneer, by all revered,
A beacon still. Wherever would we be
If he'd not stepped across to IoE?

On Persons, Gods and Learned Societies: A Reflection on Incorporation -Michael Hand

It's been a big year for the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. On 13 December 2024, the Society turned 60 – a birthday it marked with, among other things, an extended annual conference and a Distinguished Lecture Series. As older readers will attest, becoming a sexagenarian is an ontological shift of seismic proportions. But it pales into insignificance when compared with the metaphysical transition that occurred five months later. On 13 May 2025, the Society ceased to be an unincorporated association, comprising a group of individuals brought together for a charitable purpose, and became instead a charitable incorporated organisation. In short, this is the year the PESGB became a person.

The reasons for incorporation will by now be familiar to most of you. As an unincorporated association, the Society did not exist independently of its trustees. Assets held, debts incurred, and contracts entered into by the Society were, in fact, held, incurred and entered into by the trustees. There was nothing wrong with this arrangement – it served us well for six decades – but it was not without risk. If the Society had run into financial difficulties, the unlimited personal liability of the trustees would have put them in a perilous position. Incorporation has made the Society a person in its own right, responsible for its own debts and obligations, and thereby limited the liability of trustees.



But what kind of person has the PESGB become? Plainly not a *human* person. Incorporated organisations resemble human beings in various ways: they can deliberate, act and be held responsible for their actions; they are the bearers of rights and duties; they can own property and lend and borrow money; they can be convicted of crimes and subjected to penalties. But they are also unlike human beings in important respects. They cannot see, hear, touch or taste. They do not have appetites or emotions and do not suffer from illness or infirmity. In an old adage attributed to the 18th century Lord Chancellor Edward Thurlow, the difficulty with imposing penalties on corporations is that there is 'no body to kick'. It is this absence of a physical body that has struck many as the key difference between corporate and human persons. The name of an incorporated organisation, writes H.L.A. Hart, 'is the name of a real person existing with a real will and life, but not a body of its own' (Hart, 1954, p.24).

At this point, the theologically minded among you will notice an interesting parallel between the personhood of corporations and the personhood of God. As understood in the Christian tradition, God is a person 'without body, parts, or passions' (Westminster Confession, 1646). Thirtysomething years ago, when I was an undergraduate student of theology, the discipline was abuzz with earnest discussion of Richard Swinburne's trilogy of books (*The Coherence of Theism*, *The Existence of God* and *Faith and Reason*) setting out a rigorous philosophical defence of theism. On the first page of the first of these volumes, Swinburne observes that God is 'a person without a body' (Swinburne, 1977, p.1). The key difference between corporate and human persons, then, is the very thing that separates men and women from gods.

What follows? Should we infer that the PESGB has this year entered the pantheon of the gods? That would be premature. Perhaps the category of persons without bodies is a genus with more than one species, and there are good reasons *not* to think of our newly incorporated Society as a deity. Still, until such reasons are forthcoming, we would do well to keep an open mind.



Hart, H.L.A. (1954) 'Definition and theory in jurisprudence', *Law Quarterly Review* 70. (Reprinted in H.L.A. Hart (1983) *Essays in Jurisprudence and Philosophy*, Oxford: OUP, pp.21-48.)

Swinburne, R. (1977) *The Coherence of Theism*, Oxford: OUP.

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), available at <https://www.focchurch.org.uk/about-us/important-documents/the-westminster-confession-of-faith/>.

Reflections on the 60th Anniversary Conference - Ping Su and Catherine Lu

This year, the PESGB commenced celebrations for its 60th anniversary with its annual conference held from 27–30 March 2025. 184 distinguished academics and teachers from diverse fields and countries gathered at New College, Oxford.

Fascinating academic events included four keynote speeches, an invited anniversary panel, 65 paper presentations (including works-in-progress), 27 posters, 10 symposia, and three workshops. Beyond the academic programme, the 2025 PESGB conference also offered entertainment activities to enhance the jovial atmosphere. These included a concert in the New College Chapel featuring the incredible pianist Aida Lahlou; a philosophical film screening of the *Young Plato* documentary, opened by its star, Belfastian headteacher Kevin McAreevey; a PESGB Pub Quiz, a singalong and party on the Saturday night after a formal college dinner, and even a flying circus!

On 27th March, the PESGB conference began with a pre-conference workshop for graduate students, led by Graeme Tiffany. He encouraged students to ask each other a philosophical question as an icebreaker. Following the discussion, he took students on a guided walk through Oxford, illustrating how the surrounding environment and personal reflection intersect in philosophy. He emphasised the important educational value of activities beyond the school walls.



The workshop was followed by the official opening of the conference, which commenced with Yuriko Saito's keynote, entitled *The Role of Aesthetic Education in Everyday Life*. Yuriko advocated observing everyday aesthetics, highlighting how seemingly ordinary objects and actions can hold aesthetic significance. For example, a clay cup, even if cracked, retains aesthetic value. Routine tasks like cleaning can also reveal unexpected beauty when viewed from a different perspective. She encouraged participants to reflect on aesthetic value in their daily lives.

On 28th March, the second day of the conference, Amy Shuffelton delivered her keynote, entitled *After the Revolution: Education and the Power of Disappointment*. Amy argued that disappointment creates a space for education in ways that hope alone cannot. As a political emotion, disappointment forces us to confront both our history and our aspirations, recognising the complexity, contingency, and collective nature of human affairs.

Drawing on *Frankenstein* and presenting Mary Shelley as a philosopher of education, she explored how the novel teaches us to face disappointment without despair, to remain present while reflecting on the past, and to envision an open future. Verney, a character from *The Last Man*, exemplifies this by adopting a sheepdog, immersing himself in great literature, and embarking on a hopeful journey. In the wake of revolution, disappointment becomes a crucial lens – steering us away from false hope and self-affirming despair – through which we can assess history and imagine political futures. Ultimately, Amy concluded, Mary Shelley offers a simple but enduring lesson: if all else fails, find a good book and adopt a dog.

Amy's keynote was followed by an invited anniversary panel, chaired by Ka Ya Lee and featuring Paul Standish, Doret de Ruyter, Rowena Azada-Palacios, and Drew Chambers. This panel drew on the experience and wisdom of philosophers of education across generations and countries. They considered the shifts in topics, themes, and research over the past 60 years and entertained the question of what had been missing and what should be attended to more in the future.

To this end, Johannes argues that we should distinguish between teaching “about progression” and teaching “for progression.” He then calls for us to go beyond teaching progression to recognise the wrongs and injustices of the past in education, which he refers to as regression. Moreover, he further argues that by teaching the history of both progression and regression, we can explicate and justify normative criteria, which provides crucial knowledge in democratic education. This teaching process contributes to the development of our democracy both in the present and in the future and is therefore itself an expression of progression.



The final day of the PESGB conference concluded with James Conroy's keynote, entitled *The Emergence of the Appetites and Education Across Sixty Years*. In this talk, Jim distinguishes between two kinds of appetites: *caritas* and *cupidity*. *Caritas* is the foundational love of the world, while *cupidity* is the desire for possession. Jim reminds us that we should be alert to the danger of education slipping from *caritas* to *cupidity*. That is to say, as teachers, we ought to be alert to the potential danger of being egoistical in our attempt to possess students' ideas and affections instead of directing them towards knowledge and wisdom.

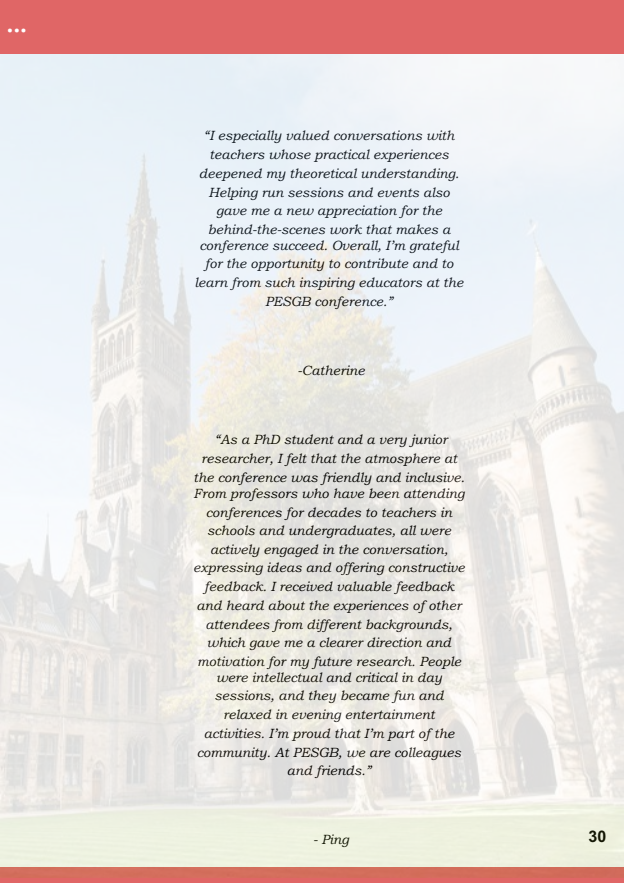
The four-day conference brought together researchers, students, and educational practitioners from around the world. Attendees enjoyed fruitful intellectual conversations, singalongs, and great food and drink as they celebrated PESGB's 60th birthday together. There are more anniversary events planned throughout the remainder of this year, which can be found on the PESGB website. In the meantime, we are already looking forward to next year's conference, which will take place at New College, Oxford, between 27–29 March 2026.



Final Personal Reflections

As a PhD student and student helper at the PESGB Conference 2025, I enjoyed both attending and supporting the event. My presentation on character education and well-being received valuable feedback from international academics and teachers, helping me reflect on different contexts, and on the link between theory and practice. These exchanges enriched my PhD research and offered me insight into current topics in educational philosophy.





“I especially valued conversations with teachers whose practical experiences deepened my theoretical understanding. Helping run sessions and events also gave me a new appreciation for the behind-the-scenes work that makes a conference succeed. Overall, I’m grateful for the opportunity to contribute and to learn from such inspiring educators at the PESGB conference.”

-Catherine

“As a PhD student and a very junior researcher, I felt that the atmosphere at the conference was friendly and inclusive. From professors who have been attending conferences for decades to teachers in schools and undergraduates, all were actively engaged in the conversation, expressing ideas and offering constructive feedback. I received valuable feedback and heard about the experiences of other attendees from different backgrounds, which gave me a clearer direction and motivation for my future research. People were intellectual and critical in day sessions, and they became fun and relaxed in evening entertainment activities. I’m proud that I’m part of the community. At PESGB, we are colleagues and friends.”

- Ping

One of the important aspects of the work of the Society is creating strong links with those who are working in other areas of education, both formal and informal. As part of this, applicants who do not work as academics in Higher Education are invited to apply for a bursary to attend the annual conference at New College, Oxford. In return, we ask these teacher scholars to keep a blog in which they record their experiences of the conference. Here you can find a selection of those blogs from this year's conference.

Many thanks to the teacher scholars who attended this year: Emma Horton, Karen Yoshikawa, Annie O'Donovan, Anna Park, Ethan Stanley Good, Michael Kellett, Ben Taberer, Victor Brar, and Giulia Pelizzato.



Is philosophy just making stuff up?

One of the most awkward parts of attending conferences, or indeed any work-related event, is the requirement to explain what I do. On the train from Sheffield to Oxford for the PESGB annual conference, I was still unsure how best to articulate this and was very much hoping to stay under the radar. It is not that I was not looking forward to the conference. After all, I had applied for a Teacher Bursary. It is just that I am not a philosopher, I have not really studied much philosophy, and if I am honest, I could not really name one philosopher of education – John Dewey, Gert Biesta? Does it count? So why, you might reasonably ask, had I gone to this conference at all?

I was hoping the conference would be fruitful for my current work and study. I am a teacher by profession, practising in state secondary schools as a history teacher and school leader for 15 years. Whilst coming to the formal study of philosophy of education later than most, I spent my career considering issues I now realise are important philosophical as well as pedagogical questions.

Currently I am working on the Maker {Futures} programme at the University of Sheffield. I work alongside teachers and with researchers to see what happens when students make artefacts – both as Papert's 'objects to think with' and as a language with which to communicate.

Maker pedagogies promote a circular approach to education, and highlight the value of struggle, risk, and slowness. Some teachers we have worked with have spoken about finally getting to know children they have taught for months through making. For others, it has revealed the disconnect between the job they thought they were doing, versus the one they were. But the questions teachers most often ask are about how making might 'give' children 21st-century skills and 'make' them more prepared for the jobs of the future. This both troubles and interests me.

My response to this has been to gently re-focus the conversation on the educational value of making for students and teachers. But how to articulate this in a theoretically grounded way such that it does not sound woolly, impractical, or unconvincing is not quite at my fingertips. Maker {Futures} is part of the School of Education in a Social Sciences faculty that has few academics who would identify as philosophers, so the work we have done so far is more empirically driven than theoretically reasoned.

The more work I do with making, the more I see its potential to challenge much of what is taken for granted in education, and the more I have come to realise that empirical study alone will not suffice.

The pre-conference programme involved a walking methodology led by Graeme Tiffany and started with the dreaded ice-breaker activity – but this one kept up its end of the bargain. We were to write down two questions, one about philosophy and the other about walking. Being a novice philosopher, my question – is philosophy just making stuff up? – was only partly asked in jest. It was met with some interesting answers, and it really did help to get to know people without having to ask or explain what people do. Being able to physically move around outside to talk to people had a significant impact on how dynamic, relaxed, and easy the activity was. From here, the conference went in a hundred different directions, and it is difficult to pull all the strands together here, but I have chosen three sessions to reflect on and show how I connected the philosophy to my work.

**“Become who you are!”
Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke
Zarathustra***

I had high hopes for the first session. It did not disappoint, and I have been reflecting on it ever since: *On the Three Metamorphoses of the Teacher*, Louise Vincent used Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* – to explore the potential value of a cyclical approach to teachers’ self-cultivation. One where teachers can embrace the different stages of the camel, lion, and child in a continual process of overcoming.

The heuristic might usefully be employed as a tool for critiquing the prevailing linear model of professional development, one which requires development opportunities to have immediate impact and measurable outcomes. Applying this to my work, I reflect on how it is experienced teachers who are more readily able to dwell in the child phase when working with maker pedagogies.



They are more comfortable in adapting the curriculum, embracing complexity, and harnessing struggle. They can make space to return to projects later, rather than holding fast to the pernicious freight train of 'coverage' with its hit-and-run tactics of ticking tasks off a list. However, what I'm also seeing is that for those teachers in this child phase, the willingness to engage in playfulness and uncertainty comes at an increasingly high cost personally and professionally. Perhaps the question I will pursue further in my work is how maker pedagogies might support teachers in becoming confident and content in holding all three stages of the metamorphosis simultaneously.

What enables us to lead fully and truly human lives?

On Saturday morning I enjoyed a symposium based on the work of Japanese educator and Buddhist philosopher Daisaku Ikeda. Each of the four presenters shared a perspective on his work. Riya Kartha considered teacher cultivation of the 'greater self' or *taiga* as a ceaseless interplay between the self and other. This once again highlighted the inadequacies of dominant constructions of professional development.

Kartha argued that teacher's development often rejects the personal dimensions of a teacher's inner life. This denies the coexistence of the heart, mind, body and spirit, which is crucial for compassion and wisdom, and leads to the 'lesser-self' or *shoga*, characterised by personal desires and being indifferent to suffering.

Giulia Pellizzato explored the role of poetry in education. She argued that the regenerative power of literature has been obliterated from teaching and learning and used Ikeda's reference to Emerson's *The Poet* to balance the intellect with intuition – "the flower of the mind." This speaks to my work at Maker {Futures}, where we provide a contemplative space for students to express their ideas that may otherwise be difficult for them to articulate using language.

"If all else fails, find a good book and adopt a dog" - Amy Shuffelton's keynote, final remarks.



The keynote on Friday was given by Amy Shuffelton, *After the Revolution: Education and the Power of Disappointment*. Shuffelton used Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to dig into the dangers of false hope and despair, and instead to value disappointment. In schools, when we make artefacts, we have to think about the inevitable disappointment that comes with working with objects in the real world.

The educational value of disappointment has been hijacked by the pervasive emphasis on perseverance and resilience, which works as a controlling force to silence legitimate responses. Shuffelton argues that disappointment can offer a way forward that does not rely on false hope or debilitating despair. When students make artefacts, they are continually reorienting their work in response to the physical boundaries – including materials, skill, time, etc.

This process of reorientation keeps them in continual dialogue with hope and disappointment. It provides a challenge to the way education individualises students, especially during practical activities, where they are required to reflect on how their artefact was planned and the extent to which it achieved a predefined aim through the imposition of their will onto the world.

Through engaging with maker space pedagogies, the responsive, the relational and intuitive aspects of creativity that came from being in dialogue with the material world are brought into view. The consequence of this is the ability to experience, as Biesta would put it, being in the world but not at the centre of the world. This is not easy for teachers. Overall, I will not be following Shuffelton's advice on adopting a dog, but I will be taking disappointment forward into my work with teachers.

One final thought relates to a conversation I had over lunch with my fellow Teacher Bursary recipients about the impact of philosophy on education policy. We all agreed that teachers engage with philosophy in their everyday practice without necessarily naming it as such. However, we also recognised that the extent to which philosophy is brought to bear on education policy is harder to identify. Perhaps we need to provide more opportunities for accessible philosophy of education courses and conferences using blended approaches to continuing professional development (CPD)?

Did I find out whether “philosophy was just making stuff up”? Well, perhaps it partly is, but following the conference, I am more convinced than ever that the beating intellectual heart of Maker {Futures} is firmly rooted in philosophy.

It has now been a few days since coming home from Oxford, and I am still pondering the fact that it is all over and that I am back in familiar surroundings. However, I have returned with a renewed perspective and purpose in my role as an educator.

The residential nature of this conference provided a rare opportunity to immerse myself in reflecting on aspects of education that are often taken for granted. For example, access and cultural differences in education vary greatly across the world – what is an entitlement for some may be a hard-won battle for others.

The conference was thought-provoking and inspiring, thanks to a mix of expertise and diversity. I think no one was left untouched by the experience. For me, it was truly powerful to witness others and to peel back the layers that people tend to identify with, such as gender, religion, national identity, etc., and from that point to have meaningful conversations. Ultimately, we were able to agree on our shared social responsibility in the world.

One of the main reasons I wanted to take part in this conference was to reconnect with some of my Institute of Education (IoE) teachers and to engage in philosophical explorations with fellow educators. Both goals were successfully accomplished, but I received much more than I had anticipated.



Philosophy of education allows people to engage in a process of enquiry, where participants rarely arrive at definite conclusions, but where the process itself offers an opportunity to deepen understanding of different aspects and perspectives of the topic. It involves both constructing and deconstructing the concepts we bring to the table.

This year PESGB celebrated its 60th anniversary during its annual conference. It was a wonderful experience to participate in such a special event. Its importance lies not only in the history of the Society, but also in the relevance of what it contributes to the field.

I recommend this conference and PESGB membership to anyone who is a teacher, or who works in or studies education.

Annie O'Donovan

Attending the PESGB 60th Anniversary Conference was an edifying experience. I teach early school leavers in a second-chance education setting, where there is very little space or time to think about—let alone thoughtfully consider—the philosophical and pedagogical merit of the way the system is run. It was a pleasure to have this chance to listen to analyses of educational experiences and environments, and the deeply moral and political concerns surrounding them. In true Socratic style, learning was enriched by questions asked of the presenters, and by informal conversations during networking opportunities. The sustained emphasis on sharing ideas at every turn was energising.

The lenses through which the delegates interpreted the presentations were wildly diverse, reflecting conceptual translations from a wide range of perspectives. I found these discussions endlessly stimulating and thought-provoking.

I engaged in a discussion around the meaning of the term 'comprehensive', and how its interpretation flipped the meaning of the whole symposium.



An analysis of the distinction between 'constructive' and 'destructive' activism in the West shed light on ideas I had not yet articulated for myself, while a brief exposition of the concepts of '*alazony*' and '*irony*' altered my understanding of liberal democracy.

Some of the keynote presentations I attended, were more theoretical, considering hope and disappointment (Amy Shuffelton) and progress (Johannes Drerup). These contrasted with some of the more reflection-on-practice-based talks and symposia, such as the changing 'appetites' of education over the course of the PESGB (James Conroy). In the latter category, deep attention was paid to the way our conceptual understandings and experiences of democracy (Terri Wilson), religious education (Ruth Wareham et al.), reading (Áine Mahon), and listening (Johan Deltner), for example, influence and shape the parameters of our learning.

The conference environment was welcoming and warm, and delegates were very generous with their time and experiences, sharing stories and thoughts during the many—and very enjoyable—networking breaks. It was wonderful to hear people talk about their work in these moments. I had an enlightening breakfast with Eleonora Mingarelli from HU Leuven, who shared ideas around reflection and idea collection—thank you!

The conference has benefited me as a teacher in several ways. Meeting other teachers who are concerned with the philosophy of education was refreshing, and it was both comforting and enlightening to discuss shared philosophical concerns and how they play out in primary, post-primary, and community education settings. The experience has given me renewed motivation in my pursuit of postdoctoral funding and academic job opportunities, and it has underlined my commitment to the 'doing' of philosophy in communities of inquiry.

The inclusion of teachers at the conference added depth and diversity to the thinking, which, for me, often challenged more abstract ideas to recalibrate themselves. This push towards reconceptualizing theory considering practice—and, in turn, considering how we might live differently—is the kind of philosophy I most enjoy. It was a real pleasure to be immersed in a community of like-minded people for the weekend, engaging in this endeavour.



Conroy, J. (2025) "The Shifting of the Appetites and Education Across Sixty Years" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

Deltner, J. (2025) "Creative Tensions in Students' Listening: A Deweyan Approach to Listening to the Unexpected and the Expected in Educational Dialogue" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

Drerup, J. (2025) "Teaching Progress? On the Role of History in Democratic Education" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

Mahon, Á. (2025) "Reading for the Doctorate: Affectivity and Attention" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

Shuffelton, A. (2025) "After the Revolution: Education and the Power of Disappointment" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

Wareham, R., Tillson, J., Weinstock, D., Widmaier, H., Clayton, M., Mason, A., and Swift, A. (2025) "How to Think About Religious Schools: A Symposium on the Political Morality of Religious Schools" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

Wilson, T. (2025) "Dewey, Democracy and the Conceptual Traps of Parental Rights" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

A Wonderful Unreality – Thoughts from a First-Timer

The 60th anniversary PESGB Conference 2025 was a first for me in so many ways: first time in Oxford, first time in a room full of philosophers, first time thinking philosophically, and first time explaining my PhD. Would I recommend it? Absolutely-without hesitation.

I have been a teacher for 20 years, a teacher educator for 3, and a part-time doctoral student for just 2 months. Cut me and I bleed stories and PVA glue. My research has a strongly philosophical twist, which is taking me out of my practitioner comfort zone-so what better way to open up this new world of thinking than by joining a group of philosophers for 4 days? (Side note: I struggle to find the collective noun for philosophers. Answers on a postcard, please.)

Those 4 days were a masterclass in how to think, question, and see differently; how to challenge and be challenged; how to stay open to new insights and provocations. In our current education climate, teachers are often actively discouraged from these modes of thinking. There are departments tasked with packaging and producing acceptable thoughts for teachers to have, and acceptable knowledge to know. Having always held a candle for the mavericks in education, it was perhaps inevitable that I would be drawn, moth-like, to the flame of the philosophy of education.

House Points to the conference team for the sheer amount of choice in the programme. There was always more than one room I wanted to be in, and more than one presentation I wanted to hear. Some sessions gave me immediate food for thought and had me scribbling furiously in my notebook, trying to capture an idea before a new one took its place.

I was not prepared for the absolute friendliness and approachability of everyone there. Imposter syndrome tried to tell me I was too much of a novice, too much of a practitioner to belong in such spheres and conversations-but imposter syndrome was wrong. Every conversation was open searching, funny, and carried a genuine interest everyone's thoughts. I described and outlined my PhD more times in four days than I had in the previous six months.

I recommend this to anyone- there is nothing like having to describe your research repeatedly over a short span to hone its shape, direction and focus. I found myself understanding my own research in new ways with every retelling, adding ideas from sessions as I went along.

Why we do what we do...

Two days off from teaching six-formers and spending time in the spring sun is, arguably, a luxury for any busy teacher. To spend these days however among the company of Philosophers in Oxford is certainly a dream. This short piece intends to capture my highlights of the PESGB 60th anniversary conference at New College, Oxford, of which I was most privileged to be able to attend.

Arriving at New College, I was immediately struck by its beauty. The archaic architecture of the college casts a real sense of academic grandeur. Just roaming the grounds, I was immediately humbled, aware of the immense privilege of simply being present in such a historically rich environment. Very quickly, with the aid of a welcome dinner (and wine!), I was warmly embraced by the PESGB community.

The diversity of those attending was particularly striking to me, not just in terms of nationalities represented at the conference, but also in the professional backgrounds of those attending. Academics specialising in the philosophy of education shared tables with primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, further education teachers, and students studying towards a variety of qualifications.



As someone who had only recently completed my PGCE just three years ago, I felt particularly humbled and privileged to attend my first PESGB conference. When recalling my PGCE studies, I am reminded of the almost complete absence of any meaningful philosophical reflection within the qualification.

Philosophy of education, or perhaps even philosophy more generally, seems entirely disconnected or omitted from teacher training in the UK. Maybe indicative of the current teacher shortage crisis we face in this country, this omission might be symptomatic of the rapid and perhaps *reductive* transformation that is expected of trainee teachers. In just one year, we are expected to transition from being ‘experts’ in our chosen academic disciplines to becoming professionals prepared to manage and survive a classroom full of young people. The fast pace and pressure of a PGCE can inevitably then only prioritise basic *training* of pedagogical skills over a deeper philosophical reflection on the nature and purpose of education itself.

In this context, the PESGB’s annual conferences, and the organisation, can be seen as providing a necessary counterbalance to this problem. I believe that these spaces allow for teachers to engage deeply and philosophically with the purpose of education itself. *Why* as educators do we do what we do? What are our fundamental aims? What *should* they be? How ought we shape our daily interactions with students? The conference therefore offered an opportunity to reconnect with the *existential* core of teaching, something I suggest is worryingly absent from the more disinterested approach to teacher training in the UK. By this I refer to the recognition of teaching as not merely the instrumental transfer of knowledge or skills to students, but rather as a deeply relational act, one that involves an *authentic* engagement with students.



Many of the papers I had the opportunity to see presented drew from such existential themes, and, as a soon to be doctoral student of philosophy of religion, I found myself right in my element. Professor Yuriko Saito’s keynote speech in particular resonated with me. In her paper, she called for the embedding of “aesthetical education within the classroom” (Saito, 2025), encouraging teachers to cultivate within students an “aesthetical appreciation for the mundane” (Saito, 2025).

Saito's paper was reminiscent to me of the Heideggerian notion of *Befindlichkeit*, or *attunement*, finding oneself within their environment. She urged in her work that we *slow down* to authentically engage with the world around us, to adopt an aesthetical sensibility within our daily experiences (Saito, 2025). By extension, as teachers, we ought to foster more meaningful and less instrumental relationships with our students and our environment within our professional practice.

Louise Vincent's presentation similarly stood out to me. Vincent proposed "A Nietzschean Framework for Teachers' Self-Cultivation", drawing upon Nietzsche's metaphor in Thus Spoke Zarathustra of the camel, lion, and child, namely, the three Metamorphoses of the spirit (Vincent, 2025). Here, she advocated that as teachers our pedagogical practice ought to be grounded in a journey of authentic self-awareness. By appealing to Nietzsche, she argued that we should seek ways of enabling us to reclaim a sense of authenticity (Vincent, 2025) – to teach from an authentic place – to allow us to connect authentically with our practice and subsequently our students. Equally, Leonard Bibby's paper prompted an exploration of *epoché* as a tool to be used within teaching.



Bibby (2025) highlighted the importance of nurturing a classroom environment of genuine critical thinking. Bibby's paper challenged what he saw as a tendency towards fallibilism in the classroom, that is, reinforcing students to hold judgments surrounding certain issues.

Instead, he argued that teachers should instead adopt a reflective *epoché*, actively suspending the immediate judgments of students when teaching to continue to preserve critical reflection. The importance of this is clear: students are to remain unbiased and free from preconceived judgements within their pursuits of knowledge, again reinforcing the notion that teaching ought to be inherently philosophical. The conference then concluded fittingly I believe with Professor James Conroy's keynote.

Conroy went on to explore the Augustinian notions of *caritas* and *cupiditas*, or the distinction between selfless love and selfish desire, albeit in the context of teaching education (Conroy, 2025).

Conroy's distinction between these two forms of love served to remind us that genuine teaching involves loving and appreciating students for who and what they are rather than what they might achieve. As teachers, we risk, to flex another Heideggerian term, *enframing* students in the context of our own expectations as teachers, or the expectations of the school itself. Instead, then, we should actively seek to incorporate a sense of *caritas* within our practice, to recognise the value and wisdom of students within their own right, and, equally to recognise the value and wisdom of what we do as teachers (Conroy, 2025).

Bibby, L.C. (2025) "Epistemic Epoché in the Classroom: The case for scepticism" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

Conroy, J. (2025) "The Shifting of the Appetites and Education Across Sixty Years" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

Saito, Y (2025) "The Role of Aesthetic Education in Everyday Life" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

Vincent, L. (2025) "On the Three Metamorphoses of the Teacher: A Nietzschean Framework for Teachers' Self Cultivation" in PESGB Annual Conference Programme and Abstracts. PESGB.

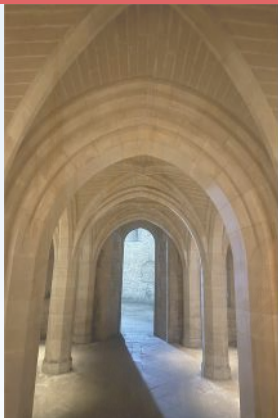
Conroy's paper, in my view, continued with these same existential themes, seamlessly aligning with Saito's call for the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility, a reminder then to be philosophical within our teaching practice. Overall, my time at New College was as deep and meaningful as you might expect. After being bombarded with philosophy for four days in a row, I do admit that I felt exhausted – and perhaps this has been conveyed clearly if you find yourself exhausted after reading my summaries. However, I felt deeply reinvigorated by a reminder that education, at its core, is a deeply human and philosophical endeavour.

I believe that among all the practicalities and daily demands of teaching, we can easily lose sight of this essential truth. I am humbled to be able to have attended conferences like PESGB continue to hold, to have been able to reflect critically, to have been able to remind myself what it means to be a teacher, and to be able to ask why it is we do what we do.

I am a trainee primary teacher undertaking my PGCE course, and the conference was an excellent opportunity to engage with current debates in the philosophy of education today. Looking back, my first thought is gratitude for having been so well looked after over the weekend. The historic and eye-catching towers and halls of New College Oxford provided a very impressive setting; the meals were sumptuous, and the coffee plentiful.

The wide variety of talks and parallel sessions offered plenty of choice, allowing me to follow the issues that most intrigued me. Highlights included stimulating keynote speakers, *Dialogue and Ethics in Teacher Education* (D. Forster), *The Case for Epoché in Education* (L. Bibby), and *Philosophy of Science Education* (D. Turner). I found the talks thought-provoking and relevant to my practice as a trainee teacher, and it was invaluable to have the space to reflect, learn, and discuss.

Finally, I appreciated the intellectual generosity and kindness of the attendees. There were more Doctors present than one would expect in a well-staffed hospital. Questions were well-informed and insightful. People were keen to help me understand the issues at hand, and attendees had a range of experiences and expertise all of which they shared generously.



The chance to talk with such a variety of people and learn from their expertise was invaluable as I begin to find my way in education, and I am sure it would benefit others as well.

Thank you very much to PESGB, Oxford, and all the speakers and attendees for making the conference what it was; I will keep my eyes peeled for next year's conference dates.

Journal of Philosophy of Education - *David Bakhurst*

This year PESGB marks its 60th Anniversary. Next year the Society's journal, the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* will publish its 60th volume. In its first year of publication, the journal published a single-issue comprising half a dozen papers presented at the inaugural annual conference, and it was some time before the journal regularly published several issues a year. In its early days, contributions to the journal were representative of the broadly analytic approach favoured by its founder, Richard Peters, and the contributors largely came from British universities.

Today's *JOPE* is a very different animal. Not only do we publish vastly more material, but our authors also work in a wide variety of philosophical styles and traditions. And the journal is highly international in character. In volume 58 (2024), for example, we published the work of 86 authors. Just over a third (32) were based in the UK, and the rest submitted their papers from Norway (7), Canada (6), China (4), Denmark (4), South Africa (4), USA (4), Germany (3), Italy (3), Finland (3), Austria (2), Belgium (2), Spain (2), Sweden (2), Botswana (1), Israel (1), Japan (1), New Zealand (1), Philippines (1), Poland (1), Portugal (1), and South Korea (1).



In the 1990s *JOPE* began to publish special issues devoted to specific themes. These special issues were typically republished as books the year after their appearance in the journal, though this practice was abandoned in the late 2010s as the journal became more widely available with the move towards electronic publishing and wider open access. By that time, however, as part of a new contract from Wiley-Blackwell, a new free-standing book series, largely devoted to monographs, had been created and this became an important outlet for some excellent work.

But when the journal moved to Oxford University Press in 2023, the Wiley series was wound up. As OUP do not typically link book series to journals, we decided to launch a new series with another publisher, and we found an excellent one in Bloomsbury Academic.

BLOOMSBURY

I am happy to report that the first books in the PESGB series, *Inquiries in Philosophy and Education*, edited by Paul Standish, have now appeared. They include Joe Dunne's *What's the Good of Education?*, Chris Winch's *Civil Society's Education*, and Rowena Azada-Palacios's *Postcolonial Education and National Identity*. The full list can be found [here](#). Please consider submitting a book proposal to the series! And *JOPE*, as ever, is keen to receive proposals for Special Issues from potential guest editors. For further details, contact Paul Standish: p.standish@ucl.ac.uk.

In recent weeks, a number of new faces have joined the journal's editorial team. Because the workload required to publish six issues a year is substantial, we decided to add a third Co-Editor, and David Lewin has agreed to join Paul Standish and Emma Williams in that role. Drew Chambers has accepted the position of Book Reviews Editor, succeeding Alexis Gibbs, and Rowena Azada-Palacios has agreed to join our team of Assistant Editors, replacing Lovisa Bergdahl. I am delighted to welcome David, Rowena, and Drew. Many thanks to Alexis and Lovisa for the wonderful contribution they made to the journal.

SUBMIT YOUR
RESEARCH

Why publish with Journal of Philosophy of Education?

Finally, I must mention one member who has decided to step down from the Editorial Board after many years' service, John White. John published his first article in our journal in 1970 (on Indoctrination) and became a member of the Board in 1988. I would like to thank him very much for everything he has done to support *JOPE* over these many years. We will miss his presence on the Board, but John has promised me he will continue to write for the journal and to serve as a reviewer. Perhaps he will grace the journal's 60th volume with some reflections on how philosophy of education has changed since those early days! Thank you, John.

Since becoming blog editor in April 2025, I have appreciated receiving a wide range of submissions from contributors with diverse backgrounds. When I took up the post, I aimed to publish one piece per month, but owing to the number of contributions, I have managed to share one every fortnight on average. I hope to continue posting once every three or four weeks over the next year, whilst maintaining the quality and range of posts. The current acceptance rate is approximately 80%.



Please share the blog and the submission guidance below with your wider professional (and personal) networks. For example, one of 2024/25's most widely shared pieces was on [Huntington's disease](#), written by a former colleague, an academic librarian at Leeds Beckett University with a BA in Philosophy, though not currently a member of PESGB.

Existentialism in the Classroom: The...

pesgb

14th June 2025

Having taught Philosophy A Level in Further Education for two years now, I still find it so striking, and perhaps frightening, the expectations and pressures that our society bestows upon our young...

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Prhonesis and Virtue: Reflections from...

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13th May 2025

An allegory of wisdom, attributed to Giovanni Domenico Cerino (1609–1681): Prhonesis and Virtue: Reflections from Gdarok I am a full-time maths teacher at an inner-city comprehensive school in...

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Freedom in the classroom

pesgb

9th May 2025

Practitioners: face questions relating to freedom each day when teaching and planning curricula. How will students engage with the material? How should students be in the learning environment? Do...

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Blog submission guidance below:

We publish thought-provoking, short-form pieces (around 800 words, minus reference matter) that are original, research-informed, accessible, and that find points of contact between philosophy, education, and related disciplines and issues.

In partnership with the PESGB's *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, we also publish short book reviews. [Click here to visit the Archived Book Reviews page \(2014-2020\)](#). Recent reviews can be accessed through this landing page, through the Book Reviews tab (right of the screen), or by [clicking here](#).

The pieces published here will be of interest to academics, students, policymakers, parents, and education professionals -just about anyone for whom education, in all its myriad forms, is of interest.

We are open to submissions for individual pieces and to series pitches year-round. Please familiarise yourself with our submission guidelines, which can be found [here](#).

Submissions are open to all -PESGB membership is not a requirement. Submissions, pitches, and informal enquiries should be sent to Sunny Dhillon [Sunny Dhillon](mailto:Sunny.Dhillon@sunny.dhillon@bishoptg.ac.uk) (sunny.dhillon@bishoptg.ac.uk).

The Beautiful Twist in Education

pesgb

4th April 2025

In times such as these, it is difficult to ignore the prevailing practice of attempting to measure the success of (formal) educational endeavours using all manner of qualitative and quantitative...

[READ MORE](#)

Why we do what we do... A reflection on...

pesgb

8th April 2025

Two days off from teaching six-formers and spending time in the spring sun is, arguably, a luxury for any busy Further Education teacher. To spend these days however among the company of Philosophers...

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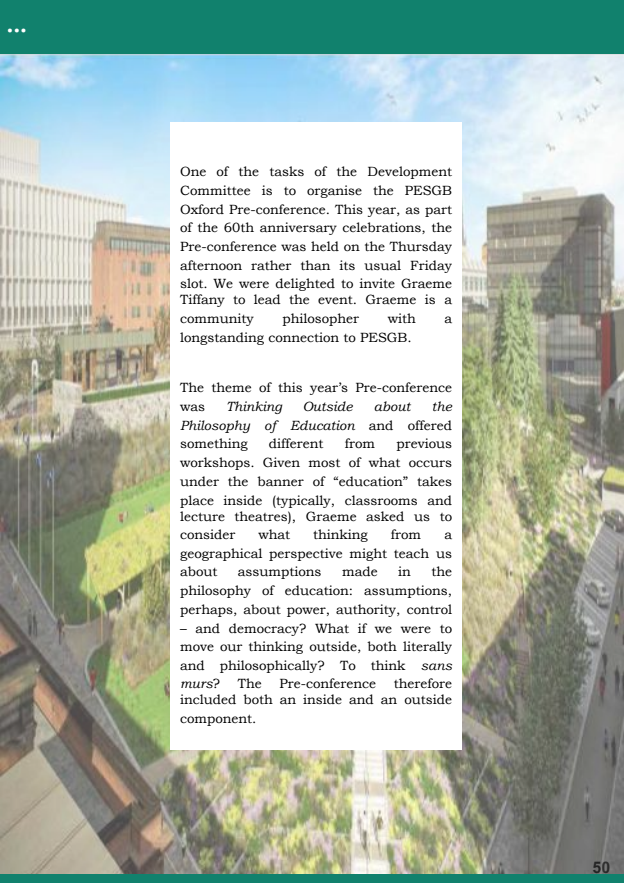
Development Committee Report-*Adrian Skilbeck*

This has been a busy year for the Development Committee. It began with a call for expressions of interest to run the next iteration of the PESGB Summer School, for 2025 – 2028. Each four-year cycle of the Summer School alternates between a postgraduate and an undergraduate event. Two excellent bids were received from the University of Strathclyde and the University of Winchester. These were adjudicated by Ruth Heilbronn and Rowena Azada Palacios on behalf of the Development Committee.




The award went to Strathclyde, and you can read elsewhere in the newsletter about a wonderful week of philosophical discussion and cultural activity that was held in Glasgow in June with a group of postgraduate students. We should also mention the phenomenal work done on the Summer School by John Tillson at Liverpool Hope University over the past few years, including navigating the pandemic. On behalf of the Society, I would like to thank John for his immense efforts and the high quality of the Summer School programming during his tenure.





One of the tasks of the Development Committee is to organise the PESGB Oxford Pre-conference. This year, as part of the 60th anniversary celebrations, the Pre-conference was held on the Thursday afternoon rather than its usual Friday slot. We were delighted to invite Graeme Tiffany to lead the event. Graeme is a community philosopher with a longstanding connection to PESGB.

The theme of this year's Pre-conference was *Thinking Outside about the Philosophy of Education* and offered something different from previous workshops. Given most of what occurs under the banner of "education" takes place inside (typically, classrooms and lecture theatres), Graeme asked us to consider what thinking from a geographical perspective might teach us about assumptions made in the philosophy of education: assumptions, perhaps, about power, authority, control – and democracy? What if we were to move our thinking outside, both literally and philosophically? To think *sans murs*? The Pre-conference therefore included both an inside and an outside component.

A background image of a park with trees and a river. The image is split vertically. The left side shows a weeping willow tree with bright yellow-green leaves, and a river with reeds in the foreground. The right side shows a large, leafless tree with a thick trunk, and a river in the background. The sky is a pale blue.

Graeme began by taking the Pre-conference delegates for a walk around Oxford, in the spirit of Philosophy Walks and Community Philosophy (*mobility* being just as much a line of enquiry as *space* and *place*). Opportunities were taken along the route to discuss questions raised by what we encountered as we walked. We then returned to New College, taking our thoughts inside to further explore our thinking about education, which led to interesting and at times provocative exchanges as ideas and assumptions were subjected to critical attention. We were very grateful to Graeme for his contribution not only to this event but also for his engaging presence throughout the weekend of the conference. We would also like to thank Catherine (Yun) Lu, our student helper, for her work on the Pre-conference.

As well as the pleasure of welcoming graduate and doctoral students to the conference, we were also able to extend a warm welcome to this year's teacher scholars. Once again, we had a very strong field, with thirteen applicants from a variety of backgrounds. As with last year, we advertised eight places, but because of the strength of the applicants, we were able to secure extra funding so that we could fund nine places, although in the end only eight attended on bursaries.

It was therefore a pleasure to welcome the following teachers and educators to this year's PESGB Conference: Ben Taberer, Emma Horton, Victor Brar, Karen Yoshikawa, Annie O'Donovan, Giulia Pelizzato, Anna Park, Ethan Good, and Michael Kellett. We hope they enjoyed the atmosphere of New College during the 60th anniversary celebrations. You can read a selection of their blogs elsewhere in the newsletter.

Finding quality time to read, write, and think can be challenging, whether you are an academic, a post-doc, a student, or an independent researcher. Following the success of the 2023 Writing Retreat at the Woodbrooke Quaker Centre in Birmingham, the Development Committee thought it would be good to hold another one. Woodbrooke has unfortunately closed, so the 2025 Writing Retreat was held at another Quaker venue – Charney Manor in Oxfordshire – at the beginning of July.

We had a high level of interest in the Writing Retreat and were pleased that so many members were looking to take advantage of a period of time for focused writing. By all accounts, the retreat was a great success, even if two days never feels enough. We were very grateful to Eri Mountbatten O'Malley, who was able to step in at the last minute to lead the retreat. You can read Eri's report on the retreat elsewhere in the newsletter.



In other developments, Andrea English, who leads our work on teacher education, has been in discussion about an online event with panel presentations on the current state of teacher education, which would include a special panel for Ruth Heilbronn, Patricia Hannam, and Kate O'Shaughnessy, members of the Development Committee, to present their analysis of the current crisis in teacher education. This may be set in the context of a larger conference at the University of Edinburgh, with partners from across the University, and discussion of this is still underway.

Andrea was also invited as a keynote speaker for the BERA 50th Anniversary Conference, held jointly with the World Education Research Association (WERA). She spoke to an audience of 850 in person, with additional participants joining via live stream, on the topic of the value of listening in teaching. In her talk, she highlighted the importance of philosophy of education for the future of the field.



The Development Committee has a budget of £12,000 p.a. to support a number of grant applications, for sums of up to £3,000, for small-scale projects. Last year we approved three grant proposals for events that have had considerable success, and this year we have so far approved two, with additional funding also being provided for one of the previous bids to support further activity.

Daniel Vanello was supported to run a one-day workshop in May 2024 at the University of Southampton on moral learning in early childhood. This had an interdisciplinary focus, one of the key aims in the funding of proposals.

The University of Strathclyde received a small grant for a one-day conference led by PhD students on artificial intelligence.

Alison Brady held a successful one-day conference in September 2024 that sought to develop philosophical engagement with the experiences of early-career researchers. This followed a successful series of in-person and online events aimed at supporting early-career researchers in developing research networks and providing opportunities to discuss the challenges in developing bids for funding and how these can be approached.



In 2023-24, Leila Osman was funded for a series of seminars around Violence against Women and Girls. Academically, this has culminated in a suite of papers for JOPE. Following the initial funding from the Development Committee, Leila and Emma Williams have subsequently held a two-day conference at UCL in association with the British Society for Aesthetics on Representations of Violence Against Women and Girls. The event attracted a number of eminent speakers from the academic world. Further projects around this major issue in contemporary society are planned and a one-day event centring on the TV series 'Adolescence' was recently held at the University of Warwick.



There have been one or two enquiries about possible applications which are currently in progress. The Committee would encourage anyone who is thinking about applying for a grant to get in touch, even if the idea is still in its formative stages, as we are able to provide support in developing successful applications.



BRITISH
SOCIETY OF
AESTHETICS

The Inclusion Committee (IC) is the successor group to CoRE – the Committee on Race and Ethnicity – and it will advise on the Society’s practices relating to inclusivity, broadly conceived, with a particular focus on historically underrepresented and/or minoritized groups. It also advocates on behalf of members identifying as or with such groups. This is with a view to recognising good practice where it exists, and to helping the Society improve its practices where and when necessary. As well as the protected characteristics stipulated in the *Equality Act (2010)*, the Society is also prioritising the experiences of new, non-HE-affiliated, and/or early-career researcher members.

The members of the new IC are:

Paula Ambrossi

Marinete Araujo

Rowena Azada-Palacios

Oli Belas (Interim Chair)

Siobhán De Fréin

Jason Cong Lin

Ruimeng Liu

Qasir Shah



The IC will have its first meeting in September, and we expect to meet 2–3 times annually. At an open (transitional) meeting of CoRE/IC at the Society’s 2025 Annual Conference, it was agreed that there should be close working between the IC and Development Committee. We will also be working closely with colleagues coordinating the Society’s communications.

Grants Committee Report - *Joris Vlieghe*

After a setback in the number of applications during the pandemic years, interest in PESGB's funding schemes has grown steadily, and this year-if memory serves-we received the highest number of applications ever.

The Large Grants Scheme currently offers four funding tracks. First, there are doctoral studentship grants, which provide up to £5,000 for one year to support tuition fees. Students may reapply after the initial year. This year the committee received eleven applications, of which five were successful. Second, the staff-led doctoral studentship grant, introduced last year, allows supervisors (at British and Irish universities) to apply for funding to help attract a PhD candidate. Usually, one such grant is awarded.

A third, and particularly popular, track is the seminar series grant, which enables recipients to organise internationally oriented seminar series.

This grant, which is open to anyone who has been a PESGB member for more than a year, covers travel, accommodation, catering, and related costs. This year seven applications were submitted and four were successful. Applicants are reminded that, in line with PESGB's commitment to supporting early career scholars, early career researchers should be actively involved in these initiatives.



Finally, there are miscellaneous grants, designed to support initiatives not covered by the other categories but which contribute to the sharing, application, and development of scholarly work within the philosophy of education. Although less well known, this category remains available for creative proposals.

While applications with some empirical focus are considered, they must demonstrate a strong philosophical and educational dimension to be eligible. Alongside the Large Grants Scheme, PESGB also runs the Small Grants Scheme, which typically supports colleagues in attending conferences, with eligibility every two years.

We extend our warm thanks to Carrie Winstanley for her many years of dedicated oversight of this scheme. From now on, both small and large grants will be overseen by the PESGB Grants Committee. I will continue to lead on large grants, while day-to-day management of small grants will now be handled by Åsa Melander, currently a PhD student at Roehampton.

Applying for a PESGB grant is a valuable way to gain support for your research and related initiatives—something quite unique within our discipline, and with the added advantage of a relatively high success rate. If you are interested in these funding opportunities, I would be happy to talk with you, whether about the formal requirements or the content of your application.

Just drop me an email.



Philosophy of Education Sans Frontiers (PESF) - *Qasir Shah*

Philosophy of Education Sans Frontiers (PESF) is an informal network within PESGB, set up by Qasir Shah, Rowena Azada-Palacios, and Paula Ambrossi.

We are pleased to report that PESF has had a strong start, with steady interest from members in developing a broader understanding of philosophy through cross-cultural and cross-tradition dialogue.

PESF is committed to widening the scope of philosophical inquiry in education by drawing attention not only to non-Western philosophies but also to marginalised Western traditions often overlooked in mainstream discourse.

As Thomas Aquinas suggested, truth is best pursued through pluralistic exchange, and PESF embodies this spirit by engaging with diverse philosophies that challenge, enrich, and extend dominant perspectives.



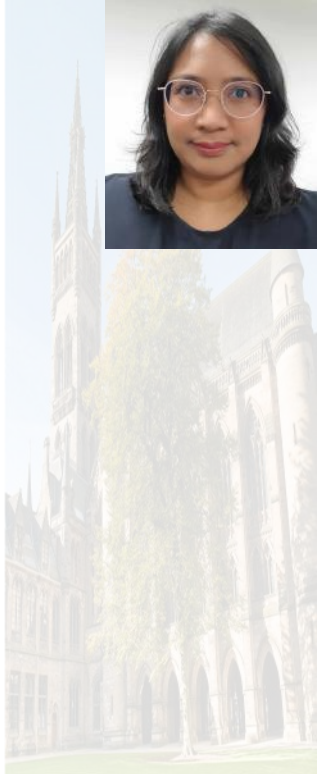
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We are an explicitly inclusive community, mostly working online with speakers from around the world, which helps broaden PESGB's reach in the right direction.

This year our programme has included Karin Murrison on the Posthuman Child Manifesto, Lin Ma on Heidegger's 'Conversations' with the *Zhuangzi*, Agnes Kosek on *The Politics of Recognition*, Madina Tlostova on *Decoloniality Reimagined*, and most recently Christine Tan on *Daoist Wisdom and Epistemic Humility*-talks that have sparked discussion and questions.

These events not only broaden philosophical horizons but also foster more inclusive scholarly practices, enriching PESGB's Annual Conference and the Journal of Philosophy of Education.

We warmly invite you to join us-whether you are already working in non-Western or marginalised Western traditions, are curious to learn more, or would simply like to be part of a welcoming space for dialogue. All are welcome. Look out for messages from PESF about upcoming seminars, reading groups, and events, and please get in touch if you would like to contribute or take part. Together, we hope to cultivate a more diverse, dialogical, and equitable community of inquiry.



European Seminars in Philosophy of Education - *Doret De Ruyter*

In 2024, eight colleagues decided to launch a new organisation to provide a space for constructive discussion among philosophers of education throughout Europe and named it the European Seminars in Philosophy of Education (ESPE). The acronym was practical, because it could easily be changed to *European Society of Philosophy of Education* if our initiative proved successful. However, we thought it wise to begin relatively small in the first years by holding an annual meeting.

The reason for our initiative was described in the theme of the first meeting: *Philosophy of Education: Rethinking European Traditions*.

Contemporary philosophy of education benefits from a long legacy of thinking about education in Europe. Many of the concepts, theories, forms of argument and methodological approaches used today stem from traditions born and developed on the European continent, even if researchers are not always aware of these connections. At the same time, much of the European legacy to education has remained outside the scope of contemporary philosophy of education.



Since much of the work done in the philosophy of education occurs in the English language, and English is only one of many languages spoken on the European continent, not all of the European conversation has made it into the current repertoire of ideas. In fact, some of the most important voices and ideas within this conversation have had almost no reception by Anglophone philosophers. European traditions of educational thinking deserve our attention not only because they have been overlooked, however, but also because our colleagues throughout the ages have seen in them a promise of making our encounters with young people more meaningful, more productive, and more focused on what really matters in a human life.

On 3 and 4 July 2025, the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht (the Netherlands) welcomed 65 academics from Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland, the UK, and Canada, plus a PhD student from the University of Münster. It was a good mix of emerging and senior scholars.

Most contributions to the meeting were on topic, with inspiring titles such as “A cross-linguistic comparison of educational theory: Reclaiming *Erziehung* in international discourse” and “Making sustainability great again? Teaching European history of ideas in a time of climate crisis and populism.” Presenters addressed continental European traditions such as European Critical Theory, *Bildung*, and *Allgemeine Pädagogik*, or European philosophers of education like Adorno, Hegel, Makarenko, and Simmel, or else they organised seminars with speakers from different European countries.

The structure of the conference was similar to the PESGB conference, including the two-minute exchange with one’s neighbour after each presentation, with one major difference: there were no keynote speakers. We had decided that at the first meeting everyone should be in the same position. We did not want to favour a particular country or tradition, and of course a two-day meeting would not have allowed for a representative number of keynotes. This worked really well. The participants were enthusiastic about this set-up.



The two days were over before we knew it. Fortunately, participants had ample time to meet each other during the breaks in the university garden or the restaurant, and it was good to see that many new academic friendships were forged.

The plan is to tour Europe so that everyone has a meeting closer to home. We also plan to organize meetings in cities that can be reached by train, to keep the environmental impact to a minimum. In the coming year, the meeting will be in Paris. The dates will be announced soon, along with a new call for papers. If you want to keep informed, please subscribe to the ESPE mailing list by visiting:

<https://www.listserv.dfn.de/sympa/subscribe/espe>

1 Julian Culp, Doret de Ruyter, Johannes Drerup, Franziska Felder, Anniina Leiviskä, Stefan Ramackers, Anders Schinkel, Douglas Yacek

The 2025 Writing Retreat - *Eri Mountbatten-O'Malley*

Members find peace and focus at the Charney Manor Writing Retreat

In July, PESGB funded a Writing Retreat for PGRs and other researchers who wanted time away from teaching and distractions, to focus on their writing. The venue, Charney Manor in Oxfordshire, was a real hit with delegates. We were surrounded by peaceful countryside in a Quaker country house that was small but beautiful, and, importantly, peaceful.

There were plenty of private spaces for solo or group work, as well as small fields and orchards, shrubs, birds, and other wildlife. In fact, we even capitalised on one of the lawns for some refreshing yoga sessions on the afternoons of Days 2 and 3. The food and service were also outstanding overall.

In the evenings, there were opportunities to soak up the local culture. We came across a rural sport called *Aunt Sally*, in which competitors have to knock the “dolly” (a wooden peg) off a metal pole using a kind of wooden skittle. There was also live folk music and an incredible atmosphere at the local pub, the *Horse & Jockey*. Finally, the team spirit was excellent, and we all enjoyed each other’s company.



Some quotes from delegates below:

“This was a really unique opportunity to step away from the demands of family life and concentrate on a piece of work.

Having this space to think was very helpful, and it resulted in a new idea for a paper. I also really enjoyed socialising with such a great group, who provided much occasion for laughter. Eri also led some yoga outside in the beautiful grounds, which was also a real highlight.”

"I found attending the PESGB Writing Retreat in July extremely beneficial. I am in the final year of writing up my EdD and balancing working full-time as well. I really benefited from having some ring-fenced time to work on editing my discussion chapter without other distractions. Attendance at the Writing Retreat allowed me to be much more productive than usual. My group of fellow writers were an excellent group who helped motivate me with my writing. The whole experience was excellent..."

"I think the venue was great for a writing retreat - I liked the quiet, the variety of spaces to work and walk, and the garden, especially for yoga! It would be good to go there in the autumn or winter..."

It was enjoyable and motivating seeing other members of the group around the Manor and having them to talk to at break times. The Horse and Jockey had lots to offer!"

"The venue was gorgeous, so peaceful, plenty of quiet space to work inside and, if the weather is fine (as it was), plenty of nooks and crannies in the gardens where you can read and write. If you are a city dweller like me who sometimes needs a change of scenery to find clarity in your thoughts it is ideal. I plan to include both this retreat and indeed the manor itself in the acknowledgements section of my thesis! I do not think there was really anything that could be improved on in terms of how the retreat was organised: there was a good balance between social time (meals, tea breaks) and writing time, and you could do as much or as little as suits."

2025 PESGB Postgraduate Summer School-

David Lewin



The *Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain* generously funds an annual summer school, offering opportunities for students to explore, in sustained yet informal ways, the philosophical issues raised within education. It provides an exceptional opportunity to encourage a new generation of scholars to engage with the discipline. This week, the University of Strathclyde's Institute of Education welcomed 15 postgraduate students to its Glasgow campus to explore the theme: *Education and Philosophy between Cultures*.

Acknowledging that intercultural communication and competence are at the heart of postgraduate researcher development, we have been exploring the question of how to do philosophy of education — and educational research more generally — within and between cultures. Is adequate translation of concepts possible (e.g. *Bildung/Erziehung* as 'education')? What does understanding another perspective really entail? What conditions are necessary for mutual encounter across educational cultures and traditions (and what, after all, is an educational culture or tradition)?

It was fitting that the participants came from around the world: from China to Canada, from Saudi Arabia to the USA, from Ireland to Norway. Led by invited experts in philosophy of education (along with some Strathclyde domestic talent!), questions of intercultural educational thinking were explored through discussions of a range of texts developing related problems: the limitations of translating conceptions of education (e.g. *Bildung* in German; 教育 (*kyōiku*) in Japanese; *utdannelse* in Norwegian, etc.); the problematics of thinking of philosophy of education as a sub-discipline of philosophy; the role of the theory of education (in relation to educational studies and educational practice), and more. PhD students also shared their projects in a relaxed and convivial environment.

It was not all work, mind you! A day spent exploring Stirling Castle and Loch Katrine showcased some of Scotland's historical and natural riches. We also managed to squeeze in an evening sampling folk music (and the odd dram of Kilchoman) at Glasgow's oldest – and best – pub, The Scotia, which rounded off a wonderfully (inter)cultural week.

The full 2025 programme and further details are available on the [Summer School webpage](#) (Password: *pesgb*).



Keynote presenters:

Aline Nardo, University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Sebastian Engelmann, University of Education Karlsruhe, Germany

Participant reflections:

"I'm very satisfied with the programme content. The selected readings have significantly broadened my horizons - some of them will become key references for my thesis. The lectures and discussions provided me with a profound overview of intercultural education research and made me more aware of the challenges involved in conducting comparative research."

"What I particularly enjoyed was the opportunity to engage with PhD fellows from all over the world. We made good use of the break-time group discussions, the evening conversations over drinks, and even the day tours to exchange academic ideas, share daily life experiences, and explore our understandings."

"It was truly an amazing experience - the expected and unexpected influences of this week will be long-lasting and continue to shape my thinking. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the organisers and PESGB."

"The content and readings were very inspiring because they addressed many of the difficulties and challenges in doing intercultural philosophy (of education). Some of the issues (e.g. essentialism) have always concerned me, and the readings really helped me think them through. The selected readings presented well some tensions inherent in intercultural philosophy, such as the commonality and incommensurability of different cultures."

...
"I would recommend the summer school to all my peers, because it is not only a valuable chance to deeply engage with important themes in the field, but also an opportunity to be motivated and inspired by the ways others do philosophy of education."

"I really enjoyed the trip! The timing and schedule were perfectly arranged. Sitting in the cabin below deck, having drinks and conversations while it was raining outside, left me with such a unique experience - I felt warm and cosy. It was also my first time visiting Stirling Castle, which made the trip even more special."

"A big thank you to all the organisers - your sense of humour, kindness, and easy-going attitude created such a welcoming atmosphere, and we all felt truly well looked after'."

"Our thanks to the PESGB for their trust and support in granting us this opportunity to run the summer school. We look forward to 2026 and beyond!"

Participant List

Ping Su, School of Education, University of Birmingham

Michael Zhenyang Cai, Moray House School of Education,
University of Edinburgh

Phyllis Trelli, Institute of Education, University of Strathclyde

Haoyu Jin, Moray House School of Education, University of
Edinburgh

Georgia Heyward, School of Education, Virginia Commonwealth
University

Anna Rumjahn, School of Education, Simon Fraser University

Wu Xiangni, School of Education, University of Hong Kong

Louis Waterman-Evans, School of Education, UiT The Arctic
University of Norway

Xing Shuyu, School of Education, University of Hong Kong

Nadja Ainetter, Education Studies, University of Education
Karlsruhe, Germany

Anta Afsana, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK

Rana Alsubail, Institute of Education, University of Strathclyde

Cosmas Iyamu, School of Education, University College Dublin

Susanne Sakariassen, School of Education, UiT The Arctic
University of Norway

Chelsea Stolt, School of Education, University of Maryland,
College Park

2024 PESGB Undergraduate Summer School - *Damilola Ogunlana*



The summer school was an amazing experience. I learnt a lot from the professors and speakers, as well as from my fellow cohort. I made new friends and connections during this experience. I also enjoyed the discussions and debates, as everyone had the opportunity to share their thoughts and develop their understanding. This enabled me to apply some of the methods and theories I have learnt to the various topics discussed.

It is difficult to single out a favourite topic, as all were engaging and eye-opening, but the most challenging and thought-provoking, in terms of practicality in education, was Professor David Aldridge's talk on *'The Idea of Evidence in Teacher Education'*. It was also valuable to hear from those with direct experience within the teaching field.

Overall, the summer school was a very exciting experience, and I would recommend it to anyone interested in the intricate questions of society and the self, or simply curious.

In memory of James MacAllister - Ian Munday

Address by Ian Munday at the Funeral of James MacAllister, Aberfeldy, 2 August 2025

Parts of this address, including the extract from James's writing, will appear in a volume entitled *Artful Education and the Downward Journey: Facing Finitude and Death*, edited by James MacAllister, Anne Pirrie, and Ramsey Affifi. The book will be published by Bloomsbury Academic in 2026.

For James (love, from Ian)

James was that friend who performed the impossible trick of running ahead whilst waiting. In some ways, I mean that quite literally - he struggled with, yet always succeeded in, slowing down to accommodate my pedestrian pace in our many walks round Edinburgh, Stirling, and Aberfeldy. When he shot up on to the roof of his parents' Edinburgh flat like a mountain goat, I failed to follow. "Come on," he would say, "you can do it, it's not hard, the view's amazing." Alex and Catherine - I can promise you that I have never been on the roof of your flat.

James sometimes complained that the things that impressed me most about him were his athletic capacities - his ability to do impossible things, like kicking drop goals in rugby. But this wasn't true. Most people wear masks to protect themselves against the vicissitudes of an indifferent world. When I first met James, I wrongly assumed he must be doing just that - when the mask didn't come off, it quickly became clear that there wasn't one. He didn't need one.



One of the many remarkable things about James was that he had the strength to be absolutely open, vulnerable. He was an exemplar of what it means to be resolutely independent and strong, yet still receptive, loving, and caring. It's a rare combination of qualities.

Whilst it is perhaps more commonplace these days for friends to express their feelings toward one another, many of us still find this difficult - not James. When he did this with me, I was both delighted and embarrassed, bashful, you might say. I would always sincerely return the sentiment but was rarely the first to express it - I got better at it following his example. He was ahead of me, waiting in that regard too.

Given his gift for expressiveness and his desire to acknowledge what matters, it will come as no surprise that James would often talk about his feelings for the people he loved - his family, Sarah, Maxwell, Alex, Catherine, Karen, and Paul, and his friends here present.

Accepting that James has run ahead to complete what he, following Lucian, called the "downward journey" is a hard reality to face. If there is something after death - and who can be sure that there isn't - I comfort myself with the thought that he might be waiting there, ready to go for a walk. Should I be lucky enough to be let in, I could incur his ire or incredulity by suggesting that Steven Gerrard, or some other favourite Liverpool player, was overrated. He could remind me that the Welsh rugby team were still rubbish. We'd probably talk about philosophy. We'd laugh - we laughed a lot.

If this thought is too fanciful (I'm sure James would think it was), then there is a more worldly sense in which he waits for us. He waits for us to remember him. At the end of a lecture on the structure of stories, the novelist Kurt Vonnegut asks members of the audience to turn to the person next to them and remember their favourite teachers. He shares a phrase his uncle passed on, which captures what that act of acknowledgement feels like: "If this isn't nice, I don't know what is."

James gave us so many occasions to have that thought - part of his genius was his ability to take us with him into the joys of the moment. When, in future months and years, we share our memories of James, he will be present and alive in our words and hearts. We will have cause to say, with more than a tinge of sadness: "If this isn't nice, I don't know what is."

I will now read a short section of James's writing, taken from a chapter entitled *What Can Death Teach About Love? Downward Journeys to Nowhere Special*. It features in a book he was co-editing with Anne Pirrie and Ramsey Affifi and involves meditations on what he calls "artful death education": "not artful in the Artful Dodger sense but in the sense of skilful and humane action in the world." Typically for James, it is characterised by nuance, sensitivity, clarity, and warmth. I think you will hear his voice come through it as I read:



“Artful death education involves developing understanding of what death is and it involves recognition of the pain that death can bring. Artful death education aims to console the grieving and dying. It offers no easy answers. It proceeds in a context responsive way. Artful death education encourages people to attend to death and loss when they surface in life. For in feeling loss, it is possible to better see what and whom we value, whom and what we love. Death education like this requires judgement, trust, time and timing. If delivered too soon or too late or too quickly, or by someone who is not trusted more harm than good may come. Support for the dying and grieving should ideally come from people they already know and trust - from friends and family or if not them perhaps from bereavement counsellors. Teachers may have a role to play sometimes depending on the circumstances. Context aware, sensitively delivered inputs might also be able to help students see that the pain in death can also reveal love. Individual teachers should not be expected to do too much though. Death education could easily become artless if ill-timed, impersonal and lacking in love. Lastly, artful death education need not, but may often, start with art. This might be a poem, a painting, a novel, some music or a children’s story or a film - any art that can enable exploration of death and loss.”

[...] Downward journeys are stories about the loves of the dead or dying. I have suggested there is value in creating downward journeys (and in listening to them) as they can help the dying and grieving live with love and find value in loss. Downward journeys cannot take the pain of loss away, but they can form part of an artful death education. I have also maintained that love is a relational form of being together in the everyday. But if love just is relation as I have maintained, it could be objected that storying love is just another way of detaching from it. However, this objection does not hold in the case of downward journeys. Death ends forevermore the possibility of relating in a loving way with those who are lost - this is why it pains. A downward journey is not a flight from the relation of love - it is an exploration of love when the living relation must end. Downward journeys cannot keep the relational core of love alive forever, but they can crystallise and preserve love in different form. There is consolation in this. There is value in this. There is love in this.”

In memory of Geoff Hinchliffe - *Christopher Winch*

Geoff studied Philosophy and Politics at Kent University, gained an MPhil in Moral and Political Philosophy at Glasgow and a PhD on Aristotelian conceptions of community at the LSE. All his life he retained the Leeds accent which was the result of his upbringing in that city for much of his early life. He was a qualified and experienced teacher, especially in higher and adult education. He had a long career in the IT industry before joining UEA in 1999 as Careers Adviser, eventually becoming Director of Academic Practice at UEA in 2014. On retirement from full time work he continued to work part time as a lecturer in the UEA School of Education until his death.

In all that he did, Geoff was a consummate professional and some years ago I had the privilege of taking part in the review of the academic practice programmes that he organised at UEA. He had a clear vision of what such programmes should aim for and had the pedagogic and administrative ability to turn the UEA programme into one that was both rigorous and professionally relevant.

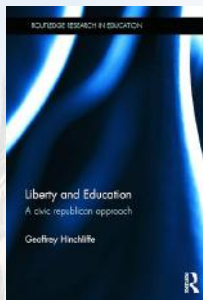


I was particularly struck by his critical attitude to his own programme, an attitude that he encouraged UEA colleagues to take as well. He saw this as an important way of ensuring the quality of the work for which he was responsible. This is all too often not necessarily the case for such programmes. I believe that his success was due in no small part to his profound understanding of adult education, gained both through his own teaching and his philosophical reflection on the nature of teaching.

From 2000 onwards he emerged as a distinctive voice in the Philosophy of Education, joining the Society at about that time. He began publishing on a range of topics in the philosophy of education, most notably on vocational education and skills and most recently on the concept of professional judgement, the capability approach of Sen and Nussbaum and its relevance to education and on civic republicanism and civic education, about which he wrote an acclaimed book *Liberty and Education*, published in 2014.

His philosophical interests and sympathies were broad, and he was non-sectarian both in his sympathies and his philosophical friendships, while at the same time staying close to the Aristotelian and analytic traditions.

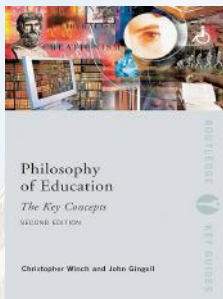
Geoff was a kind and good man, devoted to his family, gregarious and with a wry sense of humour. He had a great capacity for friendship and was much loved by those with whom he lived and worked. He will be much missed by family, colleagues and the philosophy of education community. He is survived by his wife Sally and his sons Ceddie and Ben.



Memories of John Gingell, longtime Friend and Colleague.

I first met John in March 1984 at a PESGB conference at Strawberry Hill. He was taking part in a symposium on critical thinking with John McPeck, and I struck by his very sensible and well-argued response to McPeck. After it was over I suggested to him that he develop his ideas into an article. With what I came to realise was typical self-deprecation, he demurred saying that he was 'too lazy'.

Just over three years later, I arrived at Nene College where John was the main philosophy of education lecturer, having been backed for the post by G.H. Bantock at Leicester who thought, quite rightly, that no Department of Education should be without a philosopher of education. I had been appointed to look after the English courses on the B.Ed. at Nene and we quickly became good friends and started to co-operate on developing the Philosophy of Education courses in the new B.Ed. with the help of Peter Wells, also at Nene.



Before too long we proposed some modules in other philosophy areas such as ethics and epistemology and received a cautious green light from 'management' to go ahead with these. The programme was highly successful and burgeoned into something like two thirds of a philosophy honours degree. We also made a significant contribution to the new degree in politics offered at the college, by now University College Northampton. This was an enormously satisfying period for John and I worked as a team in arguing for, planning and teaching these courses.

Our interests were complementary. John was very interested in ethics and aesthetics as well as political theory while my own interests rested in political theory, epistemology and philosophy of mind and language. The teaching and the response of the students was very encouraging and, with the students we set up a successful Philosophy Society. Some of our outstanding students went on to do postgraduate work. Both John and I had high expectations of our students, and we were not disappointed.

Although both nominally 'analytic' philosophers we both emerged from different philosophical stables. John was a utilitarian and quite forceful religious sceptic, having done his PhD with Anthony Flew, whose prowess as a supervisor he greatly admired. I am a Wittgensteinian with a much more sympathetic view of religious belief than John would ever have entertained. Nevertheless, we both relished good humoured philosophical debate and often converged on similar views starting from different perspectives, particularly within the philosophy of education, a subject on which we wrote extensively.

John and I also worked well together as writers and researchers, completing two books and several articles. We published a long article on the development of R.S. Peters as a philosopher of education not long before he died. He was still at the height of his powers, and I am proud of this work as I hope was John. It was always a pleasure to work with John, and he was an excellent co-author, critical and supportive in just the right measure.

It's fairly rare to have a close friend who is also a fellow worker and fellow writer, but this was the case with me and John. I shall miss his distinctive voice in the philosophy of education, and the subject is the poorer for our loss.

In memory of Nigel Blake- *Richard Smith, Paul Smeyers, and Paul Standish, with Pádraig Hogan*

In the summer this year, Nigel Blake died at his home in Surrey. He was 78. He was for many years a very active and much respected member of PESGB, serving as Chair from 1999 to 2002, as well as taking on other roles. He had a long and fruitful career at the Open University, especially as a member of the Art History team, where he courageously supported colleagues in the face of politically motivated charges of crude Marxism. Some years later it transpired that Nigel himself had been under surveillance by the UK security services.

Nigel's publications included many collaborations with Paul Smeyers, Richard Smith and Paul Standish, including *The Universities We Need* (Kogan Page, 1998), *Thinking Again: Education after Postmodernism* (Bergin & Garvey, 1998), *Education in an Age of Nihilism* (Routledge Falmer, 2000), and the co-edited *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Education* (Blackwell, 2003). He served on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* for many years and was its first Reviews Editor; he also co-edited an influential Special Issue of the journal entitled *Enquiries at the Interface: Philosophical Problems of On-Line Education* (2000).

Enquiries at the Interface: Philosophical Problems of Online Education

Edited by
Nigel Blake and
Paul Standish



It was our pleasure to know and work with Nigel for many years. He was not always the easiest of collaborators, but he certainly injected something distinctive and important into our work, and the books we produced were all the better for it. He had a mischievous sense of humour and an incisive wit, and this contributed greatly to the times we spent, and the work we did, together. Things were different – and better – when he was around, and like many others in the Society, we have missed him.

A fuller indication of the distinctive qualities of Nigel's work and character is provided by Pádraig Hogan, who also knew him well, and we leave the final words to him. Pádraig writes: "Among the recollections I can offer, I was often struck by Nigel's keenness to engage with the questions that postmodernism, not least the variants associated with Lyotard and Foucault, posed for education. He wasn't an uncritical disciple of such authors, but he insisted on the need to take their arguments seriously. In the later decades of the twentieth century there was more than occasionally a disparaging stance in Anglophone philosophy of education circles, and in educational debate more widely, to such seemingly disruptive 'Continental' currents.

For many years Nigel worked jointly with Paul Smeyers, Richard Smith and Paul Standish on a succession of books that confronted the resistant stance and opened wide the doors that had long been firmly shut against Nietzsche, his followers and his critics. Among the latter, Jürgen Habermas held a particular importance for Nigel. In his own distinctive voice Nigel also wrote a number of incisive journal articles and book chapters that tackled anti-intellectualism and what he sometimes called a 'conservative spirituality' in educational discourse."

He was particularly critical of complacent forms of consensus and of recurring attempts to dismiss as relativism the kinds of enquiries that seek to interrogate unacknowledged assumptions; especially assumptions that underlie invidious attitudes and practices in educational institutions. He was continually sceptical of absolute positions in ethics, but far from being a relativist he held the conviction that "open and disciplined argument may hope to contribute to an incomplete but improving understanding of right and wrong, true and false." Such a conviction, he argued, lends a particularly promising and defensible orientation to educational thought and action.

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