



## Preface: Philosophy and the Public

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GAP.11, the eleventh international congress of the German Society for Analytic Philosophy, took place at the Humboldt University in Berlin from the 12th to the 15th September 2022. This special issue contains the three keynote lectures.

The title and main topic of the congress was ‘Philosophy and the Public’. Many public debates touch on issues that are the subjects of intense research in academic philosophy: peace and war, migration, fake news and disinformation, artificial intelligence, expertise and expert disagreement, social justice, climate change ethics, racism and gender. These issues raise questions in ethics, social and political philosophy, but also in epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of science and metaphysics. In analytic philosophy, such questions of application are increasingly being taken seriously. In many fields, academic philosophy has experienced an ‘applied turn’.

A philosophy congress that reflects this development in the field was overdue. In the keynote lectures, colloquia, panels, and special presentations of GAP.11, the topic ‘Philosophy and the Public’ was analysed and discussed from various perspectives. The congress was also accompanied by a students’ congress and a public philosophy program aimed at a broader audience.

The conjunction ‘philosophy and the public’ captures at least two different aspects. On the one hand, the phrase points to the popularization of research results from academic philosophy, of bringing to bear the deliverances of philosophy in non-academic settings. On the other hand, we witness philosophers going public in the sense of intervening in ongoing political debates.

The difference concerns the origin of the subject matter: topics like the Gettier problem, the sceptical challenge, or Zeno’s paradoxes stem from philosophical research. To be sure, some research results from academic philosophy are suitable for feeding into non-academic debates, while others are not. In contrast, issues such as climate change, fake news, or the allocation of scarce goods do not come from the academy. These issues raise political challenges and would be debated in society even if academic philosophy were to lay down its tools overnight.

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Sometimes, academic and non-academic relevance come together. There are topics that are hotly debated outside the academy, while aspects of them are subjects of intense research in academic philosophy, often unbeknownst to the broader public.

Two of the keynote lectures presented in this special issue fall into this category. Tim Henning's paper 'Wissenschaftsfreiheit, moralische Kritik und die Kosten des Irrtums', based on his opening lecture of the congress, deals with possible moral constraints on academic freedom. Henning argues that while moral concerns are reasons of the wrong kind for criticizing scientific claims, *pragmatic encroachment* opens up the door for a certain kind of legitimate moral criticism: What counts as sufficient evidence for a scientific claim is in part determined by pragmatic factors like the costs of error. Henning's opening lecture was followed by a public panel discussion between Henning, Elif Özmen and Julian F. Müller.

The second paper, 'Reproductive Work and Productive Fairness' by Serena Olsaretti is based on her *Erkenntnis* lecture, which was generously supported by Springer Nature. The paper deals with the question of whether there is a moral obligation for other citizens to share with parents the costs of raising children. Olsaretti argues that there is a defensible moral principle of 'productive fairness' that can serve as the normative premise of the public goods argument for sharing the costs of children.

The third paper, 'Belief: What is it Good for?' by John MacFarlane, is based on his closing lecture of GAP.11. MacFarlane wonders what role is left for the notion of belief once we have the notion of credence. He argues that belief is in a different line of work altogether: Its job is not to rationalize and explain an agent's behaviour, but to track an agent's reasons. The point of the practice of reason-giving, he suggests, is fostering interpersonal coordination.

Theories of rational behaviour, decision theory and Bayesian epistemology are not exactly a stomping ground for public philosophy. MacFarlane's paper is a contribution to standard, non-applied analytic epistemology and theory of rationality. As the third keynote of GAP.11, it represents GAP's commitment to the importance of solid fundamental research in analytic philosophy. The benefit of fundamental research for the society is less direct and less obvious than that of applied philosophy. The benefit relates to a third aspect of philosophy's contribution: skills and tools. Exercising the professional skills of analytic philosophy is crucial precisely because philosophers aim beyond superficial and short-sighted answers, be it to research questions or to societal challenges. When academic philosophers go public, they should do better than some individuals who go by the name of philosophers in the German public who ventilate overconfident opinions on anything and everything, untainted by any expertise.

Academic philosophy's self-reflection about the emerging field of public philosophy has only yet begun—about its theory and practice, aims, methods, agenda, and limitations.<sup>1</sup> It was beyond the scope of GAP.11 and of this preface to make a serious contribution to this self-reflection.

<sup>1</sup> *A Companion to Public Philosophy*, ed. by Lee McIntyre, Nancy McHugh and Ian Olosov, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2022.

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