High School Philosophy, Then and Now: A Surge of Interest in the Teaching of Philosophy in American High Schools from 1954-1968 and New Possibilities for Today

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Abstract

There was a distinct surge of interest—among professional philosophers, school teachers and administrators—in the teaching of philosophy in high schools across the United States beginning in the early 1950s. While this surge led to much fruitful discussion about high school philosophy and to the implantation of several experimental courses, no single plan of action was ever realized. And yet, left in the wake of this movement was a wealth of valuable insights into both the practical and theoretical issues involved in carving out a more prominent and permanent place for philosophy in the high school curriculum. This essay seeks to shed light on those insights—recovered primarily through APA reports, personal letters, and reports on various experimental courses—in an effort to re-examine, from a more contemporary perspective, the possibilities for and roadblocks to high school philosophy.

Introduction

During the middle of the twentieth century—beginning around 1950—there was a distinct surge of interest in and experimentation with the teaching of philosophy in high schools across the United States. That is not to say that interest in and even examples of the practice of philosophy in high schools in the United States were entirely new during this time: John Dewey—the Nation's foremost philosopher—recommended, in talks and papers from the late nineteenth century, teaching some form of philosophy in high school (Hahn, 1967, p. 219); according to Nakosteen (1965), by 1900, "natural philosophy" and "mental philosophy" were included in the third and fourth years, respectively, of the curriculum of public high schools (as cited in McConnell, 1976, p. 15); Mulhern (1933) reported that, in Pennsylvania, twenty-five percent of the 163 academies offered logic and thirty-four percent included moral philosophy as a curricular offering between 1750 and 1900 (as cited in McConnell, 1976, p. 15). Generally speaking, the inclusion of some study of philosophy was not uncommon in institutions of secondary education—public schools, private academies, and denominational schools—in the later part of the nineteenth century. Rather, it was altogether quite common.

But by the time of—and in part because of—the 1892 Report of the Committee on Secondary School Studies, the picture was changing. The Committee on Secondary School Studies (more commonly known as the Committee of Ten) sought to make more uniform the "untidy world of secondary education" in the United States (Urban and Wagoner, 2009, p. 235). Both the conferences set up by the Committee and the final reports it produced were structured around nine specified "divisions of a high school curriculum": Latin; Greek; English; Other modern languages; Mathematics; Physics, astronomy, and chemistry; Natural history, including botany, zoology, and physiology; History, civil government, and political economy; Geography, including physical geography, geology, and meteorology (Mason, 1967, p. 208). Though it can certainly be imagined that something resembling philosophy permeated some of these

"divisions," philosophy (as a discipline unto itself) was given no formal place in the structure established for the twentieth century high school.

Thirty-six years later, the 1918 Report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (more commonly known as the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education) seems to have pushed philosophy even more completely into the margins of the high school curriculum. The so-called "Cardinal Principles"—the objectives for the high school—were: Health, Command of fundamental processes, Worthy home-membership, Vocation, Civic Education, Worthy use of leisure, and Ethical Character (Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, Appointed by the National Education Association, 1918, p. 3). It is easy enough, again, to imagine that something resembling philosophy could have crept into a curriculum designed around these objectives, but, as in the report from the Committee of Ten, philosophy was at best included as a component of another subject.[1]

The point is that neither the Report of the Committee of Ten nor the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education—that is, neither of the two projects primarily responsible for shaping the modern high school curriculum in the United States—left room for philosophy in that curriculum. In addition, philosophy had long been associated with religion—since the time of the founding fathers—and so the "proper wary of the inclusion of religion in a public school curriculum" meant that there was also wary of including philosophy (Moore, 1964, July 14).

It is no wonder, then, that examples of the inclusion of various areas or components of philosophy in the standard early- to mid-twentieth century American high school are particularly rare: An ethics course was offered at a high school in Wisconsin in 1909, but abandoned by 1920; for a handful of years in the late 1930s, a one-semester philosophy course was being offered to seniors at Hempstead High School on Long Island, New York; in 1953, ethics was being taught to high school students in New Mexico.[2] These efforts in the first half of the twentieth century were, generally speaking, few, scattered, and almost entirely uncoordinated.

Starting in the early1950s, however, there is significant evidence showing an increasing amount of interest in and, subsequently, an increasing number of examples of the teaching of philosophy in high schools across the United States. More importantly, these examples started to become more coordinated and connected—thanks largely to work of men like Douglas Morgan and Willis Moore, working through the American Philosophical Association (APA)—and led to at least *discussion* about a "single, concerted program of action on a national level" (Morgan and Perry, 1958, p. 91). Of course, one need only take a sample of the typical public high school in the United States today to realize that no "single, concerted program" ever materialized; over fifty years later, philosophy is still not-so-noticeably absent from most high schools in the United States.[3] Regardless, there is much to be learned from this surge of interest in high school philosophy and the ensuing discussions and experimental courses between 1954 and 1968. Those involved wrestled with practical and theoretical issues involved in the defining and teaching of philosophy, the reforming of curriculum, and so on, that are still relevant to any effort to bring philosophy to high schools today. Indeed, an implicit argument of this essay is that we can learn a great deal from past efforts and the thinking of the men and women behind those efforts—a great deal that can be beneficial to current attempts at bringing philosophy to the high school curriculum.

With that in mind, this essay seeks to accomplish three main tasks: First, it will provide a brief overview of the extent of interest in teaching high school philosophy between roughly 1954 and 1968 and throw light on some of the more 'transcendent' reasons for this surge of interest.[4] This section will also detail some of the work of the APA and certain of its members related to teaching philosophy in high

school and present the three major issues—practical and theoretical—that need ironing out prior to any attempt at a "single, concerted program of action on a national level": 1) defining what was meant by a course in "philosophy"; 2) making room in the already-full curriculum; 3) finding qualified teachers of high school philosophy. Second, it will give particular and closer attention to one prominent experimental course that was conducted during this time period (and that had a lasting impact on subsequent pushes to bring philosophy to the high school curriculum)—that of Willis Moore at the University High School at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (SIUC). This part will necessarily include a closer look at Moore's work, including his vision for the course and his reasons for that particular vision, his practical implementation of the course over an eight-year period, and the student evaluations he collected. Third, it will seek to extend Moore's thinking to a more contemporary context by, among other things, re-examining his answers to the three theoretical and practical issues listed above.

The Rise of High School Philosophy in the Mid-Twentieth Century

In the Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association for 1954-1955, Charner Perry, the current (in 1954) President of the Western Division of the APA, announced the recent appointment of "an *ad hoc* committee" that would explore the "advisability and possibility of philosophy courses being taught at the high school level" (v. 28, p. 55-56). This committee, chaired by Douglas Morgan, then the chairperson of the Philosophy Department at Northwestern University, recommended that any such exploratory efforts related to teaching philosophy in high schools should be "examined on a national, rather than a divisional basis" (v. 28, p. 56). Before long, the APA National Board of Officers appointed a committee composed of members representing each division of the APA. This larger, more representative committee was charged with three tasks: 1) report what had previously been done and what was currently being done in regards to the inclusion of philosophy in high school curricula across the country; 2) recommend whether (and what kind of) philosophy courses should be offered in high schools; 3) recommend some means by which qualified teachers of high school philosophy courses could be found (Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, 1954-1955, v. 28, p. 56).[5]

The first report produced by this "subcommittee on philosophy in secondary schools" (which was chaired by Morgan[6]) appeared in the 1957-1958 Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association under the title "The Teaching of Philosophy in American High Schools" (Morgan and Perry, 1958). The report included three main sections focused on three separate but clearly connected questions, all related to the tasks given to the subcommittee: What has been and is currently being done in regards to the teaching of high school philosophy? What should be done (particularly in regards to the type of course that should be offered)? What practically can be done (particularly given the already full high school curriculum and the current lack of qualified philosophy teachers at the high school level)?[7]

The first of these questions proved to be the easiest to answer. The subcommittee gathered information from education systems in other countries as well as from schools in the United States, dating from previous centuries all the way to the present.[8] The portion of the report detailing instances of philosophy in high schools between roughly 1900 and 1950 largely reflects what was discussed above. That is, instances were few, scattered, and disconnected from one another. The subcommittee's reporting of the "present" scene in American high schools, however, shows already—by the mid 1950s—signs of increasing interest in and practices related to philosophy in the high school curriculum. A brief consideration of three primary examples[9] of philosophy courses that sprung up between 1956 and 1958

alone will be helpful here for two reasons. First, it offers an initial demonstration of the increasing frequency with which these courses were being offered at the time; second, it provides some insight into the reasons why the courses were started (from the perspective of those involved)—reasons both of a context-specific and more general (i.e. more 'transcendent') nature.

Briarcliff High School in New York implemented, in the fall of 1956, an "Essential Ideas Seminar" course covering a wide range of philosophical topics. The course was offered to "twenty top pupils" and was justified by a felt need to "bridge the gap between high school and college, to stimulate promising pupils, to reward past scholastic achievement with an honors course" (Morgan and Perry, 1958, p. 114).

Another course was developed as part of an experimental program conducted by MacMurray College President Louis W. Norris and implemented at Jacksonville, Illinois High School in 1957.[10] This course was intended for "intellectually superior students," (Mann, 1960, p. 3) but also operated under the belief that high school students in general are "fully competent to master philosophical ideas, and that they should in fact do so" (Morgan and Perry, 1958, p. 114-115). It was started, in part, because Norris and the others involved thought that "formal (non-instrumental) factors need re-emphasis in American education" (Morgan and Perry, 1958, p. 115). This particular project is somewhat unique in that it also produced its own report, in 1960 after the course had been running for three consecutive years. In that report, additional reasons are offered for the course's origin: For example, it was considered a response to the fact that "[i]n our day there is great pressure to challenge high school students to work up to capacity and in doing so to think, to stretch their imagination, to be much more creative in their educational experiences" (Mann, 1960, p. 3). A "good stiff course in philosophy" like the one being offered was "one means by which this [could] be done" (Mann, 1960, p. 3). The report also makes clear that a course in philosophy can help to arrange "greater cooperation between colleges and public schools in the development of curriculum and methods" (Mann, 1960, p. 3). Finally, it includes a particularly pointed essay by Douglas Morgan; this passage from that essay stands out among others:

> That child is being cheated whose parents and teachers care so little—and have so little faith in him—as to permit the dissipation of his talents in tutti-frutti elective high school courses….In most high school curricula there is room for much more serious, disciplined intellectual work than is now being done. In some high school minds there really is some genuine curiosity about values and ideas that go beyond this moment's vocational and social and sexual concerns. There is a hunger for philosophy (Morgan, 1960, p. 11).

A third significant example of a high school philosophy course that developed between 1956 and 1958 is from a high school in Benton Harbor, Michigan. It began when Mr. James Miller, a high school teacher, recruited approximately thirty-five "top high school seniors" for informal bi-monthly meetings focused around Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*. Based on the success of this informal program, and with the encouragement of the superintendant, a more formal course was adopted into the curriculum for the 1958-1959 school year. It was to be offered to 80 of the highest-achieving students. Miller discussed the course itself, his motivation for starting the course, and the general curricular issues of the time: "I had a group of very good students in one class…and decided that something should be done to stimulate their ability." And, later in the same interview: "When you go to meetings of educators today you hear a great deal of discussion on what we are going to do with above average students…[T]he Russian advance in science has brought this to our attention more than anything else." In courses such as

the one he developed, Miller claimed, "new outlets may be found for the high grade students who will be the leaders of tomorrow."[11]

In addition to providing evidence of the increasing instances of philosophy being taught in high schools in the mid to late 1950s, these examples also provide insights into the reasons behind this growing push to include philosophy in the curriculum at this *particular* time period.[12] However, while these context-specific reasons are important, particularly from a historical perspective, the task here is to understand the larger, 'transcendent' reasons for including philosophy in the high school curriculum. Several such reasons are also found in Morgan's and Perry's Report and can be summarized as follows: philosophizing about a number of large and important questions is "a fundamental human activity"—children will do it naturally with or without an actual course, but a course can help them philosophize more effectively; philosophy helps students wrestle with questions about right and wrong, the good life, the point of existence, and so on, and asking and wrestling with such questions makes a unique contribution to a person's understanding of herself as both an individual and as a citizen of her country and world; philosophy can teach a student that "there really are many different, defensible answers to many different, important, intelligible questions; that the world in which he lives is not a simple, one-dimensional object, toward which one simple-minded clean-cut and culturally ordained attitude alone is appropriate"; philosophy fosters critical thinking (1958, p. 93-95).[13]

These reasons for considering the inclusion of philosophy in the high school curriculum are the ones that are of primary importance to this essay and that demand further attention. We will give them such attention presently by examining in greater detail another (and perhaps the most significant) experimental course in high school philosophy during this general time period—that of Willis Moore at the University High School at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Through such an examination of Moore's course, which ran from 1961-1968, we will also gain insights into the second and third questions above—i.e. what should be done and what practically can be done in regards to teaching high school philosophy?. These, obviously, were the more debated and difficult questions, and while they are addressed in Morgan's and Perry's Report, they are—I think—better addressed in Moore's 1964 report on his own course.[14]

Willis Moore's Experimental High School Philosophy Course, 1961-1968

Morgan and Perry's 1958 report on high school philosophy was not a report on something that was ending, but rather a snapshot of something that was gaining steam. In the 1960s, was clear that "Dr. Morgan [continued] to welcome advice and reports on courses being planned or taught" (Garrett, 1960, p. 1). In fact, the subcommittee Morgan chaired had become, as he had originally hoped, two things: 1) a kind of "clearing house" for information related to current and future efforts to bring philosophy into high schools ; and 2) a resource offering "cooperation and assistance" to anyone interested in learning about existing efforts and/or making an effort of their own to include philosophy in high school curricula (Morgan and Perry, 1958, p. 91). Consequently, the conversation about the possibility of a "concerted program of action" for teaching philosophy in high schools was expanding to include more and more voices. And it was reaching an increasingly large audience of academics and educational practitioners—some who were engaged in experiments of their own and some who were intrigued by the very idea of philosophy in high schools. One person who fit into both of those categories was Willis Moore, Philosophy professor at the University of Southern Illinois, Carbondale. And so, in 1962, when Douglas

Morgan was ready to turn over his chair position of the APA's Philosophy in Education's subcommittee on the teaching of philosophy in high schools, Moore was the natural choice to replace him.[15]

At that point, Moore was already one year into what would become an eight year experimental course in high school Philosophy at the University of Southern Illinois's University High School.[16] He reported formally on the course in 1964, after its first three years.[17] Moore's report provided background information and justification for the course; it detailed the procedures and materials for the course; and ended with a statement on the "results" of the course up to that point and some student evaluations. Most importantly, it gives sustained attention to and offers insightful comments about questions concerning what should be done and what practically can be done in regards to a high school philosophy course. Because the first of these questions is the more theoretical one, I shall table it a bit longer and address the more practical issues first.

Among such practical issues is the problem of fitting the new content (philosophy) into the existing curriculum. Two main options were considered, by Moore in particular: First, there was the possibility of including philosophy within the realm of other subject areas—social studies, general humanities courses, or something of that nature; second, there was the possibility of trying to make room for a "straight philosophy" course. On the former, Moore was consistently skeptical. Moore typically admitted the value of humanities courses, but defended more strongly "the position that a straight philosophy course" would be a more promising "way of getting philosophical content into the curriculum" (Moore, 1966, October 28).

His reasons for this preference become clear in a number of other letters. In a 1964 correspondence with Donnel Portzline of the West Virginia Department of Education, Moore responds unfavorably to Portzline's argument that philosophy is best included—along with other social sciences—under the banner of "social studies." Moore argues that:

> The problem…is that the vast majority of the current teachers in the secondary social studies programs are not prepared to weave philosophy into their treatment of social problems and institutions. They are not prepared in terms of their own training. Philosophy is a subject matter and a method just as is the case with sociology, history, political science, and so on; and, as proper teaching in the areas of the social sciences requires specialized training in those subject matter areas, so does proper teaching in philosophy (1964, October 29).

Moore expressed similar reservations in a letter to Carolyn Glass[18]: "Very little philosophy is getting into the high schools" when it is taught merely as part of humanities courses; teachers, he claimed, "tend to emphasize the subject matters they are best equipped to offer; and philosophy is seldom one of these" (1966, August 23). And finally, this time to Douglas Morgan, Moore laments that fact that, "if [philosophy] gets in [the high school curriculum] at all it is treated as literature or presented quite superficially" (1966, November 18). Ultimately, Moore recommends that philosophy be *both* "integrated into social studies curriculum as the basis for critical evaluation of institutions and processes" *and* taught "in a specialized class" (1964, October 29).

His solution for finding room for such integration and for a specialized class is simple. For high ability students, we "might simply add some content" to their existing work load. More generally, he argues that the "most serious weakness of our common high school program" is that "the curriculum is too traditional, too repetitious of what the student has been working on since the early grades." What we need, he says, is to introduce "new content rather than a speeded up or more intensive version of the

familiar one." And so, for Moore, the required "dropping out of some traditional material" in order to accommodate "the introduction of the reflective and critical material of philosophy into the upper years of the secondary school system" is not much of a problem at all; there is "no tragedy" in having students take a "little less history or English" (Moore, 1968, April 17).[19]

The problem of finding room for philosophy seems, for Moore, to have gone hand in hand with a second practical concern: Finding qualified teachers of philosophy courses. Moore was not entirely sold on the idea of integrating philosophy into social studies, literature, and other humanities courses partly because he did not think teachers of those disciplines were qualified to teach philosophical content and methods. In fact, his number one reservation about a "big 'push' to start philosophy courses in high schools across the country" was "the fear of poorly trained teachers who are not properly prepared in the content of the course" (Moore, 1963, February 6). He argued that, "what happens where unprepared…teachers attempt to weave philosophy into the curriculum is either that their philosophy degenerates into empty words of Benjamin Franklin aphorisms or that it quickly drops out of the presentation." Further, when questions are raised, the teacher must have the background to handle them well and with some authority. Most, he says, "cannot now do this" (Moore, 1964, October 29). In short, Moore—along with many of his peers—argued that no philosophy in the high school curriculum is far better than philosophy poorly taught.

Moore sums up these concerns over the lack of teachers in his "Report on a high school course in philosophy" (1964, unpublished): "It is better…to do nothing than to start philosophy courses with poorly trained teachers or ones with little aptitude or love for the subject. Likewise it would be fatal to the project to entrust it to someone who is unable for whatever reason to communicate with the age group he would face in high school." What was necessary, according to Moore, was some means by which teachers—either current high school teachers, or pre-service teachers in University Schools of Education, or current Philosophy students at Universities—could be trained in a way that would make them competent *both* in teaching high school students in general *and* in teaching philosophy at the high school level in particular. Indeed, Moore acknowledges in his letter to Portzline that his (Moore's) argument against using social studies teachers to teach philosophy "would not hold if social studies teachers had had adequate training, say, at least a teaching minor, in philosophy" (1964, October 29). Some such training, Moore thought, could help provide qualified teachers of high school philosophy.

With these two practical issues resolved,[20] Moore turned significant attention to the question concerning the type or kind of philosophy course to be offered. And, again, he had a resolution to even this more theoretical question: A high school philosophy course should consist primarily of elementary logic and ethics. One need look no further than Moore's own experimental course to witness his proclivity for ethics and logic as the main components of any high school philosophy course.[21] He dedicated the first semester to ethics, using Titus' *Ethics for today*; he dedicated the second semester to "elementary, straight thinking" logic, using Lionel Ruby's *The art of making sense* and, later, *An introduction to logic* (Moore, 1964, p. 2-5).[22] The ethics part of the course seems to have been inspired by John Dewey's 1893 essay "Teaching ethics in the high school."[23] In a lecture Moore delivered in Albany, NY on July 14, 1966, he quoted Dewey's essay at length (it is worth repeating that quotation here since it informed Moore's own ideas and practices):

> Where there is one reason for the ordinary student to become acquainted with the intricacies of geometry, of physics, of Latin, or of Greek, there are twenty for him to become acquainted

> with the nature of those relations upon which his deepest weal and woe depend, and to become interested in, and habituated to, looking at them with sympathetic imagination…the subject-matter of ethics must furnish the measure for other studies and not vice versa.[24]

Moore seems to have shared these exact sentiments. In the same lecture in which he quotes Dewey, he goes on to discuss a "deeper justification"[25] for including philosophy in high schools—a justification "intimately concerned with man himself":

> It is the spreading realization that the great, crucial problems of our day, the ones man must solve if he is to survive as a species of life, lie not in the areas toward which the natural sciences and other technologies are directed but in the regions which are the concern of the social studies and the humanities. I am speaking of the great problem of living together in peace and of the host of more specific problems we must solve to take care of the big one. And, after all is said and done, the conflicts that make up this big problem are value conflicts, usually of moral values. This is where philosophy comes in, as the study of man's conception of his place in the world and his ideas of the goals of life and how to attain them.

In the previously quoted letter to Donnel Portzline, Moore gives further justification for logic and ethics as the primary components of a high school philosophy course. "The argument for ethics…is that students at the junior-senior level in high school are often at a stage in their thinking where moral standards are being questioned and where they need to hear these matters talked out and to participate in such social verbalization." In regards to logic, Moore thought "the value lies in the creation of a critical stance with regard to discourse, one's own and that of others. This attitude is achieved through the development of a sense of congruence and incongruence with standards of consistency and accuracy. This can best be done in terms of a concentrated study of these standards. Connection with on-going social processes is maintained in terms of illustrative material drawn from advertising, political argument and other types of persuasive discourse" (1964, October 29).

In a later letter Moore again states his arguments in favor of logic and ethics. On logic:

> I do not advocate either the old heavy idealistic metaphysics or epistemology or the new language analysis and philosophy of science. These are too abstract and generally remote from the experience and interest of high school students….In my logic course I deal with the principles and conditions of critical thinking…We deal with the forms of successful problem solving, including elementary formal structures of reasoning; but we emphasize such hindrances to clear thinking as prejudice, restrictions on information, superstitions, emotional and other affective factors (1967, March 10).

And on ethics: "In the ethics course the aim is to help the students begin to think in terms of broad life aims or patterns of living." It is in an ethics course of this nature that "for the first time in the experience of many youngsters right and wrong and the good life can be discussed dispassionately, objectively free from the common emotional tie-ins with church and family preaching" (1967, March 10)

It is important to remember that this is not just the course Moore imagined and designed; it was one he put into practice for eight full years.[26] And the student feedback Moore received on the course seems to demonstrate that his hopes were realized, at least for many of his students. A general summary of student feedback appeared in the NASSP Spotlight of Junior and Senior High Schools in 1965. According to this report, the course succeeded at, among other things, stimulating critical and evaluative thinking and

expanding students' perspectives.[27] Individual reports of specific students' feedback reinforce this general summary. For example, In the Curriculum Letter for Administrators Concerned with Secondary Schools,[28] one student is quoted as saying:

> "I was relatively unexposed to any opinions other than my own family's as to what a good life was. But this presentation of different ideas and ideals in connection with how one ought to live caused me to examine, questions, re-examine, and sometimes reaffirm my own beliefs and values. I began to ask 'Why?' where I had before blindly agreed or disagreed. This was the greatest value of the course."

Other examples of similar feedback appear in Moore's own 1964 Report. A few are worth highlighting: "[The course] helped me broaden my perspective, that is, it helped me to begin crawling out of my shell of provincialism"; "I was directed at learning how to think rather than what to think"; "[The course] helped me transcend the limits of my own personal and social outlook and view ethical problems in many contexts and from a number of points of view"; "It has helped me look at problems in a more objective sense"; "Here for the first time I was required to critically evaluate the views of others and I could not accept dogmatic explanation"; "Philosophy is the most broadening, tolerance-building subject I can think of"; "Examining the ideas of others helped me formulate my ideas, gave me a basis in other value systems by which to judge my own"; "The course helped me organize my thoughts very well." It will be a sure sign that our education system is doing well by our students if and when the educational program we provide for them elicits on a consistent basis this kind of feedback.

High School Philosophy Today: A Re-Examination

That a well-organized and well-taught high school philosophy course focused around ethics and logic can, indeed, elicit such feedback as that highlighted in the previous section should motivate us to consider anew what philosophy's place should be in the high school curriculum. Such reconsideration requires that we, again, look at both the practical and theoretical issues surrounding the potential inclusion of philosophy in the high school curriculum. In regards to Moore's most pressing concern[29] of finding teachers of high school philosophy, it seems we have simply given the task to social studies, English, and other teachers who are not specifically trained in philosophy or philosophical methods of inquiry and argumentation. We must ask ourselves if we are best serving our students by asking teachers who are trained in their own disciplines but likely untrained in philosophy to engage in such philosophically-oriented discussions. If we are not satisfied with such an arrangement, but we simultaneously admit the importance of broaching these larger philosophical questions in schools, then we need to figure out how to train teachers appropriately for the teaching of philosophy.[30]

The issue of finding room in the curriculum for a "new" subject like philosophy also presents challenges, some of which Moore could not have anticipated. The problems of integrating philosophical components into other classes has been shown to be problematic, and while this certainly does not take that option off the table, it does point to the idea that students are better served by an actual philosophy course in addition to any integration of philosophy and philosophical thinking in other courses. Moore's solution was simply to cut back on other, more standard and traditional subjects (like history or English in the example cited earlier). But, against such an idea, we can imagine an "argument from fundamentals" going something like this: how can we even think of including philosophy in the curriculum when fundamental skills like reading and writing and mathematics are 1) hardly being mastered, and 2) the

focal points of all-important standardized tests? This is, of course, a perfectly legitimate argument. A student who cannot read and write well, especially, is not intellectually prepared for a rigorous course in philosophy. But this is no reason not to include it in the curriculum. We would not think of saying, "let's eliminate history because students are not reading or writing sufficiently well yet to be able to handle that discipline" (and surely, some high school students are not reading sufficiently well even to be able to understand a historical document like the Declaration of Independence). Nor should we say such things about philosophy. It can, like any discipline, be made commensurate with varying levels of student ability.[31] I certainly do not propose a solution to the problem of standardized tests, other than to add that philosophy would not be the only discipline facing such a problem. All but English, math, history, and science are being deemphasized because of the focus that standardized tests give to these "standard subjects."

On the more strictly theoretical question about what should be done—particularly in regards to the kind of philosophy course offered—I follow Moore's thinking that a course heavy in ethics and logic is best. It is not difficult to make a contemporary argument for including philosophy (as ethics and logic) in high schools: At a time when we seem to be increasingly narrow minded about "others," we would be wise to find some way of helping students understand "different ideas and ideals in connection with how one ought to live" and to encourage and help them "to examine, question, re-examine, and sometimes reaffirm [their] own beliefs and values"; at a time when understanding and toleration of difference is so essential, we would be wise to broaden students' perspectives, help them "begin crawling out of [the] shell of provincialism" and offer them a course that is "tolerance-building"; in a time that requires global ethical perspectives we would be wise to help students "transcend the limits of [their] own personal and social [outlooks] and view ethical problems in many contexts and from a number of points of view"; at a time that requires clear, rational, and creative solutions to the world's problems, we would be wise to find ways to help students "organize [their] thoughts" and think "critically." These are but a few of the benefits of teaching philosophy in high schools—that is, when it is taught well and properly—and they are benefits we can hardly do without given the current state of our world.

I certainly do not claim that these simple reconsiderations have been done with the required and due thoroughness. What I have sought to do in this final section is merely to shed more deliberately a contemporary light on Moore's insights on both the practical and theoretical issues surrounding the inclusion of philosophy in high schools. But, ultimately more needs to be done; new research needs to investigate the benefits of some systematic study of philosophy for high school students; new ways of resolving the practical issues involved in introducing a new subject into the curriculum—and the new practical issues that these resolutions will lead to—need to be imagined and discussed. And, finally and perhaps most importantly, the general spirit of experimentation in education that pervaded the push for philosophy in high schools in the 1950s and 1960s and that was so motivated by the work of John Dewey needs to be revived.

Notes

[1] It may be particularly easy to imagine philosophy being included in the teaching of "ethical character." But the exact nature and meaning of "ethical character" in this context seems to have been prescribed; it was not, in other words, to be explored or pursued philosophically. Instead, "ethical character" was immediately linked to a "democratic society," and moral values were "*to be obtained* from the organization of the school and the subjects of study." There is also mention of the possibility of "offering a distinct course in moral *instruction*" (Commission

on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, 1918, p. 15-16, italics added). The emphasized words help make clear just how clearly the Cardinal Principles were connected to the "social efficiency" movement. As Kliebard (2008) points out, the Cardinal Principles represented, finally, a manifestation of the "growing belligerence toward academic subjects" (and the firm place of those subjects in high school curricula, as established by the Committee of Ten) and pointed clearly to the rise of the focus on social efficiency in education (p. 96). Far from anything resembling a philosophical component, then, the cultivation of "ethical character" was mere training toward desired (socially efficient) moral ends. We will see later how this manner of "teaching" ethics differs from the ethics component of Willis Moore's experimental high school philosophy course.

[2] In a less-traditional effort to expose pre-college students to philosophy and its components, Stanford University professor Patrick Suppes, in 1947, began opening his lectures on Introductory Logic to sixth and eighth grade students. Suppes also lectured on sentential (or propositional) logic to fourth through sixth grade students.

[3] It seems that, if it appears at all, philosophy is at best included in some shape or form under the "social studies" curriculum, in a world literature course, or in more elective style courses. Clearly it is not now nor has it ever been a standard high school subject or a pillar of the high school curriculum in the way that math, English, history, and science have been.

[4] By 'transcendent' reasons, I mean those that cut across specific times and places and serve as more general arguments for the inclusion of philosophy in high schools. Given the essay's emphasis on extending past arguments for high school philosophy to a *contemporary* context, these reasons (rather than those specific to the particular time period of the 1950s and 1960s) will be given the most attention. This will admittedly come at the expense of some very interesting context-specific and historical reasons, but those will still be treated briefly in a later footnote.

[5] There was support for such a committee within the APA and for the tasks proposed for it. And so by 1955 the initial steps were in place to begin a broader and more formal exploration of the possibility of incorporating philosophy into the high school curricula. But his is not to say that there was *unanimous* support. Just days after the meeting in which he proposed these ideas, Morgan, in a letter to B.O. Smith indicates that among the members of the APA's Western Division, there was both "considerable interest…and a certain amount of rather discouraging disinterest" in the possibility of high school philosophy (Morgan, 1955, May 2). William Hay, Philosophy professor at the University of Wisconsin, for example, was "appalled" by the idea, though he did express curiosity as to why Morgan "[thought] well of it" (Hay, 1955, February 21. Still, Morgan was encouraged by the fact that the support far outweighed any opposition.

[6] In the initial year of the subcommittee, 1956-1957, Morgan asked Charner Perry to "pitch hit" as the subcommittee's chair while he (Morgan) was on "research leave in California" (Morgan, 1956, August 6).

[7] The Report itself obviously engages in a more exhaustive exploration of these questions (and others). For example, it also deals with arguments related to the intellectual and emotional maturity of high school students and their consequent ability to handle philosophical discussion. Generally speaking, I have emphasized the parts of the report that, to me, seem most relevant to current conversations about high school philosophy.

[8] It is worth noting, though it is not the focus here, the apparent pervasiveness of philosophy as a significant and long-standing subject in secondary education in other nations, past and present—including, as only a small sample of the fuller list presented by Morgan and Perry, Italy, France, the Dominican Republic, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and a few nations in what Morgan and Perry term "The Arab World." Such instances of philosophy in the standard secondary education of other nations are in sharp contrast to the more limited and sporadic instances in secondary education in the United States. They would make for interesting further research.

[9] These are taken from roughly ten examples provided in all. Morgan and Perry also reported on a significant number of instances of philosophy being taught in non-public high schools during this time. The good majority seem to have occurred at religiously affiliated institutions. The examples gathered and reported are also limited to the information provided and/or otherwise available, and so it is unlikely to have been an exhaustive list.

[10] It was taught by Dr. Leroy Garrett, philosophy professor at MacMurray College.

[11] This interview with Miller appeared in the November 3, 1958 issue of *News-Palladium* (Benton Harbor's Newspaper). The title, author, and page numbers of this article are unknown. A photocopy of the article is archived in the Special Collection Research Center, Morris Library (Willis Moore Papers, Box 10). Carbondale, IL.

[12] In particular, it seems that the somewhat sudden push for philosophy in high schools at this time was part of a larger push against the so-called "life adjustment" curriculum that was prevalent in high schools at the time and that enjoyed great support from educational journals, school officials, and the general public—despite its intellectual and academic shortcomings—because it claimed to speak to the real interests of young people and to be able to fit them into the existing social order. Eventually, the deliberate efforts of life adjustment advocates to subvert the standard, subject-arranged curriculum—rather than simply adding life adjustment elements to that curriculum—caused the movement to be labeled anti-intellectual; academics and the public demanded intellectual respectability from public education; the overall credibility of the life adjustment movement within the intellectual community and, eventually, the public, eroded. The criticism and backlash reached a kind of apex on October 5, 1957 with the Russian launch of Sputnik. This major victory for the Russian space program—at a time when Cold War tensions were rising—prompted even wider-spread outrage and criticism; the United States' education system was considered the Nation's weakness and the life adjustment movement, in particular, was singled out as the culprit. Such a soft and anti-intellectual education as that being employed in the United States had no chance of competing with the rigorous (and apparently more successful) Russian education.

In short, the life adjustment movement—and the perceived "softening" of the high school curriculum that came with it—fell quickly and resoundingly out of favor starting in the early part of the 1950s and took its last breaths in the later part of the same decade. In its place grew a desire for a more academically-oriented school curriculum that focused primarily on intellectual development and concerned itself in particular with the needs of high-ability, intellectually talented high school students. Further, the curricular reforms required to re-establish an intellectual focus on schools in the wake of the failed life adjustment movement were largely in the hands of academics and Universities.

It is not hard to connect this push against the life-adjustment curriculum with the efforts of those working toward the inclusion of philosophy in high schools. For example, in some of the examples of high school philosophy already discussed, there was an often expressed need to re-emphasize the "formal" factors in American education; to stretch students' thinking and imagination; to challenge high school students with an intellectually demanding discipline (like philosophy); to offer greater academic challenges to top students in particular; there were references to "an age of crisis" and to"[t]he realities of present world conflicts and threats of global catastrophe"; Richard Miller spoke even more directly of "the Russian advance in science"; there was mention of the need to move beyond "this moment's vocational and social and sexual concerns"; there were references to the current "tutti-frutti" curriculum and "considerable public clamor for the stiffening of high school work." Willis Moore—who, as we will see, had much deeper and more 'transcendental' reasons for including philosophy in hight schools—addressed the issue in a letter to Robert Mason: "I am not one who sees [Sputnik] as arguing for curriculum reform; but it is a historical fact that great agitation for a stiffer program has occurred since then not only in the sciences and mathematics but in terms of other subject matters such as philosophy (1967, March 10). For more on the life adjustment movement, see Kliebard (2008); for more on the ways in which the Cold War and Russian advances in science influenced American education, see Hartman (2008) and Rudolph (2002).

[13] Calling these reasons more 'transcendent' reasons is not to say that they, too, were not motivated by the context of the time period; it is to say, however, that they are reasons that hold regardless of the time period in which they are discussed. In this way, they certainly contrast with more specific context-motivated reasons like those connected to Sputnik, the life-adjustment curriculum, and the general feeling of anti-intellectualism in American Schools in the 1950s and 1960s (see note 12).

[14] Perhaps "better addressed" is the wrong phrase. It is more accurate to say that Moore benefited from the wisdom of Morgan's and Perry's report, and so his own thinking seems to have taken the best and most insightful points from his predecessors' report and applied it—with some modifications—to his own actual practices of teaching high school philosophy.

[15] In July of that year, Morgan responded to one of the many letters he received from people inquiring into his and his subcommittee's work by stating that "Professor Willis Moore, of the department of philosophy at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, is now in charge of our committee's work in the area of high school philosophy" (Morgan, 1962, July 31). Indeed, Lewis Hahn, Secretary-Treasurer of the APA, sent Moore a letter on September 7, 1962 officially confirming his appointment to the Committee for Philosophy in Education, (effective through December 31, 1964). As part of that appointment, Moore was named chair of the subcommittee previously chaired by Morgan. In his dual confirmation and thank you letter, dated September 12, 1962, Moore recalls the manner in which Morgan had turned his work over: "Doug Morgan had anticipated the official appointment by

several weeks in dumping a large box of materials in my lap, so to speak." He goes on to reference several inquiries he had already received (mostly sent to him through Morgan, who had during his time as chair also received regular letters of inquiry) regarding "the teaching of philosophy…at the high school level" (Moore, 1962, September 12).

[16] The experimental course ended only when and because the University High School itself closed in 1968.

[17] Anticipating only moderate interest, Moore produced a mere fifty copies of the fuller report that could be sent to anyone requesting it. However, after a briefer version of the report appeared in a 1955 issue of *Spotlight*, a curriculum newsletter published for the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Moore was increasingly inundated with requests from academics, educational practitioners, and others interested in or already including philosophy in high school curricula across the country (and from other countries) (Moore, 1967, p. 265). In fact, requests regarding Moore's experimental course became so frequent between October 1965 and May 1966 alone that Moore conducted separate research into the requests themselves. This research culminated in a June 10, 1966 "Report on Inquiries about the University School Philosophy Course." It reported that, between the dates mentioned, Moore received 360 requests for a copy of his report on the experimental philosophy course at the University School. Of these requests, 347 were sent from within the United States (263 of them from public schools); forty-five states sent at least one request; California sent 37, New York 31, and Ohio 27. This level of interest led to Moore guest editing an entire "special edition" of *Educational Theory* in July of 1967.

[18] Glass was a student of Richard Miller's at the University of Kentucky. She took an interest in Moore's work, and contributed—as a co-author with Miller—to Moore's special edition of *Educational Theory* in July, 1967.

[19] The need for revisiting Moore's thoughts on this matter in particular is clear, and I will do so in the final section of the essay.

[20] I don't claim that these are adequate resolutions and both would require additional conversation and likely lead to new practical issues. For example, changes to teacher preparation programs would have significant effects on University Schools of Education and their accreditation processes, among other things; in addition, in the face of stricter standards and more frequent standardized tests—both concerned primarily with the basic subject matter of the "traditional" curriculum—Moore's nonchalance in regards to "dropping some traditional material" is probably more problematic today than in 1964. Prescriptions about how to train teachers to teach philosophy and how to incorporate philosophy into the nation high school curriculum are matters requiring more discussion—at national, state, and local levels. Difficult as this may be, such difficulties (of the practical kind) should not stop us from pursuing the inclusion of philosophy in high schools if it is determined to be of value to students. I will address Moore's proposed resolutions and related topics in the essay's final section.

[21] Unfortunately, Moore was not—by his own admission—a very organized or systematic teacher. His lecture notes from the course remain in the Special Collection Research Center at the Morris Library at the University of Southern Illinois, Carbondale. But, they are hand-written, sometimes on half pieces of paper or index cards. The ink and paper have faded, rendering already-difficult-to-decipher notes largely illegible. My interpretations of Moore's course are, therefore, drawn mainly from his writings about the course, rather than his notes and other materials from the course.

[22] These main course texts were supplemented by other sources—both texts and "dittoed materials" (Moore, 1964, p. 3).

[23] This essay was reprinted—along with a commentary by Lewis E. Hahn—in a special edition of *Educational Theory* (July 1967) that Moore edited. It originally appeared in *Educational Review*, November 1893.

[24] This quote appears on p. 320 of Dewey's original publication. A copy of Moore's lecture—in which he quoted Dewey—can be found in the Special Collection Research Center, Morris Library (Willis Moore Papers, Box 10). Carbondale, IL.

[25] Deeper, that is, than the educational concerns of Moore's own day—like the Russian advances in science and the accompanying fears over the state of American education and intellectualism discussed in note 13 above.

[26] It's also important to note that Moore had the full support of the University School's administration, including Principal John D. Mees and Assistant Principal Harold De Weese. Such administrative support was consistently present for Moore's and other experimental philosophy courses during this time period. In fact, it is a general spirit of experimentation that, again taking cues from John Dewey's philosophy of education, motivated much of the work discussed here.

[27] This report can be found in the Willis Moore Papers, Box 10, at the Special Collections and Research Center in the Morris Library at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. It is the September-October 1965 edition of that publication, No. 69.

[28] This can also be found in the Willis Moore Papers, Box 10, at the Special Collections and Research Center in the Morris Library at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. It is from the December 1966 Letter, volume 6, no. 4.

[29] And, indeed, it was the foremost concern of most if not all of his peers who were also advocating for high school philosophy.

[30] As this essay is not seeking to lay down a plan of action, per se, I will simply add here the fact that such changes in teacher education and teacher preparation programs is one instance where the "solution" of one practical issue leads to the development of new ones (e.g. how to restructure teacher education and teacher preparation programs).

[31] Further, we might be tempted to ask, echoing Morgan and Perry, what can be "'more fundamental' than philosophy"? (Morgan and Perry, 1958, p. 101)

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