

January 2014

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Recommended Citation

Littmann, Greg (2014) "Writing Philosophy for the Public is a Moral Obligation," *Essays in Philosophy*: Vol. 15: Iss. 1, Article 8.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1526-0569.1492>

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Erratum

p. 103: author name corrected / p. 104: 1818 corrected to 1918 [26 March 2014]

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Published online: 31 January 2014 [Corrected version 26 March 2014]

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Abstract

Writing philosophy to be read by people who are not professional philosophers ought to be central to the work of professional philosophers. Writing for the public should be central to their work because their professional end is to produce ideas for use by people who are not professional philosophers. Philosophy is unlike most disciplines in that the ideas produced by professional philosophers generally have to be understood by a person before they can be of any use to them. As a tool for delivering philosophical ideas to the public, writing philosophical works is invaluable. The need to write philosophy directly for the public should be clear regardless of one's conception of the value of philosophy, since writing directly for the public is in the spirit of all the most popular modern philosophical movements.

1. The centrality of work written for the public

Writing philosophy to be read by people who are not professional philosophers ought to be central to the work of professional philosophers. Yet there is a tendency within the discipline to view such work as peripheral at best, and irrelevant at worst. As will be argued, writing for the public must be central because the professional end of philosophy is to produce ideas for use by people who are not professional philosophers. The argument takes the form of an appeal to the moral obligations of professional philosophers. That there are such things as moral obligations will not be argued for, nor will I argue for any particular normative moral theory, as these issues are beyond the scope of the paper. However, if we both accept that there are moral obligations and adopt any popular normative theory of moral obligation, we will be compelled to conclude that writing for the public should be central to the work of professional philosophers.

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The belief that philosophers should directly address people who are not specialists in philosophy is an ancient and persistent one. Socrates would accost citizens in the Athenian marketplace. His claim that “The unexamined life is not worth living” makes clear that philosophy is important for everyone capable of undertaking it, so it is hardly surprising to find him addressing non-specialists. Both Plato and Aristotle accepted positions tutoring future kings. Other early philosophers — such as Xenophon, Isocrates and Seneca in the ancient world; Jonas of Orleans, Thomas Aquinas, and Giles of Rome in the medieval era; and Niccolò Machiavelli, Erasmus and Justus Lipsius in the renaissance — addressed books on ethics or politics to independent rulers, or to princes who were rulers in waiting. Philosophers of the Enlightenment hoped to spread their ideas to humanity in general, in the hopes of bringing about a more reasonable populous and a more reasonable society. Locke, for instance, intended his political writings to be applied by individuals in the transformation of society. As Sweet (2011) points out, Kant saw it as the philosopher’s duty to serve the ends of humanity through moral education and political critique. Holding Socrates up as his model, Kant explicitly recognized that all humans are in need of philosophy and that the public must be addressed in order to be enlightened. John Stuart Mill wrote extensively on political and social issues for a general audience, advocating such reforms as the abolition of slavery, the emancipation of women, and better conditions for workers. The pragmatist John Dewey wrote extensively on social issues for popular magazines such as *The New Republic* and *Nation*, while William James said of philosophy that, “no one of us can get along without the far-flashing beams of light it sends over the world’s perspectives”. Bertrand Russell frequently participated in public policy debates and wrote numerous works for a general audience, including his two best-selling pieces, *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) and *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945). More recently, Chomsky (1968) argued for engagement with the public by professional philosophers on the grounds that “there is no profession that can claim with greater authenticity that its concern is the intellectual culture of the society or that it possesses the tools for the analysis of ideology and the critique of social knowledge and its use”. The hope of furthering public philosophy even lies at the heart of organized professional philosophy in the United States. As noted by Campbell (2006), when the Western Philosophical Association proposed in 1918 that the various philosophical associations of the US be amalgamated as the American Philosophical Association, the three justifications offered were the improvement of teaching, the opportunity for discussion with scholars from outside professional philosophy, and “the encouragement of philosophical activities amid the general public, especially by emphasis upon the social, political and religious bearings of philosophical thought.”

These are a few examples among many. However, they make clear that the growing interest among professional philosophers in producing work for consumption by those who are not

professional philosophers, as evidenced by the formation of organizations like The Centre for Public Philosophy, The Public Philosophy Network, and the American Philosophical Association's Committee on Public Philosophy, represents a conception of what a philosopher should do that is well established in the history of philosophy.

Of course, there are many different conceptions of how philosophers serve, since there are many different conceptions of the function and value of philosophy. However, the present lack of emphasis on producing philosophy for the public offends against the spirit of all of the major movements of academic western philosophy. It does not seem to arise from doctrinal clashes over the function and value of philosophy, nor of the best way for an individual to engage in philosophy. Rather, the present emphasis on professional philosophers writing for other professional philosophers seems to arise from a tendency to apply to philosophy a model that is appropriate for other academic disciplines. Ryle (1957), while accepting that this is part of the explanation, further suggested that philosophers have increasingly become introspective as philosophy's intellectual territory shrinks due to the encroachment of the sciences and the alienation of philosophy from theology. Lachs (2009) is more damning, suggesting that the attitude stems in part from skepticism among philosophers regarding the value of their own work and fear that if their work was understood, it might lead to resistance and ridicule.

For the purposes of laying out an initial general account of the ends of professional philosophy, I will assume that the various branches of philosophy provide the sort of information that their practitioners seek. On such a model, moral philosophy can tell us how people should act morally, political philosophy can tell us how people should or can organize themselves politically, metaphysics can tell us about the fundamental nature of the universe, and so on. We might call this the "face-value account" of the function and value of philosophy. There are many reasons why a philosopher may disagree with this simple conception, either as a general view of what philosophy does or as an account of a particular sub-discipline. Indeed, there is such variety in opinion about how philosophy ought to be done that it is probably impossible to arrive at a model under which no school of philosophical thought is running up a blind alley. Section 2 below addresses some different conceptions of the benefit that philosophy provides, in order to make clear that adopting a different conception of the benefit provided by philosophy will not make a significant difference to the overall argument.

If anything like the "face-value" account of philosophy is correct, then everyone needs to understand philosophical ideas. Most obviously, moral philosophy is required by every individual who needs to make moral decisions; that is to say, by everyone. There may be

certain professions, such as the medical professions, that are particularly badly in need of moral philosophy, but everyone who has a life to lead must make decisions about how to lead it. Everyone must make decisions on matters such as the degree to which they will work to aid strangers in need, how far they are willing to go to forgive their friends, and what they should be doing with their life in general.

Similarly, political philosophy is required by every individual who needs to make political decisions, which is to say everyone who lives in a society. In a democracy, political power is ultimately held at the level of the individual, since leaders are appointed by a popular vote. This is not to suggest that democracy ever works perfectly, that political power is evenly distributed, or that there is no power in politics apart from that wielded by voters working as individuals. It is just to recognize that it is ordinary citizens who are given the responsibility to decide how their democracies are to be ruled.

Metaphysics and epistemology are likewise as much the concern of individuals in the street as they are of a professional philosopher. Both of these, at least as traditionally conceived, are attempts by philosophers to understand the nature of this universe and our place within it. The universe which metaphysicians attempt to explain is the same universe in which ordinary people must find their way. If metaphysics is for anybody, then it is for everybody. These are just a few examples, but for each of the various sub-disciplines of philosophy, if the ideas generated are of value at all, they are good for people outside the profession to possess.

Since philosophical ideas are valuable for ordinary people, philosophers have a moral duty to share any valuable philosophical ideas that they possess. They have such a duty just because one has a duty to benefit others when doing so is of little cost. This is not to say that people have no duty to benefit others if there is a significant cost to them, but just that our duty is particularly clear when there isn't. Unlike sharing material goods, sharing ideas does not require the loss by the donor of what is gained by the recipient. Not to share a valuable idea is, all other factors being equal, not even self-centered, but uncaring. It is true that we don't usually expect people to donate their intellectual property to the public domain. An engineer who develops a new technology or a pharmaceutical company that produces a new medical treatment may profit from their ideas without necessarily doing anything wrong. However, those who make money from their ideas in this way are still allowing others to benefit from these ideas. It would be wrong, on the other hand, to develop a (benign and beneficial) technology or a helpful medical treatment and fail to allow others to benefit from it by keeping it to oneself. Likewise, if philosophers have ideas that can offer benefit to other people, there is a moral duty to allow other people to benefit

from them. Since philosophy provides important insights into problems that humans in general must face, philosophers must provide philosophical writings for humans in general to read. That we have some duty to help others will be assumed rather than argued here, since defending it is beyond the scope of the paper, but certainly, the need to help others is recognized by all popular normative ethical theories.

The argument so far has dealt only with the moral duty of philosophers as philosophers. *Professional* philosophers, as professionals, bear a greater responsibility yet. Even if, as Aristotle supposed, the best life for a human being is one of pure understanding, arranging the best life for professional philosophers can't be the goal of professional philosophy. After all, in their professional capacity, philosophers work not for their own benefit but to provide benefit in return for money. It may be debatable as to exactly which professional duties are owed to which people. However, the benefit professional philosophers provide that justifies taking money for their work must be benefit provided to people outside the profession. The only professions that exist for the sake of their own members are dishonest professions like thief and scam artist. Philosophers who work for institutions that receive public assistance are taking public money for their scholarly activity, and have a duty to ensure that their scholarly activity benefits the public.

How *do* philosophers provide public benefit through their scholarship? It is easy to base our conception of appropriate scholarship in philosophy departments on how departments in other disciplines conceive of appropriate scholarship. However, to do so overlooks the fact that the way that philosophers serve the public is very different from the ways of most other disciplines. For most academic departments evaluating research, the achievement given most emphasis by far is the number of publications produced for other professionals in the discipline. Publishing articles to be read only by peer professionals is not a professional end in itself, since in itself it provides no benefit beyond the profession. However, in most disciplines, the professionals who read these articles provide public benefit by applying what they have newly learned. Many disciplines contribute to the development of technologies of public benefit. Biological works can aid the development of better medicines, engineering of safer buildings, and chemistry of cleaner industry. Many disciplines instead, or additionally, pass their knowledge on to a class of professionals who apply what is learned directly to public problems. Medicine, psychology and law provide society with doctors, psychologists and lawyers. In all these cases, the public is able to benefit from the work of these scholars without having to understand their research. A medicine will work just as well on someone who understands nothing of biology as it will on a biologist, while a lawyer can provide practical advice to a client based on legal theory the client does not understand.

Philosophy is fundamentally unlike this. It is generally the case that philosophy must be understood by someone to be of any use to them. For example, if a philosopher has some insight into the ancient question of what sort of life is best for a human being, this insight can only help other people if it is at some point conveyed to them. Delivering ideas to people who are not professional philosophers is not a side issue; rather, it is the entire point of professional philosophical research, since it is the sum benefit provided by professional philosophical research. It *is* the benefit professional philosophers provide. Obviously, producing scholarship addressed directly to the public is not the only means by which professional philosophers can disseminate ideas beyond the profession; but one vital means to achieve the goal of providing philosophical ideas to the public is by writing philosophical ideas for them to read.

It might be argued that the use of the expression “professional philosopher” here is too restrictive. Whenever a university philosophy class is designed to target members of a specific profession – such as a medical ethics course for aspiring health care workers – academic philosophers are in some sense producing a class of professional philosophers who serve the public directly rather than just by spreading ideas. Likewise, a computer programmer whose work benefits from a course in logic, a psychologist whose work benefits from a course in philosophy of mind, or any other individual whose work benefits from philosophical training is in some sense a professional philosopher working with the public. Importantly, though, although we might class these individuals as “professional philosophers” in some sense, if they have not majored in philosophy they are unlikely to find the work published in professional philosophy journals accessible. Such journals are written for those who chose philosophy as their profession and are difficult to understand for outsiders.

2. Metaphilosophy considered

So far, we have been adopting a “face-value account” of philosophy under which members of each sub-discipline acquire the sort of information they are looking for. There are many reasons why a philosopher might reject such a view. However, nothing essential to the argument depends on what sort of philosophy we take to be valuable. It will be enough to point out that whatever is valuable about philosophical ideas, it will be the duty of professional philosophers to transmit those ideas to people who are not professional philosophers. Such sharing is in the spirit of all of the major western philosophical movements of recent history.

Pragmatists like Pierce, James and Dewey maintained that philosophers should focus on the “real problems” of the world – within which they include moral and political problems – for the betterment of society. This is an attitude shared by pragmatism’s inheritors like Rorty and Putnam. Dewey (1918) described philosophy as “a social hope reduced to a working programme of action” and both he and James were authors of philosophical works explicitly directed at a popular rather than academic audience out of a recognition that having any kind of significant practical effect is going to require spreading ideas beyond the discipline.

Early analytic philosophers like Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein saw the philosopher’s role as providing appropriate analyses of propositions. Such clarification was intended to dissolve, rather than attempt to answer, traditional philosophical puzzles. Good philosophy for them is, above all, a defense against bad philosophy and the sins it commits against common sense. As Wittgenstein (1953) put it, good philosophy “is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language”. If so, it will be the duty of professional philosophers to provide inoculation against the delusions of bad philosophy to the public in general. After all, it can’t be the function of a profession to police *itself*. One vital tool for spreading the necessary ideas to the public is to provide works of good philosophy for the public to read. As noted above, Russell himself wrote numerous works for a general audience. His purposes were explicitly practical and political. As he put it, “Education is the key to the new world” (1926).

Logical positivists like Carnap and Ayer saw philosophy as such a defense, but placed even greater emphasis than early analytics on the positive role for epistemology and philosophy of science in the service of science. The emphasis placed on serving science might suggest that the philosopher’s ideas need not leave the academy to provide their benefit. However, given how inaccessible work written for professional philosophers tends to be for professional scientists, producing works for a general audience would still be an important constructive step. Most scientists lack the philosophical background to understand work published in academic philosophical journals. Ayer himself frequently took part in BBC radio programs on philosophical subjects directed at the general public.

To address philosophy to the public is no less in the spirit of the continental tradition. Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche all seek to relate the best way for human beings to live, no less than Plato and Aristotle. As Nietzsche put it, his goal was “the highest power and splendor possible to the type man”, for those individuals capable of attaining it. Phenomenology makes the way the world appears the primary focus of attention, but the only way that a philosopher can serve the public by researching the way that the world appears and the implications of those appearances is by passing that understanding beyond

members of the discipline. Husserl saw his work as politically important, intended as an antidote to the philosophy he called “objectivism”, which had caused a “crisis of European humanity”. Heidegger believed that an understanding of good philosophy was essential for a human being to attain authenticity. While his warning that “Making itself intelligible is the suicide of philosophy” (435) suggests limits on the degree to which philosophical thoughts can be captured in ordinary language, it is no more a justification for not trying to engage the public philosophically than it is not to engage other professional philosophers. Existentialists like Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty likewise made an understanding of good philosophy a prerequisite to living well.

Critical Theory, as introduced by Horkheimer and Marcuse, views the value of philosophy as lying in its ability to contribute to emancipatory social theory, for the improvement of society. Horkheimer states that the critical theorist’s work “is not merely an expression of the concrete historical situation but also a force within it to stimulate change” (p. 215). He holds that Critical Theory’s purpose is “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (Horkheimer 1982, 244). Habermas accordingly addressed himself to the problem of bringing the rule of free and open discussion to appropriate social institutions like the family, educational institutions, and the public sphere in general. The rule of free discussion cannot be imposed from above but requires the understanding of ordinary individuals. Habermas notes “in Enlightenment there are only participants” (1973b, 44). Derrida similarly maintained that deconstruction had important implications for morality and politics. Yet ideas must spread to society before they can change it or help it to change itself.

3. Objections considered

It might be objected that professional philosophers don’t need to write for the public because they already spread philosophical ideas through their teaching. The first thing to note about such a response is that while it rejects the need for public philosophy, it doesn’t offer a defense of the status quo in professional philosophy. If the benefit philosophers provide as professionals comes down to the ideas imparted in the classroom, then the profession needs to revolve around teaching. On such a model, philosophers should weigh teaching much more highly for tenure and advancement than most other disciplines do, since as noted above, most other disciplines deliver benefits by other means than teaching classes. Production of excellent textbooks would presumably be one of the greatest professional achievements, while scholarship directed at other professional philosophers should be undertaken with a careful eye on how the work might improve the service given to students.

More importantly, though, it is implausible that teaching is sufficient as a means to spread philosophical ideas to the public. If it is important that philosophy serve interested students, it must be important to serve interested people who are not philosophy students. The students who attend philosophy classes are not a class of human beings with a unique need for philosophy. As noted, the questions faced by professional philosophers are, more or less, the questions faced by everyone.

It is true that philosophy students tend to be particularly interested in philosophy, so it may be said that philosophers make their understanding available to anyone sufficiently interested to receive it. However, this reply is insufficient for two reasons. Firstly, not everyone has a good opportunity to attend college. Aristotle was right that the more personal commitments an individual has, the less opportunity they will have to develop their mind, but professional philosophers should make an effort to ensure that nobody is held back any more than necessary by their circumstances. Secondly, professional philosophers reduce their opportunities to do people good if they insist on only serving those who will attend classes. Most people with no interest in the work going on in philosophy classrooms also have very little idea of what philosophy is or what it might possibly offer them. Understandably, people are wary to commit themselves to a course of work whose nature they do not understand just in case it happens to prove rewarding. Professional philosophers deny them opportunities to become interested if they place barriers in the way of their engaging with philosophy. Further, limiting people's investigations to what is being covered in their class may force them to deal with material that is not interesting to them in order to get to material that is. Not only does this stifle interest, but limiting philosophical inquiry to material covered in class stifles the spirit of free enquiry. As Dewey (1938) put it "To imposition from above is opposed expression and cultivation of individuality; to external discipline is opposed free activity..." Moreover, philosophy is to be applied outside the philosophy classroom. Questions arise in the classroom because they are questions we are faced with just by existing in the universe. People must be empowered to address philosophical issues as they arise in their life, without needing a professional philosopher on hand. Rather than setting up barriers to the pursuit of philosophy by non-professionals, professionals should be seeking avenues by which they can reach people with philosophical ideas.

Of course, writing directly to the public or otherwise engaging them through the mass media has disadvantages compared to speaking to students in a classroom. As Plato pointed out in the *Phaedrus*, a book cannot be questioned or argued with. However, just as in Plato's time, the importance of teachers does not make the book redundant or counterproductive. Books can be used to transmit ideas to people at a rate that teachers cannot match because of how

easy they are to access. Consider how badly philosophy might have suffered if philosophers had spurned writing things down on the grounds that it would be better to have philosophical studies overseen by a teacher.

Another possible objection is that philosophy cannot be properly addressed in a text written for the general reader. After all, academic writing is a more refined tool for handling the complexities of the material. Even technical terms and philosophical jargon, the most obvious barriers to ordinary people understanding the work of professional philosophers, serve to clarify rather than obscure once they are mastered. Academic writers write for one another in an academic style for good reason. For communicating ideas between professional philosophers, academic writing serves far better than ordinary English would.

However, to refrain from writing in ordinary English on the grounds that ordinary English is a flawed tool would be to let philosophers' inability to perform their job perfectly serve as an excuse not to perform their job well. It would be akin to doctors deciding not to treat patients on the grounds that they cannot prevent them from eventually dying, or architects refusing to build houses on the grounds that constructing a perfectly safe house is beyond their ability. Since few of the people professional philosophers serve can be communicated with in academic language, philosophers must make use of ordinary language to communicate with them as best they can. The need to provide philosophical works written in ordinary English is similar to the need to provide English translations of philosophical works written in other languages. The writings of Greek, German or French philosophers, along with other philosophical works not written in English, are generally best read in their original language. One who seeks for the greatest clarity of understanding of a philosopher's work should master the language in which it is written. Yet the philosophical thoughts of philosophers who wrote in languages other than English are not solely of importance to scholars who specialize in the work of those philosophers. Plato may be best studied in Greek and Kant in German, but their work is important enough for philosophers in general to understand that it must be made available in English.

This reply to the charge that ordinary English is inadequate for philosophy also serves against any objection to bringing philosophy to the public on the grounds of difficulty. For example, public philosophy cannot be rejected on the grounds that philosophy is too hard for non-professionals to engage in properly. While it is obvious that non-professionals cannot be expected to perform at a professional level, this is no reason not to help them to philosophize as best they can. It would be absurd to leave them in ignorance on the grounds that their ignorance will always be greater than ours, just as it would be to abolish education on the grounds that understanding will always be limited.

Finally, it might be objected that if professional philosophy were to reward work written for the public, it would have a corrupting effect on the discipline. After all, the public is not the best judge of good philosophy and the interest they show in philosophical work will not be proportionate to its value. Not only is the public less able to identify bad arguments; they like to be flattered, entertained, and to have their preexisting beliefs confirmed. Even if the profession takes care to reward only work written for the public that meets a sufficient standard, by encouraging professionals to write for the public, they would enable the public to reward philosophical work themselves with status, money, and by providing an opportunity for the philosopher to promote their political agendas. Gaus (2005), for example, urges philosophers to abandon applied ethics, on the grounds that the opportunity for political advocacy has corrupted the search for truth.

The charge that addressing the public directly will foster corruption is true. Wherever non-professionals find value in philosophical work, there will be opportunities for philosophers to exploit their positive regard. However, this is not grounds not to share philosophical work with the public, any more than the printing press should be abandoned because it could be used to print bad things. The ability to influence people carries with it the opportunity to misuse one's influence and the temptation to do so is corrupting. One of the costs of giving themselves the best chance to help humanity is that professional philosophers will have to face new temptations. On the other hand, the cost of retreating before the corrupting influence of humanity is to not engage with humanity, robbing them of the benefits of philosophy.

4. The future of professional philosophy

Every profession must take care to ensure that it provides good service. However, the danger of not maintaining a good standard of service is particularly great in philosophy, since professional philosophers are the only ones qualified to judge the service that professional philosophers provide. To a degree, this is true of all academic disciplines, but because professional philosophers produce neither technologies nor, in general, professional consulting philosophers who interact with the public (as psychologists and lawyers do), there is little in the way of grounds for outsiders to judge the effectiveness of professional philosophers apart from asking other professional philosophers. If professional philosophers were so inclined, they could easily turn professional publishing into a game in which the goal is to score points for status in debate with other philosophers, giving little thought to what good is being done for the public they serve. Worse yet, professional philosophers could take philosophy desperately seriously, but

become so engrossed in the philosophical questions being explored that they forget to ask how their researches are benefitting the public.

The lack of attention paid to addressing the public by professional philosophers does not reflect a lack of concern regarding standards in research. Philosophers go to a great deal of trouble to measure other philosophers' professional contributions. However, not enough attention has been paid to how well the institution of professional philosophy is functioning. It is possible for each individual in an organization to be performing their assigned tasks splendidly even when the whole is severely dysfunctional. If every worker in an automobile factory were assigned to making engines and none to making axles, then each worker could be performing excellent work at their assigned task, even while the factory fails to produce a single car. Professional philosophers could likewise be individually producing excellent work without the institution of professional philosophy working well. There is a danger that by focusing on performing well according to the criteria in place, philosophers will fail to ensure that the criteria themselves are appropriate. Philosophers might even fail to keep the professional point of their work in mind, or fail to even think about the professional point of their work at all.

As competition for tenured appointments continues to grow, the bar is continually raised in the form of demanding ever more publications written for other professional philosophers. Professional philosophers perform to a high standard in generating ideas to be understood by one another. However, the profession of philosopher does not perform to a high standard as a system for providing benefit. Professional philosophers generate product well but perform badly at delivering their product to the end user.

Indeed, the push to raise standards in philosophy by demanding ever higher rates of publication for other professional philosophers may be positively detrimental to the profession's purpose of delivering ideas to the public. The greater the requirements in terms of publications for other philosophers, the more that a professional philosopher who wishes to achieve tenure and advancement is required to devote time to producing such publications. To spend valuable time writing for the public that professional philosophers ultimately serve is not in a philosopher's professional interest. In the name of raising professional standards, the system actively discourages good professional service.

It is clear that professional philosophy needs to become more socially engaged by placing greater importance on the writing of philosophy for the general public. This does not entail ceasing to value any of the ways that philosophers presently engage in scholarship. Indeed, it is to treat such philosophical scholarship as being of value to society. All people must be

philosophers. Indeed, the common use of the expressions “philosopher” and “non-philosopher” to distinguish professional philosophers from ordinary people is misleading and dangerous. Every remotely normal human is a philosopher because every remotely normal human does philosophy. We must all decide what is valuable in life, must all make moral and political decisions, and must all come to terms with the mystery of our place in the universe.

The need to make philosophy publically available in ordinary language is not less than the historical need to make the Bible available in English and other living languages so that it could be read and understood by ordinary people. Biblical texts are, no doubt, best studied in the original Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, but the texts needed to be read and understood by the general public. Indeed, the spread of religion among ordinary people, the central place that religion has in many people’s lives and the influence it has on their moral and political decisions, and their view of their place in the universe, provide a striking contrast with the role played by the writings of professional philosophers. Religious groups go to enormous efforts to get their ideas across to ordinary people. Philosophers, too, claim to have important insights into morality, politics and the universe, yet their opinions are not shared with humanity in general in the way that the opinions of religious groups are. Professional philosophers have refined their language and maintained a debate among professionals with the intention of dealing with these problems without muddying the waters, but in doing so, have alienated themselves from the very people who might find something useful in their ideas.

Karl Marx, who wrote *The Communist Manifesto* to make his political philosophy accessible to a general audience, demonstrated just how powerful a philosopher’s ideas can be as engines for social change when they are made available to the masses. He notes in *Das Capital* that communist revolution will not come until “the lightning of thought had thoroughly impregnated the yielding popular soul”. The revolution professional philosophers might seek by bringing their philosophical ideas to the public need be no less extensive than the one sought by Marx.

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