Introduction

Why should Social Workers think about Philosophy, and why should Philosophers Care?

Thinking at the Intersections

For some, the intersection between philosophy and social work needs little justification. As Mel Gray and Stephen Webb write, 'to "think social work" is to engage with and against contemporary and past theorists and theoretical concepts,' which will almost inevitably involve crossing philosophical paths. Such crossing of paths is fundamental, as 'the 'joy of "thinking social work" is in creating alternative modes of understanding through critical engagement with competing perspectives.' (Gray and Webb 2013: 7) Likewise, Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala argue that 'philosophy is not a disengaged, contemplative, or neutral reception of objects but rather the practice of an interested, projected, and active possibility.' (2011: 14)

However, a common reaction to the idea of 'doing philosophy' on a social work course is a combative one: from the dismissive 'what's that got to do with social work?' to the hostile 'social work is about practice, not idealistic theories brought out from ivory towers!', and a whole range in between. While it is true these may only reflect clichés of what both social work and philosophy actually are, it is equally true that clichés emerge through the frequency and repetition of their use, and nowhere is this more evident than the crude caricatures of 'theory' and 'practice' that have often dominated social work as a discipline. What Chris Jones has termed the 'anti-intellectual tradition' in social work has by now been both well-documented and well-criticised. Indeed, the space for in-depth 'theoretical' discussion within pre-registration social work programmes has often been limited by the perception that it competes with the 'practical' skills-based work of qualificatory education; a perception often shared not only between students but between government policy-makers (see Garrett 2013: 214). While social work practice only ever takes place within some kind theoretical framework, whether acknowledged or not (Coulshed and Orme 2006), social workers can nevertheless 'turn cold' at the introduction of what they view as 'esoteric, abstract, and something people discuss in universities' (Mullaly 1997: 99). Jones notes the 'specific and utilitarian manner' in which mainstream social work has approached social research in the United Kingdom: 'theories, perspectives, insights and research findings are plundered', but rarely 'in a spirit of genuine intellectual inquiry or exploration' (Jones 1996: 194). Despite the development of first, social work's Bachelor's and Master's degree qualifications, there remains in many areas an affirmation of the a-theoretical as a mark of professional virtue (Mullaly 1997: 100). The effectiveness of the theory/practice cliché is testified to by the fact

that exactly this kind of opening paragraph can be seen in the introductions to almost every available book on social work theory.

Of course, such provisos are given in order to be contested. In Gray and Webb's words, 'social work practice is the bearer and articulation of more or less theory-laden beliefs and concepts. Even those who… [claim] that social work is just "good common sense" are, in fact, articulating a distilled version of philosophical theories about common sense.' (Gray and Webb 2013: 5) Research has often shown that social workers rarely use 'theory' in formal or explicit ways (see Fook 2000). They can often utilise theories without identifying or naming them (Howe 1987), but nevertheless draw meaningful sense from complex situations. In this way social workers are always theorising in some shape or form. Indeed, relatively straightforward activities such as interpreting communicative cues, identifying individual agency, assessing actions and promoting freedoms, can only be carried out on the basis of fundamental philosophical commitments regarding how meaning is created, what a self is, why agency is important, the nature of the 'good', and so on.

If this is the case with social work's view of philosophy, then what about the return match – why don't philosophers talk about social work? There are a range of answers to this, and, just as before, we must be careful not to fall prey to glib generalisations or stereotypes regarding the purpose of the discipline. After all, as Josef Niźnik has noted, the idea that philosophy is somehow intrinsically divorced from questions of social need, marginalisation or power is not borne out by its history:

> Reflection on the social context of human life appeared together with the human capacity to think about oneself, a capacity marking the beginnings of philosophy. The problems of the social conditions of man, and of institutions such as the state or of such values as justice, occupied a place in the repertoire of problems dealt with by the first philosophers as important as that of ontological or cosmological questions. (Niźnik 2006: 90)

The applied social sciences do not hold exclusive rights to concerns for the social world. Perhaps rather too often, this is obscured by the relationship between philosophy and the social sciences being figured as somewhat hierarchical – philosophy handles the 'big' ideas, while social sciences deal with the individual cases that make up the big ideas – rather than a two-way conversation between concepts and their application (see Grimwood and Miller 2014). Of course, in order to provide an encompassing philosophical argument regarding the world of human interaction, *some* level of abstraction seems necessary to render the argument meaningful: not because of the demands of any formal argumentation, but rather as an important (and pragmatic) link between particular cases and their more general application. As early as the late 2nd century CE, Hermagoras of Temnos (Lanham 1991: 150) identified this as the difference between a *hypothesis* and a *thesis*: specific or empirical events (the hypotheses) are rendered meaningful within an overarching framework (the thesis). Thus, despite the visible prominence of its younger 'rivals' such as sociology and psychology within social work curricula, philosophy nevertheless continues to underpin their theories and

ground their methods. As Niźnik comments, there is no need to see philosophical concerns as substitutes or antagonists of sociological or psychological ones. They not only display 'the variety of methodological concepts, languages and doctrines familiar from philosophy, but […] [t]hey are also close to one another in so far as they respond to the human need for understanding' (2006: 89-90)

But aren't they different types of reasoning?

Nevertheless, there may well be a *philosophical* objection to bridging the two disciplines, which is worth considering at this point. A version of this objection can be found in the influential essay by Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?"', written in 1784. Here, Kant laid out what can be seen as an effective manifesto for modern philosophy, based on the principles of enlightenment. This involves, it could be argued, a separation of philosophical thinking from what can be interpreted as practice-based thinking. 'Enlightenment' Kant begins, 'is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another.' (Kant 1996: 11) We need to think for ourselves, and not on the unquestioned basis of what others tell us (be they lecturers, practice educators, government policies or whatever), or on the basis of 'just what's done around here.'

But this obviously does not mean we do as we please; as that could hardly count as intellectual maturity. In pursuing our newly-found maturity, it is necessary to distinguish between the application of reasoning that is 'courageous', and reasoning that simply lets us get on with our lives. Thus, for Kant, we exercise a *private reason* when doing our jobs during the day, and a *public reason* in our reflective time after the shift is through. We may, Kant suggests, work in a tax office during the day, and utilise a certain rational way of thinking in order to do the job well (ordering the files, employing mathematical models, etc.). But our *philosophical* reasoning emerges when we go home at night, and write letters to the newspapers arguing how unfair the tax system as a whole was. Nearly 250 years after Kant put forward this argument, it would still not be an unfamiliar picture to imagine social workers conducting their assessments and interventions for social services departments during the day, but questioning after hours whether they were empowering individuals or merely acting as agents of the state. Jobs, according to Kant, require *private* reasoning because such thinking only extends as far as helping us as individuals play out our occupational role – to be, in Kant's words, 'a cog in a machine'. While such instrumental reasoning may still come under the remit of philosophy (there are good and bad ways to do a job, after all), this is ultimately secondary to the consideration of the ends which instrumental reasoning aims at. Hence, *public* reasoning requires us to think beyond our own individual circumstance and consider society, and the world, as a whole. It asks about the role and purpose of the job in the wider scheme of things. When we do this, we are reasoning as a rational being, rather than a cog in a machine: 'when one is reasoning as a member of

reasonable humanity, then the use of reason must be free and public.' (Foucault 1984: 37) To be fully 'public', of course, the concern of reason for the reason's sake must be *universal* rather than *contextual*. Hence, for Kant, philosophers might be interested in discussing questions such as whether we should *always* obey the law, even if that law conflicts with our values; whereas, for social workers, there are rather more pressing requirements to follow legal procedures determined by the context of their jobs. Public reason is necessary for society to reach enlightened 'maturity', whilst private reason is essential for there to be a society in the first place. And if the two are distinct, then it seems only natural for social workers to flip the argument around and ask: 'how does thinking about concepts and causes really help me to do my job in the *here and now*?'

This separation between the kind of thinking that enables us to do a predefined job, with a clear set of aims and objectives, and the kind of thinking that is more typically seen as 'philosophical', could be said to have informed a distinction within the work of philosophy itself. Textbooks on philosophical ethics will frequently point out that while professions rely on ethical codes, these are not really the subject of philosophy: they are, instead, simply rules to follow. For example, Alex Barber suggests that courses on vocational ethics 'sometimes contain elements of moral philosophy', but more commonly 'they aim merely at presenting a list of professional protocols, i.e. rules for proper conduct in the relevant domain.' (2010: 8) Or in Andrew Alexandra and Seumas Miller's philosophical discussion of professional ethics: 'That professionals have a range of special duties (and rights) seems undeniable […]. The question we address here is: "Where do these duties come from?"' (2009: 104) The difference between the two seems to stem both from the manner in which they are learned – philosophical ethics are, generally speaking, more 'up for discussion' in the classroom than professional ethics, at least at most levels – and a broader debate within the history of philosophy, of which Kant's argument was one decisive contributor: the debate over the kinds of thinking we do, and the relationship between these kinds of thinking and the distinctive activities that comprise different realms of human existence – work, play, family, etc.

This distinction, however, has long been debated within social work itself. Social Work education as a whole sits within such a contested dialectical relationship between 'field education' or 'practice placements' and classroom-based questioning, analysis and reflection; or, between 'training' for the technical, day to day aspects of the job, and 'education' for a broader understanding of the potentially transformative role of the social worker within society. Donald Schön famously critiqued the notion of practice as a form of 'technical rationality' where 'practitioners are instrumental problem solvers, who select technical means best suited to particular purposes' (1987: 3); Neil Thompson has frequently advocated a 'dialectical relationship' between theory and practice (2010: 15). Hence, it is important to question Kant's distinction itself on several grounds, which in turn help to articulate how the relationship between the disciplines of social work and philosophy should be considered.

Challenging Dichotomies, Clarifying Relationships

First, it is important to remember that Kant's argument is brief: a manifesto, in a sense, of the kind of thinking he associated with the prospective new age of Enlightenment. Instrumental reason might be utilised in order to get the job done, but this is all premised on the *right job* being done, which accorded to the principles of Enlightenment itself. In this sense, instrumental reason is not *opposed* to speculative thinking. Kant himself famously argued that 'thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.' (Kant 1993: 69). There is, in fact, a clear lineage between the kind of moral society envisaged by Kant that was, via the work of Fichte, subsequently applied to social contexts in the work of British philosopher T.H. Green, and the work of the early forms of social work practice – most notably, the Charity Organisation Society and the Settlement House Movement in the United Kingdom and the United States – who were heavily influenced by these ideas (see Pierson 2011; Lewis 1995; Simon 1994).

Second, if this underpinning of the early forms of social work has since dissipated, the 'work' of social work must nevertheless be conceived broadly: 'Not only is it either micro-level, individually oriented and confined to small-scale personal change, nor is it only about macro-level, social structural change,' Hugman writes. 'It is about both of these things, sometimes separately and sometimes together. In short, social work is about the personal *and* the political.' (Hugman 2013: 159, my emphasis) This suggests that the practicalities of social work go beyond instrumental reason alone. This has been clear since at least Plant's 1970 work *Social and Moral Theory in Casework,* which was one of the first texts to explore the philosophical depth of the day-to-day tasks of social work. And since Plant's work, the idea of there even being a unified 'method' of social work has fragmented amongst a complex history of antagonistic relationships between competing models, approaches, directives and organisation. Consequently, the very question of where to draw the line between instrumental and normative reasoning is itself a philosophical discussion that social work is inherently part of; consider, for example, debates such as the criticisms of task-centred practice as prioritising an individualist sense of 'getting the job done', over and above broader issues of social and economic relationships (see Dominelli 1996). It is the practice of philosophy, I think, to track the modes of thought which link these otherwise separate areas together – personal and political, individual and social, and so on – and to unpack the conditions of such connections and disconnections that lie within them.

This is why to simply perceive philosophy as something distinct and other-worldly from the day-to-day practical tasks of social work is a mistake. In part, this is because the *time* and *space* available for bringing to the fore of our everyday activities their philosophical content is often limited to distinct and separate spaces, and often such a space is, indeed, as 'other-worldly' as a University classroom or quiet supervision behind closed doors. The space where we *articulate* the philosophical dimension of social work is often not the space where it actually *happens*. True, much philosophy may appear to be abstract and therefore difficult, initially, to relate to the day to day tasks of practice. But this does not separate the impact they have on each other. I agree, then, with Robert Imre's point that 'it is not necessarily the

case that philosophy […] needs to be "practical" in showing [social workers] where public policy, or public discourse, or even a guide to individual life, is meant to turn.' (Imre 2010: 254) As Law and Urry once commented, to 'change our understanding *is* to change the world, in small and sometimes major ways.' (2004: 391)

Thirdly, from the off, we need to be cautious about seeing philosophy in social work as simply a form of *ethics* – even if this is the most obvious area where the two disciplines speak to one another (and, indeed, why many interactions between the two take place within an ethical dialogue – see, for example, Plant (1970); Alexandra and Miller (2009)). We should likewise be wary of positioning philosophy within the same explanatory place of 'social theory' within social work, even if it can and does apply to that area. Our wariness is in part because the tendency for theory in social work to be considered as a purely functional exercise – that is, to 'make sense' of things in order to help things work, without challenging what making sense might mean, who outcomes work for, etc. – is problematic. This is because very activity involves some kind of philosophical current; and hence why the likes of Amy Rossiter have argued that an understanding of the *ontology* of social work needs to take precedence over and above its ethics (Rossiter 2011). To subsume theory into practice is, ironically, to already posit a specific *metaphysics* of social work: that is, a structuring order that precedes our experience of the world. Hence, when a social work theorist argues that 'all this debate is fine, but is it *useful* for practice?', the philosophical response would typically be: 'that's fine. But on what conditions are we *defining* "useful"?' And while that kind of question can obviously be quite irritating if asked in the wrong context, or asked as an overly-vague rhetorical question, there are clearly contexts within social work where it is entirely appropriate to be asking them, and to be demanding articulate answers.

Fourthly, in turn, we need to resist the idea that social work speaks back to philosophy because of some privileged empirical experiences that can only be understood from a practitioner's perspective. This attitude – what we might call a celebration of immanence – is at best facile. Instead, I would argue that social work intersects with philosophical concerns because of the different *sites of tension* that it lives (Price and Simpson 2007; Parton 1994). The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), for example, lists four key tensions embedded within the idea of social work itself, all of which point to philosophical problems:[1]

1) Social workers are often asked to act from within the middle of conflicting interests, interests which they may well be equally invested and 'loyal' to. The dignity of an individual, the welfare of a child, the wellbeing of a community and the integrity of the profession may all compete for primacy in the outcome of an intervention. These have continuously raised questions for social work and philosophy alike as to the basis on which we frame and understand concepts such as the self, the community, individual dignity and so on.

2) There often exists a conflict between the duty of social workers to 'protect the interests of the people with whom they work,' and broader social and political demands for 'efficiency and utility.' Both demands are grounded on important

philosophical arguments regarding the rationalisation of action, and what constitutes our interests and relations in a globalised world. This requires articulating the bonds between people – culturally, ethically, politically, or communicatively – beyond the domain of behavioural or psychosocial descriptions.

3) Social workers function as both 'helpers and controllers'. But the distinction between 'helping' and 'controlling' is far from obvious. Making a best interest assessment on a service user with learning difficulties may well be helpful, even if it appears to be an act of control; conversely, strategies for empowerment can easily risk stereotyping or tokenism, and thus over-determining service user identity. The old adage that social workers must choose between being 'agents of the state' or 'agents of change is', thankfully, losing currency; the dichotomy is false, as both simply beg the question as to what kind/s of power a social worker could be said to have. How, for example, do the machinations of their practice – the material culture of social work, it's documentation practices and it's textuality – shape the world they practice within? To what extent are the means by which they assess or diagnose a situation – that is, their interpretative practices – constituted within competing senses or requirements of what 'meaning' and 'understanding' are?

4) At every level, social workers face the problems created by the limitations on their resources. In this sense, they face the same tensions of all front-line services working with those who are in some sense excluded or marginalised from 'normal' society. The problem of resources is not *simply* one of economics, however: it is also a question of how to balance the ideal with the possible, and the normative (what should happen) from the descriptive (what is happening).

Such tensions derive from both the conflicts within work on the 'ground level' itself (Galambos 2009), and the wider identity and role of social work within welfare provision, and within the formation of 'the social' itself (O'Brien 2004). The nature of these tensions, often situated as ambiguous and contested 'interfaces' between individual and social, marginalised and mainstream (Smith 2010), themselves challenge Kant's distinction between 'private' and 'public' reasoning. As Rossiter once reflected, the place of social work in late capitalist societies is one of doubt and insecurity, framed in a discourse of hope and innocence. From such a place, public and private roles, norms and actions are often blurred in moments of decision, and 'there is no theory that can shield us from the complexity of [for example] the gesture of a white middle class woman giving an alcoholic Native homeless man a bowl of soup.' (Rossiter 2001) Hartman argues that it is the 'attention to person and situation and our refusal to retreat from mounting social problems by redefining them as personal defects, that creates the special character of social work'; but, significantly: 'such a position creates both dilemmas and opportunities.' (1989: 388) If, as McLaughlin (2012: 11-12) suggests, there is a distinction between a social work researcher and a non-social work researcher, then it is *this* – rather than any privileged access to deprivation and marginalisation – that constitutes the 'difference that is different' which Gray and Webb claim differentiates social work 'from other ways of thinking, such as those found in

psychology, sociology, history or philosophy.' (2013: 2) It is this that makes the intersection of social work and philosophy so interesting and productive for both perspectives.

Philosophy and Interpretation: The Strategy of the Book

It should be clear, then, that social work and philosophy do intersect in their interests and concerns, and both have something to say to each other. At the same time, it should equally be clear that this book is not attempting to provide immediate 'fix it' solutions in either field, or any kind of mapping exercises *from* philosophical theory *to* social work practice (as we could perhaps say that Blaug (1995) does with his reading of Habermas, or Thompson (1992) with Sartre). It should go without saying that this is not a book about how philosophy, in all of its wisdom, can bestow hitherto unreachable knowledge to the world of social work; Jacques Ranciere has rightly warned against the 'pious vision in which philosophy comes to the rescue of the practitioner, […] explaining the reason for his quandary by shedding light on the principle of his practice.' (Ranciere 1999: ix) 'Philosophy,' he quips, 'does not come to anyone's rescue and no one asks it to'. Neither, of course, is it a book where social workers firmly put philosophers in their place, by showing them what the 'real world' looks like. This is not a book about the philosophy *of* social work, nor does not intend to simply unpack the philosophical basis of the theories, models and approaches specific to social work as a discipline.

For this reason, early on in the project I took the decision to not include any 'case studies' that are conventionally found in social work literature. The result would only be to slot philosophy into an already-crowded space of psychosocial theories that offer more direct 'solutions' to social work contexts (not to mention some of the risks and problems associated with the use of 'invented examples' for both fields; see Grimwood and Miller, forthcoming). The project is in fact far more modest than its title may suggest: it seeks to lay out some areas of intersection where the two disciplines may mutually inform one another. My strategy is thus – to somewhat grossly paraphrase The Invisible Committee –not one of contamination, but of *resonance*. It effectively involves reading perspectives from philosophy and from social work research side by side, and suggesting ways in which the two resonate with each other: sometimes in harmony, sometimes more jarringly.

On this note, it is worth emphasising that the book will not benefit from being read in isolation, and will likely appear abstract if done so. Philosophy as a practice works far better through questioning and critiquing than endless lists of references and examples. For this reason, I have pointed to specific areas where these debates may resonate in particular, but I have tried not to re-tread certain sociological or psychological areas that are already well covered in social work literature. Instead, I have included several points throughout each chapter where the reader is asked to reflect on their own practice, in order to help clarify the kind of intersection being explored. My hope is that these strike a healthy balance between reflection and analysis, without over-prescribing these.

One of the fundamental contentions of this book is that social work is not simply a practical activity, but a series of interrelated perspectives on the micro, meso and macro relationships that make up culture, politics and society. It is rooted in interpretative tasks, and this informs the definition of philosophy that I use, which echoes that of Gianni Vattimo:

> Defined as the ontology of actuality, philosophy is practiced as an interpretation of the epoch, a giving-form to widely felt sentiments about the meaning of being alive in a certain society and in a certain historical world. […] The difference, though, lies in the "interpretation": philosophy is not the expression of the age, it is interpretation, and although it does strive to be persuasive, it also acknowledges its own contingency, liberty, perilousness. (Vattimo 2004: 88)

As such, I make no claim to offering some kind of final word, or holistic overview of either philosophy or social work. This is an unapologetically partial series of essays, reflecting the interpretative and contingent nature of the discipline. Each of the topics examined in these essays commands entire libraries of literature within both disciplines, and in filling in some gaps we will always be opening more. The fact that social work is, fundamentally, a *relational* practice means that any appeal to a 'God's eye view', universal survey or impartial view of what the world is 'really like', detached from any meaningful location or perspective, is unhelpful in practical terms. Likewise, the unifying theme of philosophical and cultural hermeneutics is the interpretative relationships between people, concepts, and the material world around them; it focuses on how the meaning of our actions is articulated within these relationships, and what the cultural, political and social significance of them is. Graham Ward summaries this approach neatly:

> Ontological and epistemological categories are understood to emerge from and issue into various forms of action, wedding practical wisdom (*phronesis*) with the learned skill of handling language (*techne*) and habits of everyday life (*praxis*). The activity of interpretation is conducted alongside and with respect to other people and the many cultural forms that are the products of the interaction between people (institutions, tools, art-forms). […] Cultural hermeneutics is concerned with the concrete reality of others. (Ward 2005: 65)

This 'concrete reality' is important for the hermeneutic approach. Recognising the importance of interpretation to the meanings that surround and define us does not lead to some kind of linguistic idealism – we cannot simply interpret out of thin air. Rather, concrete reality is always mediated: by the language we speak, the cultural images and metaphors that pervade it, the social structures within it, and so on. The limits of this mediation both shape the way we think, but also become a matter of thought itself (Taylor 1985). As a brief example, consider how difficult it is to challenge the kind of principle of social work education that Cain asserts: '[s]ocial work education is about more than just teaching new information and skills; it is also about encouraging students to question their assumptions and values and the structure of the world around them' (1996: 65). But the very fact that few

would challenge this – as Cain's argument which then unfolds regarding the implicit heterosexism of social work education makes clear – means that further questions also need to be asked: *from where* would a student do this? Is it possible to question assumptions without resting on further assumptions? At what point do we stop? At what point *can* we stop questioning? Are there certain modes of thought which we cannot help but use when we think about certain areas of practice – regardless of whether these are 'good' or not? Without asking such questions, 'critical thinking' can become something of an over-determined and artificially linear path of therapeutic self-discovery – 'I used to *think* this, but now I *know* that!' – rather than an ongoing interpretative project.

But how Practical *is it*?

If philosophy is the practice of interpreting the meaning of human ideas and actions in order to facilitate both understanding and transformation, then in this sense, professionals working in social care, community work and social work all engage with philosophical ideas on a day-to-day level, in what Lena Dominelli has characterised as the 'change orientation' within social work knowledge (2005: 230). This interpretative aspect underlies the approach of this book precisely because philosophy and social work share an essential relation whereby they are both, fundamentally, about thinking and acting both *within* and *beyond* culture. *Within* culture, because both are formed substantively by responding to the needs, calls and pressures of a contemporary socio-cultural context. They are shaped around a certain functional requirement. But both social work and philosophy are also *beyond* culture, to the extent that the contours of their practice are concerned with change and transformation. Responses to the present are made meaningful only through on a broader focus on the future. This is perhaps more readily seen in the radical and critical social work theorists, far more than the procession of 'models' and diagrammatic explanations of 'how things are' that can tend to dominate social work education. But even the most pragmatic and functionalist approaches carry implicit aspirations towards a certain type of society, and a certain direction it should take.

The danger felt by some, of course, may be that there is such a thing as too much questioning, or too much reflection, and that this will inevitably come at the expense of something else. In this case, we must be careful to delineate between the neoliberal framing of higher education, which demands subject disciplines show their 'market value' and 'economic impact' in immediate and quantifiable terms, and the more political voices of social work theory that look for theory to make a recognisably political *difference* to the context of practice. The first sense of 'being useful' is problematic for both social work and philosophy. The second sense is part of a wider dialogue over the role of theory and socio-cultural transformation, which I hope this book contributes to, even if it is not a book devoted solely to politics and policy. The 'practical' task of the book, rather, is to consider whether what makes sense – either in theory or practice – actually *does* makes sense, rather than simply reproducing the readymade authority of clichés and platitudes; and it does by examining what the *conditions* of it making sense are.

Once, it was thought that an understanding on what lay beyond the immediacies of the world of practice was the best bulwark against social worker's losing hope: as when MacIver claimed that the 'social worker who has no background of social philosophy is at the mercy of a thousand discouragements.' (MacIver, quoted in Marshall 1946: 17) Today, this view of philosophy as therapy may be less popular! But the need to think outside of the inevitability of the present remains just as pressing. And as previously mentioned, such thinking may be best done, not through the contamination of one discipline into the other, but rather through the resonance of arguments and ideas.

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[1] http://www.iassw-aiets.org/ethics-in-social-work-statement-of-principles (accessed 03/12/2014)