

# Essays in Philosophy

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Volume 13  
Issue 1 *Philosophical Methodology*

Article 1

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January 2012

## Issue Introduction

James McBain  
*Pittsburgh State University*

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### Recommended Citation

McBain, James (2012) "Issue Introduction," *Essays in Philosophy*: Vol. 13: Iss. 1, Article 1.

Essays in Philosophy is a biannual journal published by Pacific University Library | ISSN 1526-0569 | <http://commons.pacificu.edu/eip/>

## Introduction

**James McBain, Pittsburg State University**

Published online: 30 January 2012

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One part of metaphilosophy is to study philosophical methodology or, simply put, how to do philosophy. Just about every discipline deals with such methodological questions. Whether it is science, history, literature, the arts, etc., methodological questions are fair game and ones that are addressed. For philosophy though, methodology is a bit of a troublemaker. While seemingly simple and straightforward, it is far from that. First, most philosophers do not address questions of the methodology they are using. In fact, many of philosophy's greatest figures have said little to nothing on the matter. Second, when someone does articulate a method, it often results in turf warfare. Proposed methods are often met with denials of that being what it is that philosophers do or should do and along these lines camps divide. Third, it is often claimed that there is no single method of philosophy. This groups all proposed methodologies together as viable and leaves the philosopher with a choice of what to use when addressing various philosophical questions. Finally, many philosophers want to tackle the issues of the day, not tackle the nature of philosophy itself. Most philosophers specialize in epistemology, ethics, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, etc. and focus exclusively on issues within those areas. This leaves many not worrying about questions of philosophical methodology specifically and often metaphilosophy in general.

For many philosophers, both historical and contemporary, this is unacceptable. Philosophical methodology is something philosophers should take seriously. It is something philosophers should develop, articulate, defend, and ultimately use. But where does a philosopher start when addressing these issues? The questions surrounding philosophical methodology are vast, varied, and often daunting. Consider a short, broad list:

Are there any methods that are specifically philosophical methods?

Is there one philosophical method or many different, often incompatible, methods?

Are there different methods for the different areas and sub-areas in philosophy

(e.g., epistemology, axiology, metaphysics, etc.)?

How does one justify a philosophical method?

What kind(s) of evidence does one use in such a method?

How does the method(s), simply put, work?

Such questions are exceptionally hard to answer and this barely scratches the surface. As difficult as these questions are, more are quick to follow. The debates over methods such as conceptual analysis, reflective equilibrium, explication, and naturalism develop. The issues of the evidential role of philosophical intuitions arise. The relationship between the history of philosophy and the practice of philosophy as addressing philosophical problems becomes an issue. And the issues and questions keep coming. But all this aside, it is an exciting topic. It is a topic of utmost importance for those who take philosophy seriously.

This volume presents eighteen essays by philosophers who are engaged with some of the above questions in various ways. We begin with a look at philosophical methodology in the history of philosophy. In the essay “Cartesian ‘Riddles’: Descartes, Words, and Deduction,” Donald Cross argues that René Descartes, who was unquestionably concerned with philosophical methodology, was more unmethodical than would seem and so is not as successful in distancing himself from the scholastic tradition. According to Cross, words are fundamental to Descartes’ project; however, his characterization of words proves problematic for the role they are to play in deduction. In her essay “Is James’ Pragmatism Really a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking?,” Elizabeth Shaw evaluates the three interrelated uses of pragmatism – as temperament, as a philosophical method, and as a theory of truth. Shaw argues that Jamesian pragmatism “exhibits a sort of temperament that blends, in nonideological fashion, the tough-minded bent of empirical science and a tender-minded openness to spiritual realities and religious belief.” Pragmatism, on Shaw’s account, looks for the practical differences and consequences implicit in the meaning of the terms at issue.

The next three essays deal directly with or revolve around the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein who arguably dealt with the issues of methodology more than anyone else in the Twentieth Century. In “Philosophy as a Private Language,” Ben Gibran argues that philosophical discourse is semantically meaningless and as such not a linguistic practice, but instead it is a collective private language building off Wittgenstein’s conception on a private language. In “Wittgenstein and Surrealism,” Chrysoula Gitsoulis argues that there are two distinct methods in Wittgenstein’s method of deconstructing pseudo-philosophical problems – the description of actual linguistic practice and the construction of hypothetical language-games. In “How to Investigate the Grammar of Aspect-Perception,” Reshef Agam-Segal argues that the traditional conception of Wittgensteinian philosophical methodology cannot account for the grammar of aspect-

seeing. Agam-Segal proposes an alternative methodology one he claims allows us to entertain a form of conceptualization of an object but “does not involve us in the use of the object according to the norms that govern the conceptualization.”

We round out the focus on the history of philosophy with a bit of advice from Bennett Gilbert. In “Freshest Advices on What to Do With the Historical Method in Philosophy When Using It to Study a Little Bit of Philosophy That Has Been Lost to History,” he argues for three claims: first, philosophers’ practice is necessarily historical as it is sufficiently embedded in culture; second, original work is in part a reconstruction by reinterpretation and as such it is akin to historiography; and third, the “special oddities” of the relations between the past and the present still continue to task philosophers.

The next set of essays address topics in philosophical methodology itself or as applied to a particular area of philosophy. In “Interest as a Starting Place for Philosophy,” Brian Talbot argues that the confidence philosophers have in various claims is not justified if these beliefs are based on intuitions, observations, or reasoning on these bases. Instead, he argues that we should look to what we find interesting as a way of basing our beliefs and this in turn will further philosophical inquiry. In “Experimental Philosophy and Philosophical Disputes,” Justin Sytsma and Jonathan Livengood illustrate how experimental philosophy and the reincorporation of empirical methods in philosophy can help to make philosophical progress. Specifically, they see such methods as being useful in settling philosophical disputes as illustrated by their case study concerning intuitions about reference. Anthony Bryson and David Alexander, in “The View from the Armchair: Responding to Kornblith’s Alternative to Armchair Philosophy,” argue that Hilary Kornblith’s methodological naturalism is mistaken due to his bringing epistemic intuitions and beliefs about knowledge back in and imposing them on the empirical evidence upon which he relies so heavily.

Dana Goswick, in “Philosophical Methodology in Modal Epistemology,” evaluates two of the dominant, contemporary methods – the use of thought experiments and conceptual analysis. Specifically, Goswick argues that while both methods can reveal conditional essentialist claims, neither can reveal *de re* essentialist claims. In “Meta-Conceivability,” Phil Corkum argues that, contrary to Roy Sorenson, we cannot meta-conceive impossibilities or, rather, for any sense of conception under which conceivability guides possibility, one cannot conceive of the impossibilities being conceived. For philosophical methodology, this would entail that we must take extra care when reflecting on thought experiments. Sophie Allen, in “What Matters in (Naturalized) Metaphysics?” argues that naturalized metaphysics does not have the methodological resources necessary in order to evaluate competing ontological theories or even distinguish between them. This shows that the commitments to naturalized metaphysics must be weakened accordingly. The last essay in this set addresses the

“trolley method” in moral philosophy. James O'Connor, in “The Trolley Method of Moral Philosophy,” argues that the implicit assumption of the method – that intuitive reactions to the cases constitute an appropriate guide to real-life moralizing – is in fact false and moreover has no practical value.

The last set of essays deals with the issues surrounding the use of philosophical intuitions. We begin with Jonathan Weinberg, Chad Gonnerman, Stephen J. Crowley, Stacey Swain, and Ian Vandewalker’s “Intuition and Calibration.” Weinberg, et al. explore the possibility that philosophical intuitions may be calibrated – the regulation of intuitions as a source of evidence. They argue that there is no good option currently available to calibrate intuitions, but there may still be hope for the future. In “Intuition and Inquiry,” Anand Vaidya argues that experimental philosophy, which is, often critical of the use of intuitions, in fact depends upon the use of non-experimental intuitions about the application of philosophical concepts. Another defense of the use of intuitions is presented by Federico Matias Pailos in “Intuitions as Philosophical Evidence.” For Pailos, once we conceive of intuitions as a kind of theory-laden inclination to believe, we can see how they play an evidentiary role and moreover can be used in justification of philosophical practice. Julia Langkau, in “Towards a Non-Rationalist Inflationist Account of Intuitions,” takes a different approach to the issue. Beginning with the ontology of the intuition-state itself, Langkau argues against deflationist accounts of intuitions (such as that of Timothy Williamson) and shows how a non-rationalist inflationist account captures the desiderata best. Finally, we end this section with another defense of the use of intuitions. In “A New Hope for Philosophers’ Appeal to Intuitions,” Damián Szmuc defends philosophers’ use of intuitions by developing a new conception of that use – the Deliberative Conception. Szmuc argues the Deliberative Conception not only avoids the errors of previous models, but is also supported by empirical reason into The Argumentative Theory of Reason.

No one tackles editing a volume alone. I am no exception. Despite there being only one name as the editor of this issue, there are others to whom I would like to express my sincerest gratitude. First, I would like to thank David Boersema, General Editor of *Essays in Philosophy*. Without Dave’s kindness, help, advice, and constant encouragement, this volume probably would not have come to be. It has been a true pleasure to work with Dave. I would also like to thank my three external reviewers (who will remain anonymous, but they know who they are) who helped me review each paper. When I first took on this project I thought there would not be many submissions as a lot of people just are not that interested in philosophical methodology. I told my reviewers as much. I never would have expected the number of submissions there were. My reviewers definitely came through helping me and I am in their debt. Finally, I would like to thank *everyone* who submitted papers to the volume. The large number of submissions tells me that there is no shortage of philosophers interested in

metaphilosophical questions in general and methodological questions in particular. For one who finds these questions of the utmost importance, so many submitting shows the topic alive and well.