

## **Metaphilosophy**

(potential focus on the analytic paradigm and the continental divide, or on feminist metaphilosophy and what underrepresented voices in and outside of academic philosophy have to say about philosophy?)

Philosophy, and analytic philosophy in particular, has become increasingly diverse with respect to the subject matters it deals with as well as the methodologies it employs—so much so that it has become harder and harder to pinpoint what it actually is that philosophers do.

Contemporary philosophical discussions extend far beyond the issues that were once considered to make up the core issues of philosophy, with analytic philosophers, in particular, embracing subject matters that they once considered out of reach of sound philosophical inquiry. New developments in society as well as technological and scientific progress (or simply the newly gained awareness thereof) constantly give rise to new issues and sub-disciplines that call into question traditional distinctions and boundaries that were once drawn up to defend certain ideas of what is and what is not philosophy “proper”. Contemporary analytic philosophy seems to catch up with the idea that nothing is safe from philosophical analysis, not even topics that were once thought to be the exclusive domain of continental philosophy. Today, it seems that there is not only philosophy of just about anything, but also *analytic* philosophy of just about anything.

The methodological reservoir of analytic philosophy, too, has outgrown its origins in logical and linguistic analysis in a way that calls into question the very label we use to identify with professionally.

In light of this ever-increasing diversity of philosophy, it appears that subject matters and methodology can no longer be invoked as reliable demarcation criteria for understanding the boundaries of philosophy, both with respect to different traditions within philosophy, such as continental philosophy or pragmatism, as well as with disciplines that are supposed to lie outside of it. The more we become aware of this apparently underdetermined nature of philosophy, including its various traditions and sub-disciplines, the more we need to face the question of what (analytic) philosophy actually is. Once we embrace this question, however, it may break up into a plethora of subquestions that will probe—and even force us to re-evaluate—our understanding of what it is we are doing when we engage in philosophy. I suggest that we use the grad conf to jump into this rabbit whole, or at least dip our toes in it.

### **Potential questions**

- What is (analytic) philosophy?
- Does (analytic) philosophy have a distinct subject matter, methodology, or aim?
- Are there different (legitimate) ways to conceive of philosophy? If so, what are they, and what do they still have in common to warrant the shared label?
- Is there a particularly good way to describe what philosophers do? Is there even something that all philosophers do, at least to a certain extent, regardless of the specifics of their sub-discipline?

- Can we pinpoint the methods employed by philosophers in various philosophical sub-disciplines?
- What is a thought experiment? How do I analyze a concept? How do I inquire and criticize philosophically, as opposed to any other (scientific?) way?
- How has the way (analytic) philosophers perceive their trade changed?
- Is there still something genuinely analytic about analytic philosophy? Can we still draw a clear line between analytic philosophy and continental philosophy that goes beyond style and the cardinal virtue of clarity?
- Can or should continental insights be translated into analytic philosophy?
- Should analytic philosophers reach further into the topics that were historically treated as hot potatoes, e.g., because they appeared to be the exclusive domain of continental philosophers?
- Is there a benefit in doing what continental philosophers are doing, but in an analytic way? Is that even possible?
- Is there progress in philosophy?
- How universal is (analytic) Philosophy? What does it mean that we characterize some areas of philosophies by virtue of regional labels, e.g., French, continental or Latin American philosophy? Is analytic Philosophy “Western”?
- What are the implications of widespread disagreement among philosophers—on just about any kind of topic. What does philosophical knowledge look like? Do philosophers know things?
- Is philosophy something that needs to be done by philosophers? If so, what is it that makes a philosopher? Is there something unique that only philosophers can do?
- Can anyone do philosophy? Do we prevent some people from doing (academic) philosophy? Are there (justified) restrictions on who can do (academic) philosophy?
- What are the aims of philosophy? Why do we do philosophy? What can philosophy offer and to whom can philosophy offer these things? Does everybody benefit from philosophical inquiry in the same way?
- Is philosophy important? Are there times when it is more or less important? Is it even good for something? Does it matter? To whom?
- Can society afford philosophers? Can it afford NOT to have them? What does it mean for a society that it enables people to study philosophy?
- We can also ask domain-specific metaphilosophical questions, e.g., about how and why feminist philosophy and philosophy of race often go hand in hand; why moral psychology is something often done by philosophers; whether and how we can draw a line between linguistics and philosophy of language? What differentiates translation theory from the philosophy of translation? What can the philosophy of climate change offer climate scientists and society as a whole?

## Potential Key Note Speakers (some first suggestions):

Elly Vintiadis	Sarah Mattice
Tim Williamson	Neil Levy
Quill Kukla	David Chalmers
Kristie Dotson	Yafeng Shan (New Book coming January 2023)
Simon Critchley	Jelscha Schmid
Giuseppina D'Oro	Justin Clarke-Doane
Ulrich de Balbian	Manuel Bremer
Amie L. Thomasson	Bret W. Davis
Søren Overgaard	Eva Feder Kittay
Herman Cappelen	Teresa Marques
Bojana Mladenovic	Max Kölbel
Hans-Johann Glock	
Robert Piercey	

## Reading Suggestions

I suggest that we start by jumping right into a great example of recent metaphilosophical inquiry by Quill R. Kukla, who elucidates the concept of philosophy by pointing out what it has in common with comedy.

- Kukla, Quill R. (2020) "Philosophy, Comedy, and the Need for Good Material" in Elly Vintiadis. *Philosophy by Women*. Routledge.

It's fun, and there's more where that came from. This article is from a collection of 22 Essays with the title "Philosophy by Women", all of which deal with interesting metaphilosophical questions. So we could also look further into this book. After that, we might want to look into some introductions, seminal papers and books, as well as special issues such as:

- Shan, Yafeng (2022). The unexamined philosophy is not worth doing: An introduction to New Directions in Metaphilosophy. *Metaphilosophy* 53 (2-3):153-158.
- Levy, Neil (2003). Analytic and continental philosophy: Explaining the differences. *Metaphilosophy* 34 (3):284-304.
- Dotson, Kristie (2013). How is this Paper Philosophy? *Comparative Philosophy* 3 (1):3-29.
- Overgaard, Søren ; Gilbert, Paul & Burwood, Stephen (2013). *An Introduction to Metaphilosophy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Williamson, Timothy (2021): *The Philosophy of Philosophy*. Wiley

- Piercey, Robert (2010). Metaphilosophy as First Philosophy. *International Philosophical Quarterly* 50 (3):335-349.
- Mizrahi, Moti & Dickinson, Mike (2021). The analytic-continental divide in philosophical practice: An empirical study. *Metaphilosophy* 52 (5):668-680.
- Rescher, Nicholas (2014). *Metaphilosophy: Philosophy in Philosophical Perspective*. Lexington Books.
- Rescher, N. (2021). *Philosophy Examined: Metaphilosophy in Pragmatic Perspective*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.
- Davis, Bret W. (2022). Is Philosophy Western? Some Western and East Asian Perspectives on a Metaphilosophical Question. *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 36 (2):219-231.
- here is also a journal that deals exclusively with metaphilosophy. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14679973/>
- Aaaaand. Anything from this recent issue of «*Verifiche. Rivista di scienze umane*» (L, 2/2021) devoted to *Feminist Metaphilosophy* looks super interesting as well: <http://www.hegelpd.it/hegel/new-release-verifiche-1-2-2021-feminist-metaphilosophy-ed-by-valentina-bortolami-and-giovanna-mioli/>