

Herman Cappelen, Tamar Szabo Gendler, and John Hawthorne, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology*. Oxford University Press 2016. 688 pp. \$150.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199668779).

A working assumption within philosophy is that from the point of view of research, philosophers make use of a diverse set of methods. This includes, though is not limited to, argumentation, explanation, analysis, description, interpretation and so on. A further point to note is that the use of such methods may be found among practicing philosophers both today as well as within the history of philosophy, and likewise across diverse disciplines and philosophical movements from pragmatism to logical positivism, phenomenology to deconstructionism. What we find is that although philosophers may disagree on most philosophical issues, the question of whether or not philosophy simply *makes use* of method is hardly controversial.

A further assumption that might be made is that one or another method serves *best* to characterize the philosophical endeavor. Here we might point to reason and argument as a primary instance of this. Since ancient times, philosophers have clearly set themselves apart from the other domains of inquiry in the use of argument, reasoned discourse and debate. The problem with such an assumption, however, is that it is far from self-evident. Although philosophy certainly makes use of argumentation, since at least the 20th century, the use of rational speculation and demonstration has tended to diminish in favor of other approaches far more critical in nature, e.g., analysis and description. A further objection may be found today in the increasing use of empirical evidence as a foundation for philosophical inquiry, so-called ‘experimental’ philosophy, which in many ways opposes traditional ‘armchair’ methods. In any event, the issue is hardly decided, so the question of method within philosophy inevitably remains an open one.

With this question, we are led to the broader metaphilosophical issues that define, at least in part, the new Oxford edition on philosophical methodology. As an extensive and quite comprehensive contribution to an area of research that has slowly gained popularity in recent years, this new edition includes articles on a large variety of topics, with subdivisions that extend into the many diverse areas into which philosophy itself has within the past century delved. Given the extensive nature of the edition, I will in this review confine myself to offering a general overview of the structure of the book, with further highlights focused around articles that I personally found of interest.

The 36 chapters that define this edition are divided into four parts. The first part (Background) contains a chapter by Josh Dever, ‘What is philosophical methodology?’ and serves as a kind of general introduction to the work by way of analysis of what he calls the ‘metamethodological’ issues surrounding philosophical methodology, or in simple terms, an analysis of ‘what kind of questions would count as methodological questions’ (3). The resulting analysis within Dever’s essay is in fact quite interesting. The author does a search of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* for all occurrences of the word ‘methodological,’ thereafter examining their resulting semantic employment. This in turn yields seven different hypotheses on the nature of methodology within philosophy. Summarizing, we can say that philosophers hold that ‘methodology’ has: (i) no relevance (*eliminativism*) or merely (ii) tangential relevance for philosophy (*eliminatedivism*); if it has relevance, a methodology can refer to (iii) the way researchers go about discovering hypotheses (*working-hypothesisism*); (iv) the means by which they attain knowledge (*epistemologism*); (v) basic criteria governing theory selection (*theory selectionism*); or finally, (vi) the rules governing philosophical practice (*necessary preconditionalism*), including (vii) the way in which such principles are ordered (*hierarchicalism*). In any event, what is immediately evident from Dever’s

chapter is that with respect to the above question of whether or not some singular method or way of doing philosophy is generally recognized among philosophers, we may answer that question with a strong—not in the least bit.

Part 2: Traditions and Approaches includes 10 chapters spanning the history of philosophy and its movements from logical positivism to phenomenology and naturalism to analytic metaphysics. Some omissions may be identified, e.g., there is no article dealing with the Scholastic Method, which I personally felt ought to belong to any wide-ranging account of the history of philosophical method. So too, although phenomenology is addressed, the edition tends to emphasize the analytic tradition to the exclusion of advances (where methodology itself became a particular interest) that took place within the continental tradition throughout the early 20th century, including philosophical hermeneutics, structuralism, deconstructionism, and so on.

Special mention is to be made within this second part in reference to Normore's 'The Methodology of the History of Philosophy.' It is in fact quite a penetrating article on the topic and even indirectly foreshadows the many interdisciplinary issues raised in articles that define the fourth part of the work. In particular, it raises the question of the relationship between philosophy and its history, along with the distinctions between philosophy, history, and the history of philosophy. I am not altogether certain that Normore is successful in answering the many issues that he raises, though I do think that the article does an excellent job of pointing out both the issues as well as the difficulties faced by the historian of philosophy. The centerpiece of the article involves the distinction between Doxology, 'the study of the views of other philosophers,' (34) and the Anthropology of Philosophy, which endeavors to see 'the past as the past saw itself when it was present' (35), where the History of Philosophy proper is seen as subsisting somewhere between the two, though precisely where this may be is a question that is in many ways left unresolved.

I found the third part (Topics) to be the least clear in terms of the organization of the edition. It contains what appears as a slightly chaotic collection of 12 chapters, ranging in topics from Cath's 'Reflective Equilibrium,' to Zagzebski's 'Faith and Reason' (which would have perhaps been better placed in Part 4), followed by Kelly's 'Disagreement in Philosophy,' and concluding with Pereboom's analysis of Kant's 'Transcendental Arguments.' Issues of organization aside, the chapters themselves are all well written and, in fact, quite interesting.

I particularly enjoyed Weisberg's article on 'Modeling,' as the issue is not often examined outside of specialized domains of philosophical research that deal at some level with the social or natural sciences. Weisberg makes an excellent case for the use of models with his introductory discussion of the work of the economist Thomas Schelling (1978), who made use of modeling with surprising effect in terms of analysis of the nature and sources of social segregation. The article thereafter deftly explores the nature of models, their use, and the application of models within the context of philosophy.

The fourth and final part (Philosophy and its Neighbours) is by far the largest, consisting of 13 chapters, and in my opinion, serves as an important contribution to the field of metaphilosophy. Indeed, one of the tendencies of contemporary philosophical research is its increasing push toward interdisciplinary work. We find philosophers today within every possible avenue of investigation, from the traditional domains that define the philosophy of science, including the philosophy of physics and biology, to other domains outside the traditional avenues, including the philosophy of fiction, popular culture, media, and so on. Although this present edition remains conservative in its collection, it does include an extant collection of articles that span interdisciplinary work within philosophy, including Roskies's 'Neuroscience,' Shapiro's 'Philosophy of Mathematics: Issues and Methods,' Langlais and Leiter's 'The Methodology of Legal Philosophy,' and Mills' 'Critical Philosophy of Race.'

In particular, Shapiro's chapter includes an interesting discussion of a number of the primary debates within contemporary philosophy of mathematics coupled with comments regarding the methodological intersection between these two disciplines. A few examples of the latter are perhaps worth mentioning. At the very beginning, Shapiro notes that '[t]he primary purpose of the philosophy of mathematics is to *interpret* mathematics, and to illuminate the place of mathematics in the overall intellectual enterprise' (623). Although mathematicians certainly seek an understanding of their own discipline, it is the philosopher of mathematics who has the chief concern of raising questions regarding the metaphysical status of mathematical objects (ontology), along with issues of knowledge (epistemology) and the language of mathematical discourse (semantics). Following a discussion of Paul Benacerraff's dilemma along with the various responses to this that have been posed among both philosophers and mathematicians, further methodological points are noted. In contrast to mathematics, philosophy is notably 'not a deductive enterprise,' so that 'the philosopher of mathematics should be judged on more holistic standards' (628). Shapiro has here indicated an important distinction between the two disciplines, viz. that philosophy ought to be evaluated according to its own standards, even where philosophy studies an exact discipline such as mathematics. The article thereafter proceeds to a discussion of questions related to the philosophical grounding of mathematics, what Shapiro calls the 'philosophy-first principle,' viz., the view that 'philosophy supplies first principles for the special sciences' (630). Plato is characteristically cited as the 'quintessential first-philosopher' (630) and thereafter Quine is mentioned in lines with the naturalistic rejection of this position. A further and final point to mention is the issue of specialization. Shapiro notes that a philosopher who investigates a specialized area of knowledge (such as mathematics) ought to know something about that specialization in order to speak intelligibly about it. But how much ought the philosopher to know? The answer is, arguably, 'all of it' (633). Such a demand would of course ask far too much of the philosopher, as there are few (if any) mathematicians who can claim to be in possession of such extensive knowledge of their own field. So how do philosophers overcome this difficulty? Here, Shapiro balks at an answer. Although a robust philosophy of mathematics can be developed on the basis of elementary mathematics alone, there are other issues, such as the problem of explanation in mathematics, where a far more in-depth engagement with mathematics and even the natural sciences is demanded of the philosopher. I suppose in the end, the answer is that there is really no answer, and that philosophers must simply make do with their own finite limitations as human beings—but in this, I have gone beyond what Shapiro has himself stated.

To conclude, the new Oxford edition is, in my opinion, essential reading for philosophers and students interested in metaphilosophy. It contains a host of articles written by specialists who address a wide array of topics and disciplines within the field itself. Notwithstanding some omissions, as already pointed out, this new edition is highly recommended.

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