

# Philosophical Marathon 2022

## Philosophy and Method

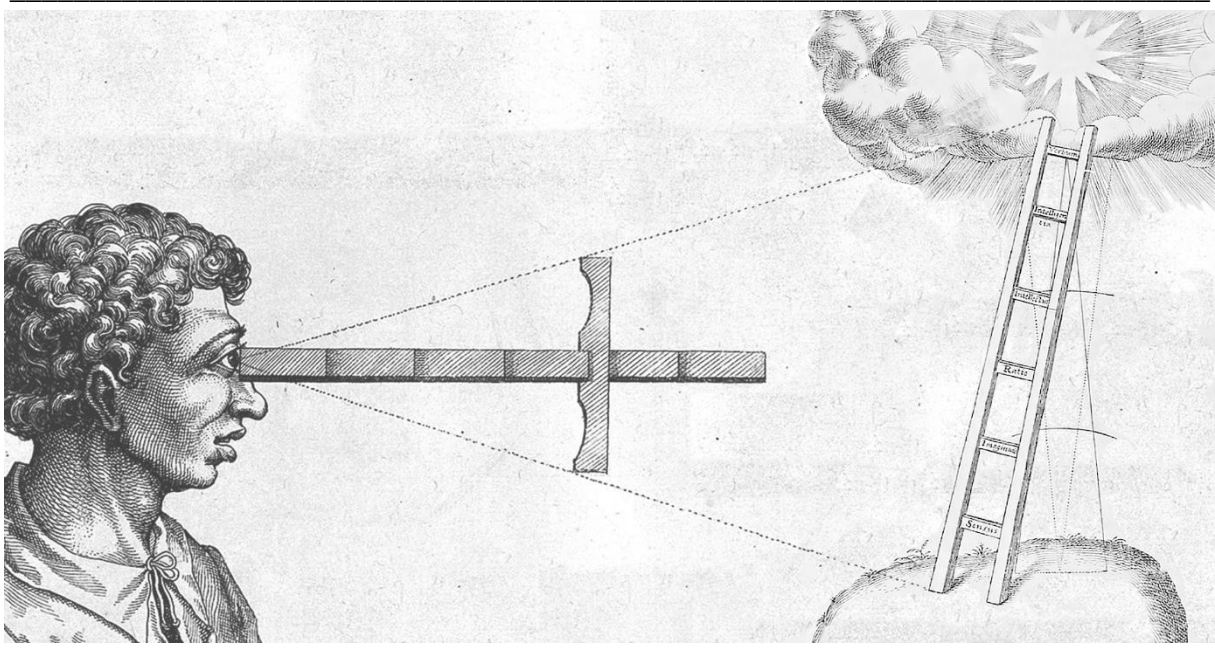
– CALL FOR PAPERS –

The **Student Philosophical Society of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana** is hosting its annual event, the *Philosophical Marathon* in an international capacity for its second year.

Participants may look forward to a weeklong series of lectures focusing on a specific topic, examined from a different point of view throughout the week. This year, the event will take place between the **14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of November**, accompanying UNESCO's annual World Philosophy Day as per tradition.

The theme for this year's event is *Philosophy and Method*. The Society calls for contributions from students and researchers who are engaged in the study of Philosophy to be presented to the open public. **The deadline for admissions is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2022**. Registrations are open at [filozofskimaraton@gmail.com](mailto:filozofskimaraton@gmail.com). Please include an abstract between **150 - 200 words, including 5 keywords**. Selected contributors will be contacted and your abstracts will be published in a brochure and on our Society's webpage. Lodging fees will be reimbursed.

Does not include travel fees.



Theme description:

For this year's topic we have carefully selected the problem of method. We understand the difficulty brought about by the selection of such a theme, for it seems that the question of method is tightly knit with an approach in philosophy that is highly elusive. Despite its appearance which presupposes that it is easy to approach from the viewpoint of every philosophical current, we become challenged with some kind of conundrum – after all, what philosophy can truly lay claim to pass judgment on method? At first sight we could ascribe this

question-answering role to epistemology. It would seem that it is the discipline that instinctively deals with questions that may be directly applied to methodology if we were simply to regard it as the carrier of knowledge. And yet, do we really want to approach the topic with such a degree of bluntness? Were we to accept solely this standpoint we could easily become entrapped in a naive kind of belief – one that we should not allow ourselves to stand for. This approach strikes us as being too academic, holding onto its rules in an overbearingly orthodox-like manner. We crave a certain *je ne sais quoi* in our approach, one can only do philosophy if thought is free. At the same time, we do not wish to devalue the discourse on method. Regardless of our approach, one must admit to the importance of method in the activity of doing philosophy. We hope the discourse our event might produce might awaken you from your slumber as well.

Plato's philosophical method, the dialectic, is perceived as a 'journey through logos' that should unveil how certain types of speech and categories can refer one to the other and when they do not. The dialectic therefore serves the famous rejection of sophistic inductions that rest on the overlooking of a core difference in concepts. The dialectic is constituted in a wholesome analysis of a chosen problematic in the sense that it thoroughly analyses all its inherent logical possibilities. What immanently belongs to it is that it always seems to get lost within aporias for which a dialectic solution, strictly speaking isn't a possibility any longer.

In Aristotle's investigations the argument follows a syllogistic structure that may most often only be reconstructed from the given text in a post festum fashion. The implicit premises are not always stated and the order of argumentation is not always transparent. Every solution of the philosophical problem generally consists of finding the right 'middle path' that explains the rest, even though it does not necessarily follow logically from the other premises. Its origin rests in the theoretical insight of the mind, the clarity of which is to be outwardly expressed through the entirety of the argument.

The Hellenistic schools of skepticism practiced the methodological withholding of judgement or *epoche*, including both practical and theoretical questions in developing the *aporia* of every side of the dilemma. For this purpose, they studied and articulated the logical paradoxes of the possibilities of attaining knowledge or explications that should, in the practical sense, lead to the freeing of the desire of epistemic certainty and living a good, undisturbed life. In their argumentations they uncovered solipsisms, groundless dogmatic premises and inconsistencies, as well as the aporetic relation in between being and knowledge – knowledge cannot onesidedly determine being and being cannot determine true knowledge.

The Cartesian doubt states that one needs to tear down all foundations on which his opinions stand and once again reconstruct them from their ruins. Judgements we form without a rational approach to their foundations are stood upon shaky ground. Doubt is the antidote, the hammer of destruction that is there to uncover the true first principles from which we can then begin to construct skepticism as the method to true knowledge. This methodological skepticism is in this undertaking within the whole context of Descartes' method the bearer of the role of taking the first step in approaching that which is true.

The geometrical method is a systematized method of demonstration aided by the axiomatic system and deductive judgement. The system consists from basic definitions and axioms which are accompanied by a variety of theses, postulates, propositions and demonstrations which all follow from the basic axioms and definitions that are given. The most known example of application of such a method in the field of philosophy is to be found in the writings of Spinoza. In his work titled *Ethics* he uses this axiomatic system to describe the strictly deterministic nature of the world.

Kant concludes that the mind, in its dogmatic use in knowledge-seeking stumbles across aporias, contradictions and antinomies by necessity. The main task of critical philosophy therefore becomes the research of the conditions of the possibility of experience. In this the main premises of metaphysical philosophies are uncovered as merely regulative ideas of the mind that expand our experience, but are nothing on themselves. In taking this step critical philosophy departs from studying our objects as actual existing entities. Kant poses the question of how our knowledge constitutes its objects. In his likeness, Hegel builds the frame of his philosophy on the idea of not accepting any premises. His point of departure is pure being as the first possible candidate for the concept of the absolute. Being – and all the following possible absolutes – present themselves as permeated with contradictions. Attempting to resolve them not only obliterates them but also enables us to uncover something more in these contradictions, alleviating them to a higher level.

The Marxist dialectical method similarly rejects static categories. As its mode of departure it takes things in their dynamicity, their becoming and passing. Unlike the hegelian method it rejects idealism. It states that in the background of transitions of things and their mental expressions there is no underlying self-dynamicity of the term – development exists in the nature of material things themselves. Nature itself already has a history. The dialectic must therefore study the most basic principles of change, departing from basic movement of the material bodies, to chemical processes, the evolution of living beings, and finally, reaching history in its real sense – the history of man. But even at that point Marxism doesn't primarily study man's spiritual history but the economical-social development of human society.

Psychoanalysis is a branch of philosophy that has its method of research set, some would say, more practically than others. In the beginning of the 20th century its founding father Freud began to delve into the research of the unconscious. For its basis he takes the patient's speech as the principle of curing, from which springs its second naming 'the talking cure'. The method of research includes free associations through which the patient eventually uncovers his or her trauma.

In a broad sense we can see the special importance of the phenomenological method in that the results of phenomenological assessment shape the characterization of a certain field of study and with that the method that belongs to this field. In that sense we can think of other disciplines of philosophy with their 'own' methodologies as primarily dependent on the phenomenological analysis.

The hermeneutic analysis always happens as a deconstructive as well as a constructive moment all at once, because it must always decompose implicit presuppositions to grasp to the best of its abilities that which is the inherent self-possessing speech and at the same time construct a new concept that maintains the problematic of the relationship of interpretation and speech open, not allowing it to be overshadowed by new, false conceptual models. Here the methodological questions deal with the dilemma of precisely how to comprehend the relation of the never-fully-clear sense-providing speech and interpretation, and how the status of hermeneutic concepts is built on this – are they only metaphoric, pointing at something or expressive, expressing only the bare structure of sense-making experience?

In a certain sense the question of method belongs twixt the biggest preoccupations of the philosophy of science. The 20th century is generally a time of extremely rich intertwinement of philosophy and science. Participants may choose from a vast variety of topics in this category alone – from the positivism of the Vienna circle, to Popper's principle of falsification, the idea of the scientific paradigm of Kuhn, various epistemological approaches of French authors such as Bachelard and Canguilhem, to the neokantianism of Herz and positivism of Mach. They may also pursue the direction of questioning science in contemporaneity and the challenging paradoxical position that it takes on in the culture of our time, for example the question of how the results of a seemingly strict method have such a divided public reception.

Logic is in a way a doctrine of the method of conclusion and, perhaps 'thinking' in a wider sense of the word. Owing to that it is harder to speak of a logical method. It is inescapable that we are to encounter the problem of self-referencing and the conjuncture of researching with that which is already being researched. The discrepancies surpass academic philosophy: the question of the status of logic (if we are to accept formalistic premises) underlies a large portion of mathematics. What is that which grounds thinking? Positivistic attempts, for instance, aim at achieving an accord between thinking and empirical reality. To the contrary pragmatists perceive thinking as a sort of logistic: thinking is not as much a subject of truth as much as it is an object of usefulness and practicality. The question of a logical method emerges, the implications of which may be reaching into the inexpressible.

In the past few decades, Asian philosophies have most noticeably entered the world-philosophical discourse – a space in which they have not yet completely adjusted themselves in. After all, these are two radically different approaches to doing philosophy, not comparable merely on the basis of theoretically cleansed terms. In attempting comparison, we may oftentimes notice many a simplification and, for the most part, very rash drawing of similarities with some of the more classical premises of traditional Western philosophy. This usually leads in directions such as overbearing polarizations or partial acceptance which attaches a kind of ornamental worth to that which it perceives as 'foreign'. The least common approach is one that struggles to see these diverse systems in their wholesome form without excluding or attaching that which is not there. Thought must be handled in its own specific context and in the context of the world to which it belongs. Yet – how do we go about this comparative methodology still remains a riddle. What is rather interesting is that we may view the history of Asian philosophies

as a kind of tendency toward the riddance of method and systemization, which can be beautifully demonstrated in describing the path from the early Vedic texts to the later schools of Buddhism.

**I**t might be that even after all these descriptions the topic continues to elude you, owing to its inherent difficulties. What is a method and does philosophy require it at all? These are only two of the questions which we hope to tackle in the scope of this event. It is on you to present the one that personally addresses you the most and evokes most doubt. We hope that this longer description of the topic that we put together may serve as a source of inspiration in your deciding. With these finishing thoughts we cordially invite you to attend.