

Editorial

The Philosophy of *Philosophies*: Reflection on the Eight-Year Journey and the Outlook for the Future

Marcin J. Schroeder 

Faculty of International Liberal Arts, Akita International University, 193-2 Okutsubakidai, Tsubakigawa, Yuwa, Akita-shi 010-1211, Akita, Japan; mjs@gl.aiu.ac.jp

Abstract: This editorial complements the editorial opening *Philosophies* eight years ago. The success of the original vision of the journal has been confirmed by the high quality of published works and its institutional recognition. The journal *Philosophies* evolves, but this evolution is an adaptation to the conditions of better realization of its original mission to promote the reintegration of fragmented by specialization knowledge guided by philosophy. In contrast to the editorial published at the time of the opening of the journal presenting general philosophical principles guiding its early development which are equally valid today as eight years ago, the present editorial focuses on philosophical but also more practical aspects of its operation and its role in the academic community together with an extensive clarification of their misunderstanding in decisions regarding submission of contributions.

Keywords: *Philosophies*; philosophy; philosophical journal

1. Introduction

The journal *Philosophies* is soon entering the ninth year of its existence. There are many reasons for celebration beyond its existence and growth. The journal has established its reputation and received recognition in the academic world not only by indexing organizations but also by the growing number of high-quality submissions and extensive cooperation of experts contributing their time and work to guest editing Special Issues and writing peer reviews. We should celebrate the success of the journal, but this means a celebration of the results of a collective effort of many people. I greatly appreciate the hard work of everyone from the members of the Editorial Board, Editorial Office, and reviewers to the contributors of submissions. I am grateful for the interest in the works published in *Philosophies* to the members of the audience reading and citing these publications. Thus, the main reason for celebration is the established and growing community around the journal.

However, the main objective of this editorial is not this celebration, but a reflection on the experience gained in the eight years of *Philosophies* and the future of the journal. Its scope was revised earlier this year, but the revisions were not in the direction established in the original aims and scope, but rather in the way they were expressed. There was no change in the type of papers accepted for publication in *Philosophies*. Whatever can be published after the revision would have been published before. The matter was more about making the broader scope of topics relevant to the mission of *Philosophies* more explicit.

The experience of the last eight years shows that the journal's vision presented in my editorial "The Philosophy of *Philosophies*: Synthesis through Diversity" [1] in the first Special Issue in 2016 explaining the mission of the journal in its opening volume does not require any major changes. In the best of possible world of Leibniz, it still could serve as a sufficient explanation of the mission of *Philosophies* that can help potential contributors in making their decisions about submitting their work. However, in our less than best possible world, not everyone has the time and patience to read a five-page explanation, and therefore the necessary formulation of the brief statements of aims and scope is a challenge. Hopefully, the recent adjustment of the scope extending the list of topics made it more helpful in making decisions regarding the submission of work for publication.



Citation: Schroeder, M.J. The Philosophy of *Philosophies*: Reflection on the Eight-Year Journey and the Outlook for the Future. *Philosophies* **2024**, *9*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies9010016>

Received: 4 January 2024

Accepted: 5 January 2024

Published: 15 January 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

The mission of *Philosophies* is succinctly expressed as part of its aims on the website of the journal:

“*Philosophies* (ISSN 2409-9287) is an international, peer-reviewed, open access journal dedicated to scientific research and philosophical reflection concerning themes at the intersection of philosophical, scientific, technological, and cultural studies. Although the philosophy of science, with its foundations in epistemology, scientific methodology, and the history of science, is at the core of the scope of *Philosophies*, the journal seeks much broader perspectives that integrate the diverse intellectual tools developed in a large variety of scientific disciplines and philosophical systems. The ultimate goal of the journal is to reach for a synthesis of knowledge using the collective wisdom of diverse methodologies” [2].

Our concern about the proper understanding of the concise description in the aims and scope is generated by the experience of receiving submissions that are not always consistent with the vision of the journal and at the same time questions from potential contributors unsure whether their work is appropriate for publication in *Philosophies*. For this reason, the scope was slightly extended by additional items. See Table 1.

Table 1. Present scope and the updated version.

Previous Scope	Updated Scope
Integration of philosophy, science, technology and culture;	Integration of philosophy, science, technology and culture;
	The past and future of philosophy
Philosophy of science;	Philosophy of science;
Logic and methodology of inquiry;	Logic and methodology of inquiry;
Epistemology and ontology;	Epistemology and ontology;
Ethics and values;	Ethics and values;
Natural philosophy;	Natural philosophy;
Philosophy of information and computation;	Philosophy of information and computation;
	Philosophy of mind and consciousness;
Philosophy of complexity;	Philosophy of complexity;
	Philosophy of religion and its study
	Philosophical aspects of religions
Philosophy of living systems and their organization;	Philosophy of living systems and their organization;
Philosophy of language and culture;	Philosophy of language and culture;
Political philosophy;	Political philosophy;
Philosophy of education;	Philosophy of education;
	Philosophy of health and healthcare
Philosophy of traditions and innovation	Philosophy of traditions and innovation
	Philosophy of sports, leisure, and quality of life

Hopefully, the recent adjustment of the scope extending the list of topics made it more helpful in making submission decisions. However, this extension is far from being a solution to the problem. The source of potential and actual misunderstandings is not in the topics of articles (philosophy is present explicitly or implicitly in every academic work), but in the way the philosophical aspects of the subject of study are present in the text and how they are presented. This is the main motivation for this editorial.

2. The Role of the Journal

“The Philosophy of *Philosophies*: Synthesis through Diversity” [1] in the first Special Issue of the journal in 2016 provides quite an extensive explanation of the intended profile of the journal and its leitmotif of synthesis of knowledge. The explanation may generate a variety of questions. What is the merit of choosing any particular profile? Maybe in the name of diversity, any submission addressing philosophical matters should be welcome.

To answer these questions, we have to address several assumptions regarding the role of any academic journal, and these assumptions are based on some particular philosophical position. Thus, an academic journal is a collective venture engaging many people with

diverse views, fields of expertise, and forms of intellectual experience. It is not just a repository of works in which each author takes responsibility for the quality of their products and acquires full freedom regarding the content and form of presented texts. A high-quality journal involves editors and peer reviewers whose work provides the authors with feedback and advice on improvements, and after successful completion of the review, the accepted-for-publication submissions receive certification of meeting expected standards.

An unlimited scope of submissions unavoidably reduces the reliability of this process. Every journal has to develop its audience, i.e., a community of readers and a community of competent reviewers (including in the latter group its leaders forming the Editorial Board, Guest Editors of Special Issues, etc.). Opening the journal to submissions on arbitrary subjects restricted only by a vague classification as related to, for instance, philosophy requires an unrealistic omniscient community of reviewers and leads to an unavoidable decline in quality.

This becomes even more critical for the initiative to promote and propagate the synthesis of knowledge. In the editorial opening *Philosophies*, there was a clear statement of commitment to high quality: “The journal is for those who want to cross the borders between different scientific and philosophical disciplines or between different cultural paradigms of intellectual inquiry, but building bridges requires firm foundations on both sides of their span. We expect that submitted articles will bridge different research domains and are characterized by a high level of expertise on both sides. We encourage submissions of works, which may be considered methodologically too rigorous and specialized for publication in traditional philosophical venues, but too philosophical to qualify for scientific specialized publications. However, we discourage submissions, which although possibly innovative and imaginative, lack rigor” [1].

This commitment is realistic only under the condition of maintaining discipline in focusing on the mission of the synthesis of knowledge and bridging philosophy with other domains of human inquiry. This is especially important regarding works with significant non-philosophical content (in the traditional, academic understanding of philosophy) involving the conceptual framework of other domains of inquiry, for instance, physics or mathematics. Such works have to be self-sufficient to be open to non-specialists without extensive additional, external readings and they have to include a sufficiently extensive explanation of the meaning of the results for philosophy.

Someone can ask whether the focus on the synthesis of knowledge is not a too-tight corset for a philosophical journal. The answer is obvious. This is not a narrow focus. The synthesis of knowledge and reflection on the methods of inquiry were always at the core of philosophy. Thus, the orientation of the journal has a limited impact on the preferred subjects of submitted philosophical works, except for the expected avoidance of purely archival texts, biographies of philosophers whose contributions did not influence the integration of knowledge, etc.

The task of promoting the synthesis of knowledge integrating other forms of inquiry with philosophy is challenging because of its immense breadth, as a rigorous review of papers bridging philosophy with other domains of inquiry requires the involvement not only of competent philosophers but also of experts from these other domains who can recognize the philosophical aspects of submissions. The experience of the last eight years shows that this miracle is possible.

On the other hand, as explained in the editorial opening *Philosophies* [1], the issue of the fragmentation of knowledge is a central, open problem for humanity. It was already anticipated by William Whewell (who introduced the word “scientist” into the vocabulary in the same context) in the mid-19th century and is at present amplified by the rising influence of information technology. The fragmentation of knowledge becomes increasingly dangerous, jeopardizing coordinated collective action to resolve all major threats to human existence and well-being. Thus, there are only a few other philosophical themes of equal importance.

Yet another possible question is about the merit and feasibility of synthesis. It is easy to recognize the opposition between the central idea guiding *Philosophies* and postmodernist “incredulity towards metanarratives” [3]. Jean-François Lyotard initiated in philosophy the entire movement under his call to arms “Postmodernist Condition”, which identified seeking syntheses of knowledge (explicitly integration of philosophy and science) as an expression of modernism which should be abolished. Lyotard later admitted that his book was a parody and that he did not have much knowledge of science when he wrote it, so he “made stories up” [4]. However, there are still some followers of this movement (recently frequently identifying themselves as “meta-modernists” with their interests predominantly in literary criticism), but this is nothing unusual in philosophy that we can find works contradicting every existing philosophical thesis. Can postmodernists publish in *Philosophies*? Of course, but their submissions may likely be rejected through peer review if they “make up stories” as Lyotard did (for instance referring to chaos theory and writing what he imagined about it without reading the referenced texts). All papers published in *Philosophies* must have firm foundations in philosophy and studies within other domains of inquiry. The position of the author cannot be the reason for the rejection of works meeting the standards of intellectual quality. The essence of philosophy is in dispute and submissions in *Philosophies* are evaluated based on the validity of arguments, not on the membership of the authors in intellectual movements.

Finally, there is one issue that was not addressed at the opening of *Philosophies*, but which is worth mentioning now. Academic journals which have the ambition of being more than repositories of academic work have the responsibility not only to store achievements of the past and present, but also to stimulate directions of future research. This role can be fulfilled by the initiatives from within their communities or audiences. Instead of top-down initiatives coming from the leaders of the Editorial Board, *Philosophies* solicits “grass-roots” proposals of Special Issues prepared and coordinated by Guest Editors from the audience of the journal. Their proposals together with the academic credentials of potential Guest Editors are reviewed by the Editor-in-Chief or other members of the Editorial Board and the announcements of approved proposals are published on the website. This is one more example of the way *Philosophies* contributes to the academic community.

3. Clarification of Misunderstandings

This editorial is an opportunity to clarify some frequent misunderstandings regarding expected content and forms of submissions. As was stated above several times, the journal *Philosophies* is firmly committed to high-quality publishing. In the context of the mission to bridge philosophy and other forms of inquiry, this means that the minimum expectation in the works bridging philosophy and scientific, technological, and cultural studies is a balance between the rigor of philosophical reflection and the rigor of scientific methodology. The typical error in submissions transcending the domain of philosophy is the poverty of the philosophical content of the work. Sometimes, the only philosophical content of submissions is a sole paragraph in the introduction listing references to philosophical works on a similar or the same subject. It does not matter that the list of a dozen or more references indicates that some philosophers wrote extensively on the subject. The authors are expected not to list such works but to engage in the discussion of the content of these works, to justify their relevance to the content of the submission. Thus, the lack of philosophical content in some submissions may disqualify them from being approved for peer review.

This issue has a mirror occurrence in philosophical papers devoid of sound scientific methodology or argumentation despite addressing science, technology, or culture. The philosophical literature inherited the tradition of the past to promote scientifically unjustified speculations presented as “thought experiments” in the studies of subjects with limited empirical or even theoretical developments. Thought experiments are not free speculations. They should propose experiments that are at the moment or in principle impossible to conduct, but which are based on strict scientific, theoretical reasoning of the time leading to entirely certain contradiction with already empirically confirmed statements on the subject

of study. We can think about it as an analog of mathematical proofs by contradiction. We can find this type of reasoning in the argumentation of the claim that objects of different weights fall at the same speed by Galileo in his 1638 *Discourses and Mathematical Demonstrations Relating to Two New Sciences*. The conclusion of this reasoning is certain and its validity remains unchallenged even today.

In studies of subjects with limited empirical knowledge, some philosophers of the past speculated, for instance, about “the brain in a vat” in multiple versions initiated in 1973 by Gilbert Harman [5]. Despite being called a thought experiment (what we call it is irrelevant), the brain in a vat was quite obviously a speculative reasoning as demonstrated in its refutation by Hilary Putnam in 1981 [6]. At least, Harman’s brain in a vat, although hardly a thought experiment based on state-of-the-art scientific knowledge, stimulated many discussions with a legitimate philosophical status. However, if someone wants to continue the discussion today without any reference to the immense progress of scientific research on the subject of consciousness in the last half-century, this would be ill-informed speculation not worth publication.

This is just an example, one of many, demonstrating that speculative reasoning retains its value as long as it is consistent with the current stage of scientific knowledge. It becomes obsolete with the progress of science.

We have to be careful with the use of the qualification of something being “philosophical”. This is especially important for the recognition of submissions fitting the profile of *Philosophies*. It is true that everyone, whether aware of this or not, follows some philosophical system acquired in the process of enculturation, in particular education. This does not make them a philosopher whose work is to study their own philosophy and the philosophy of others in a diachronic or synchronic perspective. The same applies to any body of knowledge which without exception is saturated with philosophical assumptions and principles. Assuming some philosophical position does not mean that the works dedicated to research or study of any subject are philosophical. Only works that contribute to philosophy, possibly through an empirical or theoretical scientific methodology, can be considered philosophical. In the decisions regarding the approval of submissions for publication in *Philosophies*, the degree to which work can be considered philosophical is critical.

Finally, the orientation of *Philosophies* as a journal promoting the synthesis of knowledge and bridging different forms of inquiry makes it a forum for the discussion of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research. Since the distinctions between these three methodologies are not important here and they are discussed and explained in articles published in *Philosophies* and elsewhere [7], in short, we can say that the study and promotion of an interdisciplinary methodology are the main roles of this journal. However, this does not mean that it is a journal publishing works with all instances of the use of an interdisciplinary methodology. The subject of primary interest is the philosophical, methodological aspect of interdisciplinarity. This may include instances of innovative cases of the design and use of an interdisciplinary methodology, but not cases in which it is just an application of an already well-established method without much philosophical or methodological interest. The first warning about it may be the existence of institutional forms of such studies. For instance, works in sports psychology, sports economics, or arts economics should be submitted elsewhere, unless they provide examples of clearly innovative methods.

Another type of contribution which only in rather exceptional cases would fit the profile of *Philosophies* consists of reports of empirical research. Here too, we cannot and should not exclude the possibility that empirical work has important philosophical consequences, but this importance has to be explicitly presented, explained, and justified within the submission.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, I wish to express my deep appreciation for the collective work of all who have contributed to the success of *Philosophies*. I am proud to be a part of this community and of the success of the journal.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Schroeder, M.J. The Philosophy of *Philosophies*: Synthesis through Diversity. *Philosophies* **2016**, *1*, 68–72. [CrossRef]
2. About *Philosophies*: Aims. *Philosophies*. Available online: <https://www.mdpi.com/journal/philosophies/about#:~:text=Philosophies%20publishes%20reviews,%20regular%20research,quality,%20self-contained%20works> (accessed on 27 December 2023).
3. Lyotard, J.-F. *La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le Savoir*; Minuit: Paris, France, 1979.
4. Anderson, P. *The Origins of Postmodernity*; Verso: London, UK, 1998.
5. Harman, G. *Thought*; Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, USA, 1973.
6. Putnam, H. Brains in a vat. In *Reason, Truth, and History*; Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1981.
7. Schroeder, M.J. Multidisciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity, and Transdisciplinarity: The Tower of Babel in the Age of Two Cultures. *Philosophies* **2022**, *7*, 26. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.