

In Chapter 6 of our book we respond to an important philosophical objection to Thesis T. Here it is:

The recurring revolutionary proclamation: Inquiry into past philosophy for one's own first-order philosophical purposes is pointless, because philosophers must start all over again from scratch with my just-discovered, absolutely correct, philosophical method. Don't look back.

This is a call for total revolution. As a revolutionary might say, "I've discovered a method that renders all past philosophical efforts irrelevant. Let's march together into the future with my new method in hand, ruthlessly ignoring the past. Unlike Lot's daughter, we have no reason to look back. Because past philosophers failed to discover my method their efforts were fatally misguided and therefore useless." Note that revolutionary calls bear two faces – a call to start all over again from scratch, and a call to ignore philosophy's past.

This objection is broader than it might seem. As we'll see, for some revolutionaries this new method consists of a method for ridding oneself of the very desire to philosophize.

In Chapter 6 we describe the revolutionary mandates of fifteen philosophers. Our description covers 24 pages and I won't have time to give all the details. But I will mention a few in order to illustrate the proposition that, although these fifteen differ dramatically with respect to the contents of their methods, they all agree that those methods render past philosophy irrelevant.

[1] *Contemporary and near-contemporary revolutionaries.*

We begin our list with six contemporaries and near-contemporaries: Ludwig Wittgenstein, W.V Quine, J.L. Austin, Tim Maudlin, James Ladyman, and John Bickle. I'll briefly discuss the first three.

Wittgenstein: Although apparently everyone concedes that he's a revolutionary, there is a long-standing controversy over what kind. Here are just two of several views. According to one, he formulates methods he intends to replace the disastrous methods of past philosophy. Philosophical inquiry is a legitimate activity that deserves to continue, but only if it conforms to his methods. The exact nature of these methods is predictably controversial, but whatever else they may be, they at least include the practice of continually reminding oneself of how ordinary people talk.

According to a more radical interpretation, he formulates new methods alright, but does *not* intend them as a means of continuing philosophy on a new methodological basis, but rather as a means of *permanently ridding oneself altogether of the very inclination to engage in philosophical inquiry*. He longs for a world cleansed of the pestilence of philosophical reflection, and intends his methods to be used as *self-therapeutic techniques for healing oneself altogether from the cognitive disease of philosophy*,

Not surprisingly, there's textual support for both interpretations. I won't take up that issue here, but will later use this distinction between two kinds of revolutionary method. In any event, it seems that, under either interpretation, Wittgenstein thinks that past philosophy is useless. Even in his *Tractarian* phase, he says, "What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and the only world! I want to report how *I* found the world. What others in the world have told me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience of the world. I have to judge the world, to measure things." There's no reason to think that he changed his mind about *that* in his later work.

Quine - Although he maintains that philosophy is continuous with science, he denies that philosophers should provide epistemic foundations for science – "Unlike the old epistemologists,

we seek no firmer basis for science than science itself. . .” and, “. . . philosophy of science is philosophy enough.” What are the implications for past philosophy? In words attributed to him, but apparently never published, “There are two kinds of philosophers, those who are interested in the history of philosophy and those who are interested in philosophy.” In short, *authentic* philosophers shouldn’t waste their talents burrowing into the underground caves of past philosophy. Those dark caverns can be left to *weaker* minds.

J.L. Austin – He shares with the later Wittgenstein a focus upon the speech patterns of ordinary people, but no one could mistake a page of Austin’s for a page of Wittgenstein’s. In his essay on Excuses, he expresses his hostility to past philosophy: “. . . [W]e should prefer a field which is not too much trodden into bogs or tracks by traditional philosophy, for in that case even ‘ordinary’ language will often have become infected with the jargon of extinct theories, and our own prejudices too, as the upholders and imbibers of theoretical views, will be too readily, and often insensibly, engaged. Here too, Excuses form an admirable topic; we can discuss at least clumsiness, or absence of mind, or inconsiderateness, even spontaneousness, without remembering what Kant thought, and so progress by degrees even to discussing deliberation without for once remembering Aristotle, or self-control without Plato. Granted that our subject is . . . germane in some way to some notorious center of philosophical trouble, . . .with these two further requirements satisfied, we should be certain of what we are after: a good site for *field work* in philosophy. Here at last we should be able to unfreeze, to loosen up and get going on agreeing about discoveries, however small, and on agreeing about how to reach agreement.”

So, past philosophy serves solely as a darkly-obscure prelude to the legitimate activity of science. As he puts it, “Is it not possible that the next century may see the birth, through the joint labors of philosophers, grammarians, and numerous other students of language, of a true

and comprehensive *science of language*? Then we shall have rid ourselves of one more part of philosophy . . . in the only way we can ever get rid of philosophy, by kicking it upstairs.” Since the only legitimate role for past philosophy is to be kicked upstairs into science’s well-lit and respectable living quarters, there’s no point in climbing back down those stairs into a damp dark basement to peer at philosophy’s embarrassing earlier incarnations.

[2] *Calls for philosophical revolution are not a recent development.*

If we had stopped our list there some might have assumed that, even if what we’ve said about these recent revolutionary rejections of the past is true, they are only a fad, destined to evaporate, as all fads do. That would be a mistake. Revolutionary rejections of the past run through the entire philosophical tradition. Of course, not every philosopher has rejected the past, but revolutionary rejections of the past are deep currents surfacing again and again.

[3] *Older revolutionaries.*

We go on in Chapter 6 to describe the revolutionary mandates of nine philosophers further back - Sextus Empiricus, Sanches, Descartes, Bacon, Hume, Kant, Husserl, Schlick, and Reichenbach.

Sextus Empiricus calls us to adopt a radical form of skepticism consisting of coming to see that any argument supporting any given proposition can be counter-balanced by an equally-persuasive argument opposing that proposition. “The chief constitutive principle of skepticism is the claim that to every account an equal account is opposed.” The psychological consequence of coming to see this is a total suspension of judgment about all claims to truth, whether affirmations or denials. “. . . [F]or it is from this . . . that we come to hold no beliefs.” Arriving at this non-judgmental state-of-mind about all truth-claims brings with it a state of *complete emotional tranquility*, in contrast to the anxiety-ridden state-of-mind of a philosopher.

He compares his philanthropic effort to cure philosophers of their self-destructive passion to seek truth to a physician's philanthropic effort to cure people of their physical ills.

What are the consequences for past philosophy? One who has achieved this state of nonjudgmental tranquility naturally realizes that there is no reason to ever look back to past philosophy. Why would one forfeit one's newly-found tranquility?

Francisco Sanches- "To say 'Thus spake the Master' is unworthy of a philosopher; better to trust our own native wit."

Rene Descartes – "As for the opinions and maxims of the philosophers, merely to repeat them is not to teach them. Plato says one thing, Aristotle another, Epicurus another, Telesio, Campanella, Bruno, Basso, Vanini, and all the innovators all say different things."

Consequently, "If a man were capable of finding the foundation of the sciences, he would be wrong to waste his life in finding scraps of knowledge hidden in the corners of libraries; and if he was no good for anything else but that, he would not be capable of choosing and ordering what he found."

Francis Bacon – "It is idle to expect any great advancement in science from the superinducing and engrafting of new things upon old. We must begin anew from the very foundations, unless we would revolve forever in a circle with mean and contemptible progress."

David Hume – "When we run over libraries, persuaded on these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity of number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can be nothing but sophistry and illusion." So much for the philosophical past.

Immanuel Kant – “If metaphysics is a science, why is it that it cannot, like other sciences, attain universal and lasting acclaim? If it is not, how does it happen that, under the pretense of a science it incessantly shows off, and strings along the human understanding with hopes that never dim but are never fulfilled. . . It seems almost laughable that, while every other science makes continuous progress, metaphysics, which desires to be wisdom itself, and which everyone consults as an oracle, perpetually turns round on the same spot without coming a step further?” Philosophers must “suspend their work for the present, to consider all that has happened until now as if it had not happened, and before all else to pose the question: ‘whether such a thing as metaphysics is even possible at all.’”

Edmund Husserl – Exhilarated with his new method of transcendental phenomenology, he announces that he has transformed philosophy into a rigorous science. He dismisses past philosophical efforts because they are “incapable of assuming the form of rigorous science.” In contrast to his new method, past philosophy is “utterly incapable of teaching in an objectively valid manner.” It “does not have at its disposal a merely incomplete and, in particular instances, imperfect doctrinal system; it simply has none whatever. Each and every question is herein controverted, every position is a matter of individual conviction, of the interpretation given by a school, of a ‘point of view.’”

Moritz Schlick – “But it is just the ablest thinkers who most rarely have believed that the result of earlier philosophizing, including that of the classical models, remain unshakable. This is shown by the fact that basically every new system starts again from the beginning, that every thinker seeks his own foundation and does not wish to stand on the shoulders of his predecessors. Descartes . . . felt himself to be making a wholly new beginning; Spinoza believed that in introducing the . . . mathematical form he had found the ultimate philosophical method; and Kant

was convinced that on the basis of the way taken by him philosophy would at last adopt the sure path of a science. Further examples are superfluous, for practically all great thinkers have sought for a radical reform of philosophy and consider it essential. . . . This peculiar fate of philosophy has been so often described and bemoaned that it is indeed pointless to discuss it at all. Silent skepticism and resignation seem to be the only appropriate attitudes. Two thousand years of experience seems to teach that efforts to put an end to the chaos of systems and to change the fate of philosophy can no longer be taken seriously.”

Hans Reichenbach – “Those who work in the new philosophy do not look back; their work would not profit from historical considerations. They are as unhistorical as Plato was, or Kant, because like those masters of a past period of philosophy they are only interested in the subject they are working on, not in its relation to previous times. I do not wish to belittle the history of philosophy; but one should always remember that it is history, and not philosophy. Like all historical research, it should be done with scientific methods and psychological and sociological explanations. But the history of philosophy must not be presented as a collection of truths.”

[4] *Generalizations*

I'll offer a few generalizations from this brief sample.

[a] *Philosophical revolutionaries assume that past philosophy is a hopeless chaos of conflicting views.*

A makes assertions. B rejects A's assertions and makes her own. C rejects the assertions of both A and B, and makes his own. D rejects the assertions of A, B, and C, and makes her own, and so on, without end.

[b] *Philosophical revolutionaries regard this history of conflict as disastrous.*

They are disillusioned and frustrated by this history of chaos, regarding it as extremely harmful. But there are two explanations for this attitude, depending upon which class of revolutionaries is focused upon.

I'll call one class *anti-philosophy* revolutionaries. They believe that the past chaos has been destructive because they believe that philosophical inquiry, *per se*, is harmful, and should be abandoned. Sextus Empiricus and the *radical* Wittgenstein are examples, where by "radical" I mean the more radical interpretation of Wittgenstein mentioned earlier.

I'll call the other class *methodological revolutionaries* because they believe that past philosophy has been destructive because it's been pursued with the wrong methods, not because philosophy *per se* is harmful.

[c] *Revolutionaries assume that there is an explanation for this past chaos.*

But although they agree on the existence of an explanation, they differ about its content. For anti-philosophy revolutionaries, the explanation is tied to the nature of philosophical inquiry itself. Being an inherently destructive activity, it could have produced only destructive work-products. In contrast, the methodological revolutionaries' explanation is that philosophers simply failed to use the correct methods.

[d] *Revolutionaries don't expect the past chaos to persist indefinitely.*

But again, one must distinguish. Anti-philosophy revolutionaries don't expect it to persist because they urge the abandonment of philosophy altogether. Methodological revolutionaries maintain that the past chaos can be extinguished by using their new methods.

[e] *Both classes agree on the need for a philosophical revolution, but differ over its nature.*

For anti-philosophy revolutionaries, the needed revolution consists in rejecting

philosophy altogether. Once having extricated themselves from philosophy's narcotic addiction, inquirers will lose their desire for inquiry. For methodological revolutionaries, the needed revolution consists in adopting new methods. Don't abandon philosophy, but redeem it with the once-and-for-all correct methods.

[f] *The two classes differ over the question whether philosophy should be transformed into a science.*

Again, anti-philosophy revolutionaries urge abandoning philosophy altogether, no matter what guise, or disguise, in which it might appear. Of course, they would presumably concede that philosophers could justifiably turn to *real* science, e.g., physics. Methodological revolutionaries would answer the question affirmatively. The past thicket of conflicting views can be cleared away by using new methods which will transform philosophy into a genuine science.

[g] *The methodological revolutionary thesis that philosophy should be transformed into a science presupposes that it should proceed cumulatively, in two senses.*

First, its results should be *inter-personally cumulative*. Results achieved by inquirers who apply the new methods should be accepted by all contemporary inquirers. Second, results achieved by means of the new methods should be *inter-generationally cumulative*. Results achieved by inquirers who have applied the new methods should be accepted by all later generations of philosophers.

This two-fold conception of scientific philosophy as inherently *cumulative* is based upon two assumptions. First, science bears its justifiably-lofty epistemic status because it's the only reliable source of information about reality, and that reliability is a product of methods that yield

cumulative results. Second, if philosophy is to achieve the same lofty epistemic status, it must transform itself into a discipline whose results are cumulative as well. Of course, few, if any, methodological revolutionaries think that these new methods will involve physical experiments of the kind conducted in physics, but they do believe that their methods will yield cumulative results of their own kind.

[h] *Where does analytic philosophy fit into this analysis?*

Obviously, analytic philosophers aren't calling for an anti-philosophy revolution. The fact that they are publishing huge numbers of books and articles at an ever-increasing rate would be unintelligible had they resolved to abandon philosophy. Rather, it seems that many accept the two assumptions just mentioned.

As to the first, that the methods of science provide the only reliable source of knowledge, many agree. Notice the widely-shared assumption that, e.g., physicalism and determinism have been proved by science.

The same holds for the second assumption, that philosophy should transform itself into a science by using methods whose results are inter-personally and inter-generationally cumulative. Witness the widely-shared belief that the only legitimate way to philosophize is to *specialize*, *specialize*, and then *specialize* again. Burrow down into as many deep and narrow tunnels as one can. It seems that the best explanation for this is the assumption that doing so is necessary for achieving cumulative results. Splitting the log of philosophy into an ever-higher pile of ever-thinner splinters will produce consensus. By imitating the division-of-labor practice of the established sciences philosophers will finally achieve collective progress.

These assumptions show themselves in analytic philosophy in at least three ways. First, there is the wide-spread use of the language of "results." Physicists justifiably refer to, e.g., the

Stern-Gerlach results, in the sense of conclusions generating a permanent consensus. Similarly, many analytic philosophers refer to, e.g., Quine's results, presumably in the same sense of "result".

Second, there are those in-the-air maxims that there's no point in reading philosophical publications that are more than ___ years old, where the blank is to be filled in with some very small number. The assumption is that anything worth saving in the process of philosophical inquiry is automatically retained and restated with ever-greater precision every ___ years, and that everything not worth preserving is automatically filtered out. The paradigm of physics and mathematics is at work again. Physicists and pure mathematicians justifiably talk that way because their disciplines do proceed cumulatively. But the assumption that philosophy could do so is mistaken. Believing in an Adam Smith-Invisible-Philosophical-Hand that strains out The False, while passing on The True with ever-increasing clarity is an unfounded act of faith.

Third, there is the widely-shared assumption that the primary purpose of publishing is persuading others, and that failure to do so constitutes failure as a philosopher. Read the Notre Dame philosophical reviews. Reviewers typically assert that a book fails because it won't succeed in persuading those who disagree with its claims. The assumption is analogous to the shared assumption in the genuine sciences that scientists who fail to persuade other competent scientists have failed, *qua* scientists. In the latter case, the assumption is justifiable because those disciplines do proceed cumulatively, in contrast to philosophy.

[i] *Both classes of revolutionaries agree, or at least should agree, that investigating past philosophical sources in order to further one's own first-order philosophical inquiries is pointless.*

Anti-philosophy revolutionaries should agree because they believe that philosophy

should be abandoned altogether, a belief that, *a fortiori*, includes past philosophical inquiry. Methodological revolutionaries should agree because they believe that all past first-order philosophy was pursued with the wrong methods, which renders it useless.

I inserted the qualifying phrase, “or at least should agree,” because at least some revolutionaries do look at past sources. Wittgenstein reads Augustine. Kant reads Hume. Descartes reads the late Scholastics. Husserl reads Kant. But such backward glances typically involve either strengthening their own revolutionary resolves, e.g., Kant on Hume, Husserl on Kant, or just re-confirming for themselves their conviction that past philosophy is a hopeless mess, e.g., Wittgenstein on Augustine. Even if some revolutionaries do occasionally stumble and rely upon a past philosophical source for their own first-order inquiries, e.g., Kant on Rousseau, my qualified thesis wouldn’t be falsified, because such cases could be explained as cases of revolutionaries failing to consistently pursue their own revolutions.

[j] *Our relatively short list of revolutionaries may be puzzling.*

Some might wonder how such a small number (15) could have had such an extraordinary impact upon the philosophical enterprise. How could just 15, out of the multitudes of all those who have pursued philosophy over these many centuries, have had a significant impact? Granted, 15 is a small number, but even if we had extended the list, which we could easily have done (e.g., Plotinus, Spinoza, Hegel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Carnap, Locke), the resulting number would still be minute in comparison. But small numbers are not decisive. Every *successful* revolutionary creates a flotilla of disciples, sometimes extending for generations. That was true even for Greek philosophy, with its Platonic, Aristotelian, Skeptic, and Stoic traditions.

It is even truer for the United States in which philosophy has become almost exclusively

a professional activity. We don't see many following the amateur path taken by Descartes, Locke, Hume, Leibniz, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Marx. The vast majority of philosophical publications are written by academics. Consequently, there is a predictable motivation to follow the patterns established by those who are currently the academic philosophic Masters.

For every *successful* revolutionary, there are disciples ready to follow. That's a necessary truth. No disciples – No successful revolution. Some may be motivated, at least partly, by a concern for their own professional advancement. Nonetheless, the fact that they might follow with less-than-sterling motivations is possible only because the revolutionaries they're following were driven by grander motivations. Wakes of ships don't form by themselves.

I've just used the term 'disciples,' but it shouldn't be understood in an overly-narrow sense. Philosophy graduate students might, in virtue of their professional training, find themselves thinking and writing in patterns created by revolutions generations earlier, without being aware of the precise ancestry of those patterns, an ancestry that might include several revolutionaries whose voices happened to mesh together just enough to create a collective wave, e.g., Carnap, Reichenbach, and Quine.

[k] *Will there always be revolutionaries urging us to start all over again?*

We think so. The motivational factors driving revolutionaries seem to be at least these: [1] An overpowering passion for philosophical inquiry, [2] An overpowering passion for philosophical consensus, [3] An overpowering disillusionment and frustration at the lack of consensus in philosophy, and [4] A messianic zeal to bring about such a consensus. So long as there are philosophers with these motivations, of which there will never be a shortage, there will

always be trumpets sounding the revolutionary call.

[5] *Evaluation of the revolutionary agenda.*

[a] *Is past philosophy a chaos of conflicting views?*

We agree with revolutionaries that past philosophy is a chaotic tangle of conflict.

Reading any competent history of philosophy should suffice to see that.

[b] *But is that chaos harmful?*

Revolutionaries assume it has been disastrously harmful, but we disagree. The essential purpose for pursuing philosophy is working through issues *for oneself*, not in order to reach a *communal consensus* of some kind. Why did we choose a life of philosophical inquiry in the first place? Was it to resolve *for ourselves* the fundamental issues that initially drew us into philosophical reflection? Or, was it to join a cast-of-thousands in marching toward an ever-retreating consensus-based account of reality? We think that most were initially motivated in the first way. It's only when some of us discover that the train we've boarded is headed to a very different destination that we might be tempted to regard our original motivations as naive.

Given that the essential purpose of pursuing philosophy is working through fundamental questions for oneself, what is the best means to that end? We think the answer is immersing oneself in situations in which one is confronted with a jungle of conflicting views of the very kind revolutionaries decry. Authentic, and fruitful, inquiry requires *continual dialectical reflection*, which is best achieved by working in a context of vigorous disagreement.

Some might argue that *actual* conflicts aren't necessary because *hypothetical* conflicts *imagined* by individual inquirers should suffice. However, although imagining hypothetical conflicts for oneself is a necessary capacity for philosophical inquiry, it can't by itself duplicate the flood of *actual* conflicts, both present and past. One's own philosophical imagination has

inherent limits.

[c] *Is there an explanation for the past chaos of conflict?*

We've argued that, although revolutionaries of both kinds propose explanations for the past chaos, their explanations differ. We agree that there is an explanation, but ours differs from both of theirs. The chaos can be explained in terms of two factors – the nature of philosophical inquiry and the human nature of the inquirers themselves.

As to the first factor, philosophy focuses upon issues that are neither amenable to the consensus-based *empirical* methods of physics nor to the consensus-based *a priori* methods of pure mathematics. Consider, e.g., the question whether there is a personal Ground of Being. As to physics, there is no hope of resolving that question by physical experimentation. As to pure mathematics, any axioms that might be invoked to deductively derive either affirmative or negative answers would fail to establish a consensus even about the axioms' meanings, to say nothing about their truth-values.

The second factor is the human nature of the inquirers. Given that philosophical issues are neither amenable to the methods of empirical science nor to those of mathematics, there is more than ample room for inquirers to resolve those issues in different ways. The fundamental human need to work through issues for oneself can't be completely repressed. When working within the built-in methodological constraints of physics and mathematics, which include a shared precise vocabulary, a shared understanding of that precise vocabulary, and a shared precise methodology, this basic need to think for oneself can express itself in ways that don't conflict with the formation of consensus. But in the absence of such built-in constraints, as in philosophy, the individualizing passion to think for oneself does conflict with consensus. Free from such rigorously-precise constraints, the passion for self-reliance is free to roam where it

will, resulting in inevitable conflict.

But why is that the inevitable result? Why don't these liberated individualizing passions to seek truth for oneself result in a consensus? Putting aside for a moment the *why*-question, the *fact* of the matter seems certain. Put 100, or even 5, randomly-selected philosophers in a room for a day and ask them to discuss and resolve just a single fundamental philosophical question. The result would be radical disagreement about the meaning of the question, the methods for resolving it, how those methods should be applied in this case, the question's resolution, and, given a resolution, its ideal formulation.

But someone might object, "Sure, but that's because it's only those with hugely-aggressive and egocentric personalities who are drawn to philosophy in the first place. They're bound to squabble, whatever the issue. Philosophy provides an enticing intellectual boxing ring for those who can't wait to beat someone up. One can't draw justifiable generalizations from a random sample of untamed neurotics." We disagree. Put 100, or even 5, randomly-selected mathematicians or physicists in a room for a day and ask them to resolve a fundamental philosophical question. Freed from the built-in constraints of their professions, the result would be the same.

So, the *fact* of the matter seems unquestionable. But *why* is that the fact of the matter? There are three factors. Humans have a substantial degree of freedom in choosing how to use their powers of imagination, memory, observation, analysis, and reasoning; they have significantly varying degrees of those powers; and they have significantly different personal histories, resulting in a dramatic diversity of deeply-embedded attitudes, emotions, and assumptions. These factors guarantee conflict.

[d] *Will philosophical chaos persist indefinitely?*

We've argued that neither revolutionary camp believes that the past chaos will persist indefinitely, although for different reasons. Setting aside their reasons, we disagree with their conclusion. The chaos will persist because of the nature of philosophical inquiry and the human nature of the inquirers. Neither factor will change.

[e] *Should philosophy become a science its own right?*

Anti-philosophy revolutionaries answer "No" because they believe that philosophy should be abandoned altogether, even if disguised as a new science. Methodological revolutionaries answer "Yes" because they believe that, by adopting their new methods, philosophy will be transformed into a scientific activity.

We agree with the anti-philosophy group that philosophers shouldn't try to transform philosophy into a science, but for a different reason. Although sciences such as physics and mathematics are appropriate topics for philosophical inquiry, their methods are different. Physics, the paradigmatic empirical science, proceeds primarily by means of physical experiments that are quantitative, controlled, and repeatable. Given the nature of the issues it pursues, philosophical inquiry could not proceed in that way. Mathematics, the paradigmatic *a priori* science, proceeds by deduction from posited axioms. Philosophy couldn't proceed in that way either, at least not exclusively. Although philosophical inquiry does often require deductive inference, it requires other kinds of activity as well, e.g., inductive inference, empirical observation, and first-person reflection.

Moreover, the ultimate purpose of philosophical inquiry is pursuing issues personal to each individual inquirer. A necessary condition for flourishing as a philosopher is working in contexts that stimulate dialectical reflection, and the most fruitful context for such individualizing inquiry is a context of conflicting voices. Such contexts couldn't survive the

transformation of philosophy into a cumulative science.

[f] *What form does the methodological revolutionary approach take in analytic philosophy?*

We've argued that at least part of the explanation for analytic philosophy's emphasis upon specialization is its assumption that doing so is necessary for transforming philosophy into a cumulative science. But an examination of the publications of analytic philosophers shows that specialization has failed to generate consensus. Given the pretensions, the display of unending conflict is astounding. There is nothing remotely similar to the cumulative consensus inherent in physics and mathematics. Instead, there's just the same old refrain, sung again and again, "You're hopelessly confused about X and I'll set you straight."

Granted, one can find agreement of sorts, but only provided that one ascends to a high-enough degree of abstraction, e.g., "We're all physicalists now." But looking more closely at such abstract generalizations, one sees conflicts popping up all over, as in, "Granted, we're all physicalists now, but the relevant question is – Which, if any, of the 17 published formulations of physicalism is the *right* one?"

Why is there such a chasm between the ideal of transforming philosophy into a cumulative science and the daily reality of endless hand-to-hand combat? Again, the explanation lies in the nature of philosophical inquiry itself, together with the human nature of the inquirers. The issues that philosophy essentially focuses upon are not amenable to the consensus-based methods of physics or mathematics. The fact that even those working in the most narrowly-specialized trenches can't stop disagreeing is evidence that the train of specialization won't carry them to the promised land of consensus. They are working with two motivations and those motivations are incompatible. On one hand, they want a mode of inquiry

that will generate cumulative results. That desire expresses itself in the drive for specialization, with its tall barbed-wire fences separating tiny garden plots of inquiry. On the other hand, given their human nature, they want to pursue philosophical issues for themselves, *qua* individuals. Given the inevitable lack of consensus about philosophical issues, that desire expresses itself in conflict and disputation. Even in the current lock-step of analytic philosophy, it's just *not good form* to agree *completely* with any other philosopher, no matter the issue. Part of this may be just juvenile competitiveness, but we think that another part is a primal urge to think things through for oneself. These two motivations conflict and the second inevitably triumphs because it's stronger.

[g] *Is cumulative progress possible in philosophy?*

We reject the assumption of methodological revolutionaries that cumulative progress is possible. Progress is possible only in the particular investigations of individual inquirers. The dream that philosophy could achieve the kind of cumulative progress inherent in physics and pure mathematics is groundless.

Why so? Consider anyone's list of methodological revolutionaries. Ask yourself whether any of them ever succeeded in transforming philosophy into a cumulative science. What you'll witness is an ever-expanding series of methodological revolutionaries, each predictably announcing the revolutionary dawn of a scientific philosophy, and each just as predictably failing to produce one. Their ultimate philosophical impact is always the same – more disputation and conflict.

Why so? First, there are inevitable disputes over what exactly the Master held. Think about the endless controversies over what, e.g., Kant, Husserl, Quine, or Wittgenstein *really held*. These disputes generate conflicting interpretive traditions, each pledging allegiance to the

Master, while simultaneously sparring with all the other interpretations.

Second, there are always stubbornly-independent inquirers who have the courage to challenge the Master. For every Bacon, a Descartes. For every Descartes, a Locke. For every Locke, a Hume. For every Hume, a Reid. For every Reid, a Kant. For every Kant, a Hegel. For every Hegel, a Kierkegaard. For every Husserl, a Heidegger. For every Heidegger, a Carnap. For every Carnap, a Quine. For every Quine, a Chisholm. For every Bradley, a Russell. For every Russell, a Wittgenstein. So, not only do the writings of methodological revolutionaries generate conflicts among their disciples, but they also generate conflicts between the revolutionaries themselves and stubborn contrarians.

Although we reject the claim that consensus-based progress is possible in philosophy, we do believe that individual inquirers, *qua* individuals, can make philosophical progress. But what could that mean? Here we enter a Socratic/ Kierkegaardian realm. The question whether an individual inquirer has made philosophical progress is a question directed to, and only answerable by, that particular inquirer. Of course, some third-person observers are certain to disagree with such self-appraisals, and individual inquirers might justifiably be persuaded to modify their self-appraisals in light of such criticisms. Nevertheless, an inquirer must live at each moment with his or her own self-appraisal, whatever it happens to be at the time. Philosophical reflection is an inherently individualizing activity in which the fundamental issues of philosophy must ultimately be resolved by that inquirer standing alone, apart from the cheering, or jeering, crowds. The basic question is always - “What do *I* believe?” – Never, “What do *I and they* believe?” An authentic inquirer must avoid permitting the question, “Have I made philosophical progress?” to merge into the question, “Do others think I have made progress?”

In stressing the inherently individualizing nature of philosophical inquiry, we're not suggesting that this inevitably results in a relativistic swamp of subjective self-appraisals, with no truth-of-the-matter to be discovered. We believe that is a single objective Reality, to whose nature the views of individual inquirers approximate in dramatically varying degrees. The ultimate criterion for individual philosophical success is conformance to the nature of that Reality, but, of course, the epistemic problem for each inquirer is recognizing the degree to which one's own views conform to that nature. The absolute truth about Reality is the ultimate standard of evaluation, but it's unfortunately impossible to achieve Aristotelian demonstrative certainty about the application of that standard to one's own case, or to anyone else's, for that matter.

Religion can play a crucial role in this regard, although demonstrative certainty about religion is also beyond human grasp. However, there are modes of religious inquiry that, although falling short of Aristotelian demonstrability, can provide inquirers with the evidence that becomes available only after first venturing beyond the boundaries of certainty, as Pascal observes, and as the poet, Ralph Hodgson, expresses in the words, "Some things have to be believed to be seen."

Some might challenge our pessimism about the prospects for cumulative progress in philosophy. Haven't there been at least piecemeal advances? What about the advancements in, say, logic? What about Frege, Russell, Hilbert, Skolem, Gödel, Tarski, Turing, Gentzen, Kleene, Kripke, Routley, and Priest, to name just a few? Of course, there have been advancements. But we dispute the claim that they've produced a cumulative advance in philosophy as a whole. Instead, the increasing complexity and sophistication of logic has generated increasing controversy about the nature of logic itself.

On the deductive side, there are the rapidly proliferating systems of non-standard logics - intensional logics, relevance logics, paraconsistent logics, dialethic logics, quantum logics, fuzzy logics, conditional logics, modal logics, temporal logics, epistemic logics, etc. These developments have generated intense debate over the respective philosophical merits of the various systems, in both their syntactical and semantical dimensions.

On the inductive side, the situation is just as disorderly. Dramatically differing accounts of inductive inference proliferate - competing systems of Bayesian inference, competing systems of frequency inference, and competing systems of *a priori* induction, as well as denials of even the possibility of systematic theories of inductive inference, as, e.g., Putnam has asserted.

Aside from the increasing proliferation of conflicts about the nature of logic itself, there is a proliferation of conflicts about logic's application. Even those conservatives who accept the extensional principles of standard first-order logic, differ over the applications of those principles to specific philosophical issues. Things become even more chaotic when those focusing upon an issue disagree about which of the many alternative logics should apply.

In general, logic's increasing sophistication has resulted in expanding the potential for conflict, rather than creating cumulative progress. Giving philosophers more-sophisticated logical tools has only created the conditions for greater conflict.

The same holds for the claim that philosophy has progressed in virtue of advancements in the philosophy of language. Granted, the sharpened focus upon language that began with Frege has resulted in greater attention to the importance of clarity. But we dispute the inference that philosophy as a whole has thereby been cumulatively advanced. Increased linguistic clarity has increased the potential for conflict, rather than lessening it. Giving philosophers new linguistic tools just creates the conditions for more combat. As to philosophical reflection on the nature

of language itself, examining the radically different views of, e.g., Wittgenstein, Austin, Quine, Searle, Fodor, Grice, Searle, Salmon, Soames, and Taylor on the nature of language, should be sufficient to conclude that the philosophy of language won't give birth to a wholesale philosophical consensus.

Nothing like this exists in the genuine sciences. To give just two examples, the invention of calculus contributed to cumulative advancement in physics, and Gödel's method of arithmetizing the meta-languages of formal systems and then re-expressing those meta-languages in the object-languages contributed to the advancement of cumulative results in mathematics.

But these same tools that have generated cumulative advances in science have failed to do the same in philosophy. The use of calculus by physicists led to cumulative advances in physics, but the fact that many philosophers understand calculus has failed to contribute to cumulative advances in philosophy as a whole. Indeed, calculus itself raises deep philosophical problems. Consider applications purporting to resolve Zeno's paradoxes. Dismissing them with the remark that Zeno failed to anticipate the mathematical concept of a limit doesn't help much. Doesn't the concept of a limit presuppose the conception of the real numbers as an ordered series of dimensionless points, and doesn't that conception itself provide all the materials needed to generate the paradoxes?

Similarly, although Gödel's methods have contributed to cumulative advances in mathematics, those same methods, when discussed in philosophical contexts, dramatically fail to accomplish the same. Gödel's methods are accepted without question by mathematicians. See, e.g., Elliott Mendelson's *Introduction to Mathematical Logic*. But those methods are just fodder for continuing dispute among philosophers. See, e.g., Franzen's *Gödel's Theorem: An Incomplete Guide to Its Use and Abuse*. For a discussion of Wittgenstein's rejection of the

Incompleteness Theorem, see, e.g., Shanker's *Godel's Theorem in Focus*.

[h] *In summary*

We reject the anti-history thesis of anti-philosophy revolutionaries because we reject their claim that philosophical inquiry is just a waste of time. As an element of human nature, it couldn't possibly be a waste of time. Even Sextus Empiricus and Wittgenstein left writings jam-packed with philosophy, evidence that it's not possible to rid oneself of the philosophical passion.

And we reject the anti-history thesis of methodological revolutionaries. Their claim that some new method will bring the dawn of a cumulative philosophy is a fantasy. There are no such methods. Their absence is part of the human condition. We may as well learn to live with it.