Chapter 1

Philosophical Principles

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Metaphilosophy is the philosophical examination of the practice of philosophizing itself. Its definitive aim is to study the methods of the field in an endeavor to illuminate its promise and prospects. And in addressing the issues that arise here, there is no better place to begin than by considering the rules and principles of procedure that provide the guidelines for cultivating this historic realm of rational deliberation.

For Plato, principles were the root source (*archai*) of being or of knowledge.[1] For Aristotle, they were the "first cause" of being, of becoming, or of being known (*hothen hē estin hē gignetai hē gignōsketai*).[2] And much the same conception is at issue with Thomas Aquinas, for whom a principle (*principium*) was something primary in the being of a thing, or in its becoming, or in knowledge of it (*quod est primum aut in esse rei . . . aut in fieri rei, . . . aut in rei cognitione*).[3] As standard philosophical usage has evolved in the light of these ideas, a principle is viewed as something basic—as a *fundamentum* (Latin) or *archē* (Greek). In particular, a proposition that is a principle either admits no proof (is axiomatic) or does not need proof (is obvious and self-evident). Moreover, it must be abstract by way of applying to a broad range of cases. Thus, all concerned seem agreed that principles are fundamental generalities governing our understanding of the modus operandi of some knowledge-accessible domain.

Against this background, a specifically *philosophical principle*, in the sense of the term that is to be at issue here, is a general instruction for cogent philosophizing, a maxim that lays down a methodological rule

for philosophical practice. It is not a philosophical thesis or doctrine that purports to answer to some substantive philosophical question. Instead, it is a rule of procedure that specifies a modus operandi, a way of proceeding in the course of philosophizing. A methodological principle of this sort is thus to philosophy what a maxim like "always keep your promises" is to morality. It represents a guideline to be followed if error is to be avoided. Such methodological principles are general rules of procedure, framed in terms of maxims that prescribe the appropriateness or inappropriateness of different ways of proceeding in philosophizing.[4] In matters of philosophy, after all, understanding clearly hinges not simply on the instruction of theses and doctrines, but on grasping the underlying principles within whose frame of reference such substantive dealings are articulated in the first place.

To be sure, *within* philosophy one also encounters a profusion of principles. In ethics, there is the "principle of utility," which holds that the rightness of an action lies in its capacity to conduce to the greatest good of the greatest number; in natural philosophy, we have the "principle of causality," which holds that every event has a cause; and in epistemology, we have the "principle of truth," which holds that only what is true can be said to be known to someone: $(\exists x)Kxp \rightarrow p$. But such principles are principles IN philosophy, not principles OF philosophy— that is, they are not procedural principles of philosophizing of the sort that concern us here.[5]

What argues for principles? What is their justifactory rationale? Clearly it is—or ought to be—the factor of functional efficacy. After all, philosophizing is a purposive enterprise. It has an aim or mission: to enable us to orient ourselves in thought and action, enabling us to get a clearer understanding of the big issues of our place and our prospects in a complex world that is not of our own making. And the validation of a philosophical principle must in the final analysis rest on its promise and performance in fostering this enterprise.

Will all philosophers agree with regard to principles? Of course not! After all, there is, it would seem, very little that *all* philosophers agree on.[6] All that can be said in this regard is (1) that what puts a principle on the agenda is the preaching—and, even more importantly, the practice—of prominent philosophers and (2) that when a philosopher explicitly espouses such a principle, he will generally offer (or at least *have*) plausible reasons for doing so. To be sure, difficulties sometimes arise. Thus, for example, the tendency of C. S. Peirce's sensible principle that the aim of rational inquiry is to settle opinion among

intelligent interagents seems to be flaunted by the Socrates of Plato's writings, who often seeks to destabilize opinion in the initial stages of a dialogue to unsettle judgment into a condition of perplexity or aporia. The creation of a state of ignorance and uncertainty is thus seen as a desirable goal—in seeming conflict with various familiar philosophical principles. But of course Socratic practice makes it all too clear that this is only the starting point for an honest and open-minded inquiry, whose ultimate goal is to erect a new structure of understanding on the reviews of prior misconceptions.

Be this as it may, procedural principles are in the end validated through the consideration of this utility and efficacy on the particular domain at practice that is at issue. Basically they are of three kinds: principles of informative adequacy to facilitate understanding, principles of rational cogency to assure convincing argumentation, and principles of rational economy to avert needless labor in production and avoidable difficulty in consumption.

Principles of Informative Adequacy

The principles arising under this rubric address the problem of providing adequate information—of facilitating the business of understanding and enabling us to get a secure cognitive grip on the issues at hand.

#1

NEVER BAR THE PATH OF INQUIRY (C. S. Peirce). Peirce envisioned for this principle a correlative range of application that turns on the following line of thought: "Never adopt a methodological stance that would systematically prevent the discovery of something that could turn out to be true." What can and should prevent one's acceptance of a certain factual claim is the discovery of its falsity through the ascertainment of some other factual claim that is incompatible with it. But only facts should be able to block the route to the serious consideration of a factual thesis, and never purely methodological/procedural general principles.

For one thing, radical skepticism—"Never accept anything"— would fall immediate victim to this principle. For if we adopt this line of radical skepticism, all progress is blocked from the very outset. Again, if one systematically refused to give credence to reasoning by analogy, then any prospect of discovery of facts about other minds would be precluded: even if it were the case that other people have mental lives akin to our own, we could never warrant a belief in this circumstance if we could not

somehow base on that which is claims about that which is inaccessible in our experience.

Or again, a Cartesian insistence on absolute certainty precludes any sense-based access whatsoever to information about the world's arrangements since sensory experience can never conclusively validate objective claims. (There is always an epistemic gap between the subjective phenomenology of how things appear to us and what features they actually and impersonally have.)

#2

ALL AFFIRMATION IS NEGATION: *omnis affirmatio est negatio* (Spinoza). A positive claim always stands correlative to a corresponding negative. To characterize something in some way or other is to contradistinguish it from that to which that characterization does not apply. There is no communicative point in ascribing a feature to something when this does not effectively separate and distinguish what this feature involves from what it excludes.

Now, for philosophy in specific this means that we can only clarify what a doctrine asserts and maintains if the same time we become clear about what it denies and rejects. Any thesis or position must make manifest its particular substance and purport in the setting of a contrast with the various rivals that contest the doctrinal ground at issue.

#3

NO ENTITY WITHOUT IDENTITY (W. V. Quine). This is a modern version of the medieval principle *ens et unum coincidunt* (or: *convertuntur*): (Entity and unity are the same [or: are interchangeable]: anything properly characterizable as a thing must be a unit—that is, be specifiable (or identifiable) as a single item.

This is not merely a principle of ontology and should not be so understood in the present context. For here it does not concern the question: What is a thing like? Rather, it is a principle of communicative coherence: Whatever is to be meaningfully discussed needs to be identified—that is, specified in such a way as to distinguish it from the rest. Without specifying something as the particular item it is, you cannot put it on the agenda of consideration. The ruling precept is: "You cannot communicate successfully about something that you have not yet identified."

The principle in view is closely bound up with another: *nihil sunt nullae proprietates* (everything has some properties), seeing that identity

stands coordinate with identifiability and requires descriptive specifiability, which in turn requires the possession of properties. (Observe, however, that the principle $E!x \rightarrow (\exists\phi)\phi x$ does *not* entail or require the converse: $(\exists\phi)\phi x \rightarrow E!x$. Pace the Bertrand Russell of "On Denoting," there is no good reason to deny properties to nonexistents—to deny that Pegasus, the winged horse, is winged.)[7]

Probative Principles of Rational Cogency

The principles at issue under this rubric are concerned to assure convincing argumentation. They are designed to provide for cogency in regard to philosophical evidentiation, demonstration, substantiation. Some classical instances are as follows:

#4

NOTHING IS WITHOUT A REASON. *Nihil sine ratione* (G. W. Leibniz). This has become known as the principle of sufficient reason.

With regard to principles in general, the medieval Schoolmen distinguished between an epistemological principle of knowing (*principium cognoscendi*) and an ontological principle of being (*principium essendi*). In this regard the present principle exhibits a typical duality. For it permits two very distinct constructions. It can be read in the light of Hegel's doctrine that the real is rational—that every aspect of the world's arrangements has its reason why. This, of course, is, as it stands, a very debatable bit of metaphysics.

But it can also be construed as a methodological precept from the practice of philosophy: MAINTAIN NOTHING SUBSTANTIVE WITHOUT GOOD REASON. Here its general effect would be that of the conjunction: "Be in a position to give a cogent reason for every doctrinal contention that you maintain. Refrain from making philosophical claims that lack the basis of a cogent rationale. Be in a position to support your contentions." This *methodological* (rather than *ontological*) construction of the precept clearly has the benefit of having much good sense on its side. After all, the object of a philosophical discourse is: to enlist the assent of (reasonable) interlocutors to a certain line of thought, which can only be done through substantiating a position.

#5

NOTHING COMES FROM NOTHING *Ex nihilo nihil* or *de nihilo nihil*. This was an ontological principle espoused by all the early Greek

nature philosophers, according to Aristotle (*Physics* 1.4). Lucretius stressed the importance of this idea for his master Epicurus, who (according to Diogenes Laertius 10.24.38) based his physics on this self-same principle: *ouden ginetai ek tou mē ontos*. But this doctrinal principle of natural philosophy is also a methodological principle of philosophical reasoning. For, as readily happens in these matters, a principle of physical production comes to be transmuted into one of cognitive production. And so, just as substance must come from substance in the material world, so substantive conclusions cannot be rationally supported save by invoking substantive contentions in their support.

This principle is closely related in its general import to the legal precept *Qui exsequitur mandatum non debet excedere fines mandati* (He who executes a commission [charge, *mandatum*] must not go beyond its terms). In the context of philosophizing, this in effect says: When you draw implications and lessons from something already granted or established, do not exaggerate what this actually means. Do not go beyond the warrant of what has been established or conceded to you.

#6

(Even in reasoning) A CHAIN IS NO STRONGER THAN ITS WEAK-EST LINK. *Non fortiter catena quam anulus debilissimus.* This too is true in the rational as in the physical realm. The idea was operative in the principle of Theophrastus in relation to modal syllogisms: the status of the conclusion is that of the weakest premiss: *Peiorem sequitur semper conclusio partem.* The conclusion always follows the weaker part (premise), not only the weaker in point of modality (as with Theophrastus),[8] but also the weaker in quality and quantity, with the negative understood to be "weaker in quality" than the affirmative and the particular "weaker in quantity" than the universal.

This weakest-link principle thus holds not only in the material world but in the realm of reasoning as well. A conclusion whose derivation requires a mixture of premises will itself be no more plausible than the weakest premise needed for its derivation. The obvious lesson is that in substantiating a philosophical contention we must strive to provide the strongest and best-established reasons we can manage to come by.

In a way, this principle is akin to *ex nihilo nihil*. For that principle requires that the premises be strong enough to yield the conclusion. And this principle stipulates that the conclusion must be weak enough to be sustained by the premises.

#7

(In forced choices) OPT FOR THE LEAST UNACCEPTABLE AL-
TERNATIVE.. It is a familiar principle of moral philosophy that one
should choose whatever course represents the least evil, as per the
dictum of Cicero: *ex malis eligere minima* (*De officiis*, 3.1 3). But this idea
obtains not just in ethics but in rational methodology as well. It finds an
echo in the "Sherlock Holmes rule" that "When you have eliminated the
impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."[9]
And in philosophical contexts it has the application that one can sub-
stantiate a position by showing that all of its alternatives encounter
problems and difficulties. For (and this is the critical principle) a posi-
tion that, in comparison with its alternatives, encounters fewer and
lesser difficulties than they do thereby deserves to be adopted—at least
provisionally, until something better comes along.

Principles of Rational Economy

The principles at issue under this present rubric are concerned to
assure efficiency in philosophizing. They are designed to avert needless
labor both for the producer and for the consumer of philosophical work.
Some paradigm instances follow.

#8

THE IMPOSSIBLE IS NEVER TO BE REQUIRED. *Ultra posse nemo
obligatur*. No one is obliged to go outside the bounds of possibility: So
taken, the principle is a variation on the legal dictum of Celsus the
Younger: *impossibilium nulla obligatio est*. By its very nature, that which
is impossible cannot be realized. In consequence, its realization cannot
reasonably be demanded of anyone, the philosopher included. To show
that it is impossible for a certain problem to be solved on the terms in
which it is posed suffices to release the philosopher of any obligation to
deal with it.

This principle is closely linked to another:

#9

IT IS ABSURD TO DEMAND THAT WHICH CANNOT BE HAD. *Est
ridiculum quaerere quae habere non possumus* (Cicero, *Pro Archia*, 4.8). To
insist on the realization of something acknowledged as in principle un-
realizable is clearly irrational.

This principle has numerous philosophical applications. Skcepticism affords one example. If, as Descartes insisted, the human senses cannot, as a matter of principle, ever yield certainty about how matters stand in the world, then it would be absurd to insist on a concept of sensory knowledge that requires all-out certainty.

Again, if we agree with those moralists who maintain that moral perfection is something that it is in principle impossible for humans to achieve, then it will become absurd to insist on a conception of "a good man" that requires perfection for its applicability.

#10

NEVER EXPLAIN WHAT IS OBSCURE BY SOMETHING YET MORE SO. *Non explicari obcurus per obscurior*.

A satisfactory explanation must, of course, render matters clearer than they were to begin with. An explanation that violates the principle at hand will succeed at nothing other than obscuring the matter. The principle at issue implements the injunction: Never defeat your own purposes.

This principle has an obvious corollary:

#11

NEVER MAKE MATTERS MORE COMPLICATED THAN THEY HAVE TO BE. This is obviously a sound policy for procedure in philosophy as elsewhere. And this principle has the further, equally obvious corollary: NEVER EMPLOY EXTRAORDINARY MEANS TO ACHIEVE PURPOSES YOU CAN REALIZE BY ORDINARY ONES What is at issue here is a principle of rational economy: *non multiplicandae sunt complicationes praeter necessitatem*. This principle has the further corollary:

#12

ENTITIES ARE NOT TO BE MULTIPLIED BEYOND NECESSITY. *Entia non multiplicanda sunt praeter necessitatem.*

To all surface appearances, this looks to be an ontological principle, akin to, and perhaps even derivative from, "Nature does nothing in vain" (*Nihil frustra facit natura: hē phusis ouden poiei matēn*)[10] and even "Nature makes no leap" (*Natura non facit saltus*). However, such an ontological contention is *not* at issue here. For the principle in view should be construed methodologically. A brief look at its historical context is instructive in this regard.

The principle is widely attributed to William of Ockham. This attribution is highly problematic, however. For what Ockham himself actually had in view was a structure regarding not entities as such, but rather the methodology of rational procedure along the lines of

- *Pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate*.[11] Do not posit a plurality where a single item suffices.
- *Frustra fit per plura quod fieri potest per paucioria*. It is inappropriate to do with more what can be done just as well with fewer.[12]

Again, this is a principle of rational economy in relation to probative processes that is at issue.

#13

NECESSITY KNOWS NO LAW. *Necessitas non habet legem*. This maxim of natural law applies in philosophy as well. In proverbial wisdom it has such cognates as "Desperate times need desperate measures" or even "Any port in a storm."

Disaster in the present context is preeminently the catastrophe of contradiction. The history of philosophy is accordingly shot through with the use of distinctions to avert aporetic difficulties. Already in the dialogues of Plato we encounter distinctions at every turn. In book 1 of the *Republic*, for example, Socrates' interlocutor quickly falls into the following self-advantage paradox:

1. Rational people always pursue their own best interest.
2. Nothing that is in a person's best interest can be disadvantageous to his or her happiness.
3. Even rational people will—and must—sometimes do things that prove disadvantageous to their happiness.

Here, inconsistency is averted by distinguishing between two senses of the "happiness" of a person—namely, the rational contentment of what agrees with one's true nature and what merely redounds to one's immediate satisfaction by way of pleasure. In sum, the difference is between *real* and merely *affective* happiness. With real happiness, (2) is true but (3) false, while with merely affective happiness, (2) is false, but (3) is true. However much we would like to see happiness as a unified conception, the necessity of the situation constrains us to effect a partition.

#14

DO NOT BELABOR THE OBVIOUS. The root idea of this principles is operative in law (*de minimis non curat lex*), as well as in ordinary life: "Quit while you're ahead." Once your point is made or once your argument is developed with sufficient cogency for all practical purposes, call it a day. All this sort of thing is, of course, also simply a matter of sound practice in regard to the conservation of (intellectual) energy. This, too, is a principle of sound philosophizing, and indeed of rational procedure in general.

Closely related to this sensible prescription is yet another.

#15

NEVER FLOG A DEAD HORSE. Do not argue against that which nobody maintains. Let sleeping dogs lie, or, as Chaucer more eloquently put it, "It is naught good a sleeping hound to wake" (*Troilus and Creseyde*, 1.764). It is their heed of this consideration that accounts for the fact that sensible philosophers seldom trouble to refute such doctrines as panpsychism or solipsism.

Issues of Validation

Is the preceding inventory of philosophical principles complete? Of course not: no doubt the reader can think of other possibilities. All that this survey can lay claim to is that it registers principles that are both important and typical. Completeness lies only on the side of taxonomy—in the consideration that the principles at issue will relate to the understandability of the exposition, to its probative cogency, and to the rational economy of process.

Can principles conflict with one another? Are there mutually incompatible principles? Can philosophical conflict occur at the level of principles?

The answer, in briefest form, is no! There cannot be conflicting principles any more than there can be conflicting truths. It lies in the nature of the thing that where conflict occurs, there cannot be acceptability on both sides.

But, of course, we must, here as elsewhere, distinguish *what is* from *what seems to be*. The truth as such is self-consistent and conflict free, but this is not so with what people *think* to be the truth. And the same holds for principles as well. The salient point, then, is that insofar as we propose to maintain various maxims as principles—insofar as we

propose to maintain various contentions as truth—we must make sure the consistency is preserved.

And here lies an important consideration. For there are not just principles but also *metaprinciples* that govern how one should operate with principles. And perhaps the most crucial of these is the (meta)-principle: KEEP YOUR PRINCIPLES CONSISTENT. The "principle of noncontradiction," that is to say, holds just as decidedly at the level of principles as at the level of assertions. And it, too, is in the end a principle of rational economy that holds up the interests, facilitating the purposes that are definitive of the rational enterprise at issue.

Are the principles at issue absolute and perennial or are they "epoch specific" (to use Whitehead's expression)? Are they inherent in the philosophical enterprise as such, or do they merely reflect the presumptions and predilections of a place and time?

As regards the particular examples canvassed above, it seems safe to lay claim to absoluteness. The reason for this lies in the purposive nature of philosophy as the discipline it is. For the aim of the enterprise is to resolve in a convincing way our big questions regarding reality and our place within it. And there is no point in endeavoring to do this in a way that does not effectively carry rational conviction—not just for people with the predispositions of a particular place and time but to sensible people in general. And this is exactly what those principles do (or should) endeavor to facilitate: their requirements reflect conditions under which alone the aims of the philosophical enterprise can be realized in an efficient and effective way. It is this serviceability for the very goal structure of the enterprise that endows those philosophical principles with their unconditional cogency.

This said, however, it must be conceded that the absoluteness of a principle does necessarily carry over to its implementation. Take the idea that one must never explain what is obscure by something that is yet more so. What sorts of things are obscure and what sort are clear will depend upon the state of knowledge and information of one's interlocutors. The negativity of the obscure is unconditional, but the *content* of the obscure—of just what is so and in which respects—is something that will be circumstantial and "epoch specific." In this regard, as in others, it can transpire that absolute principles call for circumstantially differentiated implementation.

Philosophers are supposed to be reflective and exhibit care and concern for what they themselves are doing. Nevertheless, the fact is

that they only seldom consider the nature and basis of the methodological principles that govern their practice. They debate—and notoriously disagree—about the substantive issues, and thereby about how such methodological principles are to be applied in particular cases. But to judge by their practice, at any rate, they seem to be substantially agreed about the principles of appropriate procedure. (To be sure, some philosophers choose to refrain from argumentation altogether, but those that do present reasons and arguments for a position—that of position avoidance included—all pretty much adhere to the standard principles.) Why should this be? This question at once leads to another. How is the correctness or acceptability of philosophical principles to be established? How is one to evaluate a philosophical principle?

The first thing to note is that a philosophical principle is not a statement of fact but a rule of procedure. As such, its proper evaluation lies not in the range of what is itself a sound rule of practice:

> Any rule of practice or procedure is to be evaluated not in the range of true-false but in the range of effective-ineffective with respect to its efficacy in relation to the purposes of the practice at issue.

Now, the proper way to assess the merits of anything that is procedural or methodological in nature is in terms of its efficacy in realizing the objectives at issue—that is, in terms of its capacity to achieve the purposes of the procedural context at issue. The underlying idea is that of coming to the realization that to isolate the rule is to risk (and perhaps even assume) failure to achieve the objectives of the enterprise. A *functional* approach to evaluation is thus in order here.

As this perspective indicates, the validation of a procedural principle turns on the issue of purposive efficacy. And in this light, the process of validating a methodological principle turns on a line of reasoning of the following format:

> If you violate the principle in question, then you impede the realization of one of the characteristic aims of the enterprise at issue.

This circumstance explains why principles—like the Ten Commandments—can always be cast or recast as negative injunctions: "Thou shalt not . . ." In some of the preceding cases this may not be obvious at first glance. For example, "A chain is not stronger than its weakest link" does not look like a negative injunction. But, of course, it is. For it

effectively comes to the proscription: Do not ask a chain to support more than its weakest link can bear."

Accordingly, it emerges that the validation of a philosophical principle will proceed along the following lines: If the principle is violated, then

1. It becomes, if not impossible, then at least more difficult than it should be to obtain any answer at all to our philosophical questions.
2. The answer we obtain will plunge us into actual self-contradiction; or else
3. The answer we obtain, even though averting self-contradiction, is incoherent and fails to provide for cogent understanding of the issues.

On this basis, the factor that is evaluatively pivotal for philosophical principles is that of the aim and mission of philosophizing. And here we have it—at least in a first approximation—that the aim of philosophy is to provide cogent and convincing answers to "the big questions" that we humans have regarding ourselves and our place in the world's scheme of things.

The following injunctions are accordingly bound to figure prominently in regard to the characteristic aims of philosophy:

1. *Provide answers to those domain-definitive questions*—that is, propound and communicate information that conveys these answers. (We want answers.)
2. *Seek for cogency*—that is, fit those answers out with a rationale that attains cogency and conviction by way of evidentiation, substantiation, and demonstration. (We want not just answers but answers worthy of acceptance.)
3. *Strive for rational economy*, pursuing the tasks at issue in points 1 and 2 in a way that is rationally satisfactory—that is, in an efficient, effective, economical manner.

It is with respect to these three prime goals of philosophizing that there came into operation the principles at issue in the preceding threefold categorization—communicative adequacy, probative cogency, and rational economy.

And so, in sum, the best support for a philosophical principle comes into view when we look to the sanctions that attach to its violation.

Specifically, to validate of a philosophical principle it suffices to argue that violations will plunge us into ignorance, inconsistency, irrelevancy, incoherence, extravagance (in either sense of that term), and comparable undesirabilities. And it is exactly on this basis that the validation of the previously enumerated principles has proceeded.

Dealing with Objections

To be sure, someone might be tempted to complain as follows in reacting to the preceding suggestion of a functionally pragmatic approach to the matter:

> There is little or nothing in the justifactory factors you have just canvassed that is characteristic of the philosophical enterprise. After all, communicative adequacy, probative cogency, and rational economy of process are desiderata for virtually any rational enterprise.

The response is simply that this "complaint" is entirely correct—the situation is just as it states. The only fly in its ointment is that this is no occasion for complaint or objection. For the validation of those methodological principles of philosophizing lies exactly and precisely in the consideration that they involve the application to the characteristic mission of philosophizing of fundamental principles of rational procedure that are applicable across the whole range of our intellectual endeavors.

To be sure, this also delimits the utility of these principles. As noted, philosophical principles resemble the Ten Commandments in that they, too, provide essentially negative injunctions. What they do is to specify impediments to cogency. Their message is something to the effect: if you wish your efforts to substantiate a philosophical thesis or position to achieve rational cogency, then you must avoid doing certain sorts of things (inadequate grounding, needless complication, and the like). Due heed to appropriate principles will, accordingly, not assure good philosophizing and will do no more than help in averting poor philosophizing. To do the work well it is certainly necessary, but by no means sufficient, to avoid the specifiable sources of error. Philosophical principles do not produce an issue-resolving algorithm for this domain. Heed of those relevant principles will not solve those philosophical problems: it will do no more than prevent one's efforts at problem resolution from going awry.

It must also be acknowledged that in philosophy as elsewhere, principles, like general rules of any sort, do not incorporate the condi-

tions of their own application. The implementation of such principles does not hinge not on its self-evidence, or on yet further (presumptively higher-level) principles, but is a matter of good judgment that takes the detailed features of particular cases of application into account. The establishment of appropriate principles is something that may itself involve other principles of higher order and can therefore be a matter of practical reason. But the application or implementation of a principle in a particular case will always be a matter that to some extent involves not just cogent rationality but good judgment. Exactly through being general, principles cannot avoid entry into the gray region of borderline cases and controversial applications (which does not, of course, alter the reality of a much larger area of clearly conforming and clearly violating cases).

In concluding, one salient point remains to be emphasized: Even in so theoretical and reflective an enterprise as philosophy it transpires that functional and thus essentially pragmatic considerations have a critical role to play. For philosophy, like any other rational endeavor, has its definitive aims and goals, and these can unquestionably be pursued in ways that are more effective and in ways that are less so.

So much, then, for principles that serve the aims of philosophy. But what of the procedures and methods that provide the instrumentalities for their implementation?