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DISSENT AND UNITY IN METAPHILOSOPHY

Abstract

Statements about philosophy in the history of philosophy and in recent metaphilosophical debates depend on first-order philosophical commitments and backgrounds, which poses both a threat and a chance for metaphilosophy as a discipline. The article aims to provide a current picture of metaphilosophy and its possible future design. It explores the problem of first-order philosophical preconceptions in metaphilosophy and suggests a strategy for the further disciplinary development of metaphilosophy. At first, it points at the problem via analysis of Camus', Husserl's, and Carnap's implicit and Rescher's, Williamson's, and Fraisopi's explicit metaphilosophical views. Neither a universal account of philosophy nor a neutral metaphilosophy are in sight. Nevertheless, as the article shows next, a descriptive perspective on existing contributions reveals certain continuity and disciplinary structure in metaphilosophy regarding its subject matter, placement, and existing topics. A complementary normative perspective that demands philosophy-oriented metaphilosophy focusing on inclusivity and universality can lead to more effective discourse formations, problem-solving, and knowledge maximization in this discipline.

Keywords: metaphilosophy; discipline; meta-metaphilosophy; preconceptions; perspectivity; history of metaphilosophy; metaphilosophical discourse formations; dissent; unity

DISSENS UND EINHEIT IN DER METAPHILOSOPHIE

Zusammenfassung

Aussagen über Philosophie in der Geschichte der Philosophie und in neueren metaphilosophischen Debatten sind von philosophischen Vorannahmen und

Hintergründen ‚erster Ordnung‘ abhängig, was für die Metaphilosophie als Disziplin sowohl ein Problem als auch eine Chance darstellt. Der Artikel zielt darauf ab, ein aktuelles Bild der Metaphilosophie und ihrer möglichen zukünftigen Entwicklung zu geben. Er untersucht das Problem der philosophischen Vorannahmen ‚erster Ordnung‘ in der Metaphilosophie und schlägt eine Strategie für die weitere disziplinäre Entwicklung der Metaphilosophie vor. Zunächst wird das Problem anhand einer Analyse der impliziten (Camus, Husserl, Carnap) und expliziten (Rescher, Williamson, Fraiso) metaphilosophischen Auffassungen aufgezeigt. Weder eine universelle Konzeption der Philosophie noch eine neutrale Metaphilosophie sind in Sicht. Dennoch zeigt der Artikel als nächstes, dass eine deskriptive Perspektive auf bestehende Beiträge eine gewisse Kontinuität und disziplinäre Struktur in der Metaphilosophie hinsichtlich ihrer Thematik, Platzierung und bestehenden Themen offenbart. Eine ergänzende normative Perspektive, die eine philosophisch orientierte, auf Inklusivität und Universalität ausgerichtete Metaphilosophie fordert, kann zu effektiveren Diskursformationen, Problemlösungen und Wissensmaximierung in dieser Disziplin führen.

Schlüsselwörter: Metaphilosophie; Disziplin; Meta-Metaphilosophie; Vorannahmen; Perspektivität; Geschichte der Metaphilosophie; metaphilosophische Diskursformationen; Dissens; Einheit

Introduction

The frequent use of the term ‘metaphilosophy’ and the corresponding research in the 1960s may lead to the conclusion that there has been a development of a new discipline, a formation of a new kind of philosophical discourse. Questions such as ‘What is philosophy?’, ‘What kind of questions does philosophy ask?’, ‘Which methods does it adopt to answer them?’, and ‘Is there progress in philosophy?’ are put at the center of attention. They constitute a separate research field. Like the laws of logic, the nature and natural sciences, epistemology, morals, freedom, and law, philosophy is one of its own normal topics (Overgaard et al. 2013: 2–3; Geldsetzer 1989). Metaphilosophy is a result of an ongoing specialization in philosophy—one could hardly imagine a specialist in metaphilosophy in the nineteenth or in the first half of the twentieth century. However, now one encounters scholars who publish several books and articles in this field and who indicate metaphilosophy as their area of specialization.¹ Several motives for the need

¹ The online source philpapers.org (accessed on 19/10/2022) lists metaphilosophy as a subdomain of metaphysics and epistemology. In the early reception of the development of metaphilosophy in Germany, Geldsetzer (1974) suggested that metaphilosophy should go by the old name of metaphysics.

for metaphilosophy can be named, such as the re-orientation in philosophy due to its diversity and dissent within it (Rescher 2021; Minkin 2021; Plant 2014), justification of philosophy and its relevance against the backdrop of the progress in sciences (Shan 2022; Dellsén et al. 2021; Chalmers 2015), or a re-evaluation of a research tradition, such as phenomenology (Fraisopi 2021; 2016) or analytic philosophy (Williamson 2022; 2018). The goal of metaphilosophy could be understood as the development of theoretical means for a more profound understanding of philosophy and for a better philosophical practice (see, e.g., Williamson 2022: 280–294; and Rescher 2021: 47–63).

One of the major challenges to metaphilosophy as a discipline are philosophical preconceptions and commitments. Philosophers and philosophical positions, schools, movements, and disciplines have their own metaphilosophies based on selected problems, topics, knowledge, methods, academic, historical and cultural situatedness, personal and theoretical preferences. All such and similar background factors lead to limited, perspectival views of what philosophy is and how it is to be conducted. It is out of the question despite dissent arising, from this first-order philosophical diversity, metaphilosophy is a legitimate discipline. The fact of dissent does not discredit anything per se, it depends on how the debates are being carried out, which structures they have, what results they lead to, and which normative attitudes the discourse participants bring with them.

The aim of the article is to give a picture of the current state of development of metaphilosophy as a discipline and its possible future from descriptive and normative vantage points. I claim that metaphilosophical positions are uncircumventably dependent on first-order philosophical commitments and background factors—there can be no neutral metaphilosophy. I show this by analysis of examples from what I call ‘implicit metaphilosophy’, i.e., statements about philosophy in the history of philosophy, and ‘explicit metaphilosophy’, i.e., recent explicit metaphilosophical research. Subsequently, I give a descriptive account that acknowledges some disciplinary unity, i.e., established discourse structures in metaphilosophy despite preconceptions and dissent. This unity can be secured and expanded with recourse to *meta-metaphilosophical normative ideals*,² such

² These meta-metaphilosophical ideals concern the question ‘How to do metaphilosophy better?’. I have pointed to the importance of descriptive and normative meta-metaphilosophical inquiries when engaging in metaphilosophical research in Lewin (2020) and have addressed this topic in a book-length discussion in Lewin (2023b). The relevance

as philosophy-oriented metaphilosophical practice, universality, inclusivity, and exchange between different philosophical traditions. These ideals offer prospects for a progressive further development of metaphilosophy, which includes effective discourse formations, problem-solving, and knowledge maximization.

1. Implicit Metaphilosophy

The term ‘metaphilosophy’ is not an invention of the 20th century. In the year 1803 the German philosopher Karl Leonhard Reinhold used it in relation to an attempt to derive logical laws from premises of Schelling’s metaphysics (Reinhold 1803: 208). As Reinhold suggests, such a derived logic would not be the original, neutral logic. It would be a philosophy that comes *after* a given philosophy, a biased philosophy, i.e., a *metaphilosophy*. This original meaning of the prefix ‘meta-’ and the term ‘metaphilosophy’ as ‘after-philosophy’ seems to capture the mentioned point well—there are many biased after-philosophies but no neutral philosophy of philosophy. The first-order philosophical practice is happening within a perspectival epistemic situation characterized by a certain standpoint, i.e., the hard-core commitments and tenets of a philosopher, a certain direction and domain of research and the horizon of personal experience, knowledge about scientific facts, and specific philosophical education. Judgements about philosophy arise within such perspectival epistemic situations. Let us consider three examples of statements about philosophy in the history of philosophy.

It is undoubtedly metaphilosophically important to ask which questions and topics are most relevant for philosophy. If we follow Albert Camus, philosophy has only one serious and fundamental question—‘Is the life worth living?’:

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest – whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories – comes afterwards. These are games; one must first answer (Camus 1942: 11).

This statement is not meant to be just an introductory, provocative statement at the beginning of the *Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus is serious about what

of meta-metaphilosophical reflections has also been a topic in Minkin (2021) (cf. also the *Handbuch Metaphilosophie*, Lewin and Minkin (2025ff.)).

he writes. The question of the value of life against the backdrop of its absurdity that appears in (everyday) life situations, in art, and in theoretical endeavors, is urgent and important. All other philosophical problem-solving, compared to it, is there for amusement. Camus would probably follow Karl Popper's opinion that such questions as 'What is philosophy?' and 'What are appropriate methods of philosophizing?' contribute nothing to urgent life matters (Popper 1968: 66; for a critique of this view see Overgaard et al. 2013: 5–8). He would say metaphilosophical questions are mere games. Nevertheless, the assessment of the importance of different philosophical questions is a metaphilosophical endeavor. If we reconstruct the perspectival epistemic situation of Camus, which has led to the quoted statement, we will recognize his persistent focus on absurdity. Camus writes: "From the moment absurdity is recognized, it becomes a passion, the most harrowing of all" (Camus 1942: 27) and: "I must sacrifice everything" (ibid.: 26) to the absurdity. The epistemic situation of Camus is determined by what he calls the "absurd attitude" (ibid.: 65) and the harrowing passion for absurdity, i.e., the focus on absurdity. Philosophy must be "sacrificed" to absurdity. And this is a perfect example of a first-order philosophical commitment that predetermines the metaphilosophical theory.

Implicit preconceived metaphilosophical statements can also be found in Edmund Husserl. For Husserl, philosophy ought to be a universal and strict science, but it never achieved this status. That is because philosophers have "naively overlooked or misunderstood" (Husserl 1911: 229) the conditions for this status. This is especially true regarding philosophical relativists, historicists, and naturalists. Husserl is especially at odds with the so-called standpoint philosophers like Dilthey. The standpoint philosophers believe that there are many philosophies based on different standpoints and world-views. By contrast, philosophy as a universal and strict science should have no room for private opinions, views, and standpoints. Ironically, in the same text Husserl introduces what he calls the "phenomenological attitude" (see ibid.: 236, 245). An attitude, as he later clarifies (see Husserl 1935: 326), is a habitual style of life of the will, with all the corresponding directions, interests, ends, and cultural achievements. The phenomenological attitude associated with the method of phenomenological *epoché* or reduction (see Aguirre 1970: VII–XVIII) has an eliminative effect: the validity of all other attitudes towards the being and the appearance is eliminated or bracketed. But this, again, is a perspectival epistemic situation. An attitude is always

eliminative; it gives preference to something. Camus ‘sacrifices’ philosophy to the absurd attitude; Husserl to the phenomenological attitude.

Another example of biased implicit metaphilosophical statements can be found in the early Rudolf Carnap’s critique of metaphysics. Just as Camus and Husserl believe they have found the best philosophical attitude, Carnap, in the essay “On the Character of Philosophic Problems” (1934) claims that

[i]n order to discover the correct standpoint of the philosopher, which differs from that of the empirical investigator, we must not penetrate *behind* the objects of empirical science into presumably some kind of transcendent level; on the contrary must take a *step back* and *take science itself as the object*. *Philosophy is the theory of science* [...] (Carnap 1934: 6).

The “correct standpoint” of the philosopher allows one to focus on the theory of science, to explicate the concept of philosophy correspondingly, and to exclude metaphysics from philosophy. Carnap is not aiming at a complete exclusion of metaphysics. As he suggests in “The Logical Structure of the World” (1928): one should explicate or engineer the concept of metaphysics according to this standpoint. “If philosophers use the name ‘metaphysics’ for the result of a nonrational, purely intuitive process; this seems to be the more appropriate usage” (Carnap 1928: 295). Then, metaphysics is not a science. But if one calls it “basic science” or “cosmology,” metaphysics could be called a science (see *ibid.*). Carnap hence freely bends and transforms the meaning of ‘philosophy’ and ‘metaphysics’ to make them fit the epistemic situation of the ‘new logician’ and philosopher of science. He later admits:

In earlier periods, I sometimes made attempts to give an explication of the term “philosophy.” The domain of those problems which I proposed to call “philosophical” became step by step more comprehensive... Yet actually none of my explications seemed fully satisfactory to me even when I proposed them; and I did not like the explications proposed by others any better. Finally, I gave up the search... it is unwise to attempt such an explication because each of them is more or less artificial. It seems better to leave the term “philosophy” without any sharp boundary lines (Carnap 1963: 862).

2. Explicit Metaphilosophy

The three examples show that an unbiased view of philosophy is scarcely imaginable. Can contemporary metaphilosophers do better? Nicholas Rescher suggested that it should be a virtue of the metaphilosopher to take some distance from her first-order philosophical views when doing metaphilosophy (see Rescher 2021: 175–181). The metaphilosopher acts within the frameworks of two different epistemic situations. The first-order philosophical epistemic situation is based on a strong commitment to one's convictions and values. The data available to a philosopher (such as knowledge about facts, experiences, opinions, theories from the history of philosophy etc.) are systematized and assessed from one chosen or rather experientially determined point of view.³ The goal of this systematization and assessment of data is one coherent philosophical system that claims to correctly describe one consistent reality. This “*Unique Reality View*” (ibid.: 171) is, for example, what Camus, Husserl, and Carnap have in common. Hence, by claiming what philosophy is, what philosophy's main question is, and what the correct standpoint of philosophy is, they did not yet arrive at the level of metaphilosophical reflection. The metaphilosophers represent what Rescher calls “*The Perspectival Reality View*” (ibid.: 172). They assess different philosophical positions, including their own, as available philosophical systems. One of the plausible consequences of this second-order, metaphilosophical stance would be an indifferentist relativism. This would result in an *aporia*: a philosopher would have to advocate both her first-order position, e.g. the Husserlian view, and the indifferentist relativism. This would be unacceptable for a Husserlian, as they would rather enforce their position at the metaphilosophical level by bracketing all possible competing (pre-)philosophical presuppositions and attitudes. But it is also not Rescher's position (ibid.: 64 and 82). Rescher's metaphilosophical assessment criteria are based on his first-order commitment to a mixture of pragmatism (“of the right”—see Kellerwessel 2014: 14–15; and Rescher 2021: 1–11 and 198–210) and contextualism (see ibid.: 29–33 and 82). The second-order view becomes a reduplication of the first-order stance.

Another example of a preconceived metaphilosophy is Timothy Williamson's philosophy of philosophy. At the beginning of the first edition of “The Philosophy of Philosophy,” he states:

³ For Rescher, contextualism is not a matter of a free choice. The contexts arise from existing experiential networks.

This book grew out of a sense that contemporary philosophy lacks a self-image that does it justice. Of the self-images that philosophy inherited from the twentieth century, the most prominent – naturalism, the linguistic turn, post-modern irony, and so on – seemed obviously inadequate to most of the most interesting work in contemporary philosophy [...] (Williamson 2022: xxx).

In the second edition, Williamson adds some new parts to “substantially extend the first edition’s picture of philosophy” (ibid.: xi). The choice of words in both quotes represents a mixture of the awareness that what he draws is one specific picture of many possible pictures,⁴ and the decisive certainty that this picture is correct. An epistemic agent who draws a picture does it certainly from one specific standpoint or ‘sitting point,’ a certain armchair, with preselected methods, topical interests, and goals. Rooted within the analytic research tradition, but critically questioning some of its results, Williamson’s metaphilosophy focusses (1) on the recent history of the analytic philosophy (and thereby points at the importance of David Lewis for its recent development—see Williamson 2022: 313–350), (2) the authors from the analytic tradition, and (3) the topics that are largely discussed within the analytic tradition (such as the analytic-synthetic distinction and the clarification of concepts—see the order of topics in Williamson 2018). The self-image of philosophy becomes a certain kind of a self-reflection of analytic philosophy, or the philosophy of analytic philosophy.

Just as there is a pragmatic-contextualist and an analytic metaphilosophy, there is a phenomenological metaphilosophy. For Fausto Fraisopi (2021; 2016), metaphilosophy is not a doctrine; it is rather a certain processual epistemic situation—the focus is on the performative opening of horizons, not on a product or a result. It is the epistemic search of the pure thought for the forms or the form of *mathesis universalis*. Performing metaphilosophy helps to reveal *mathesis universalis*, the universal and original science, by asking fundamental philosophical questions, such as ‘What is the self?’ or ‘What is the being?’. Such questions constitute four separate meta-dimensions or meta-horizons: meta-egology, meta-theory, meta-ontology, and meta-metaphysics (Fraisopi 2016: 22). To understand these domains, Fraisopi uses the descriptive method of phenomenology (ibid.: 24). The questions, the topics, and the method are largely phenomenological.

⁴ The concept of a picture, which is often used by skeptics, relativists, and perspectivists (in the sense of ‘appearance’), can be encountered throughout the work of Williamson, e.g.: the wrong picture (ibid., 7), the picture of analytic truths (ibid.: 55), widening the picture (ibid.: 317), metaphysical picture (ibid.: 318) etc.

3. Metaphilosophy as a Unified Discipline

Neither the implicit nor the explicit metaphilosophical conceptions and analyses of philosophy are free of philosophical first-order theories, pre-conceptions, values, and stances. This assessment may suffice for a naïve Pyrrhonist to declare the project of a general, trans- and interpositional discipline of metaphilosophy as impossible. However, developing and flourishing metaphilosophical discourses in the past decades suggest otherwise. Similar views on the subject matter, placement, and existing topics within metaphilosophy are possible indicators of a disciplinary unity amidst dissent. They are points of contact between philosophers with different philosophical backgrounds and belong to minimal requirements of something that is to be considered a discipline. Common subject matter, placement, and topics unite scholars in pursuit of similar knowledge goals and are prerequisites of discourse formations. In the following, I want first to take a descriptive perspective and examine which unifying factors already govern the implicit and explicit metaphilosophical investigations. After that, I will suggest that following certain normative ideals will create more points of contact and boost the metaphilosophical research both in quality and quantity.

3.1. A Descriptive Perspective: What is Already There?

One of the advantages and strengths of metaphilosophical research is the consensus about the subject area of metaphilosophy. Unlike with methods and the prioritization of certain research questions, scarcely would anyone disagree that the object of metaphilosophy is philosophy itself and all that concerns philosophy. In their introduction to metaphilosophy, Overgaard et al. (2013: 4) define metaphilosophy as the study of the nature of philosophical questions and methods to answer them. In the first issue of the journal “Metaphilosophy,” Morris Lazerowitz notes that metaphilosophy “is the investigation of the nature of philosophy” (Lazerowitz, 1970: 91). For Nicholas Rescher, metaphilosophy “is the philosophical examination of the practice of philosophizing itself” (Rescher, 2006, 1). Timothy Williamson states that “the primary task of the philosophy of philosophy is to understand philosophy” (Williamson 2022: xxx). For Fausto Fraisopi, the object of the metaphilosophical epistemic situation is philosophy itself—*mathesis universalis* can be revealed only via the questioning of the validity of philosophy (see Fraisopi 2021: 17). Richard Raatzsch, in his book “Philosophiephilosophie,” states that “[w]hat we seek, when we do metaphilosophy,

are insights into what makes up philosophy and philosophizing” (Raatzsch 2014: 10)⁵. To sum up, as the German philosopher Lutz Geldsetzer, despite his earlier views (Geldsetzer 1974) that the expression ‘metaphilosophy’ is redundant and that what metaphilosophers do should run by the old name of ‘metaphysics’, has put it: “That philosophy is the theoretical engagement in a factually known subject area [...] can be also applied to philosophy. This results in the philosophy of philosophy” (Geldsetzer 1989: 904)⁶.

There seems also to be agreement about the characterization of metaphilosophy as a philosophical subdiscipline. As Rescher has put it, “there is no philosophy-neutral methodology” (Rescher 2021: 7; cf. Rescher 2014: xi).⁷ One would then probably argue that even a sociology or psychology of philosophy or empirical analyses of philosophical databases imply a certain understanding of philosophy. Such analyses could run by the name of an interdisciplinary metaphilosophy.⁸

Furthermore, there appears to be a certain topical consistency in metaphilosophy. This consistency is not only given in recent explicit metaphilosophy that focusses on topics such as *progress in philosophy* (Shan 2022; Dellsén et al. 2021; Chalmers 2015), *thought experiments in philosophy* (Williamson 2018: 50–65; Grundmann and Horvath 2014), and *models in philosophy* (Williamson 2022: 372–385; Godfrey-Smith 2006). Some metaphilosophical topics from the history of philosophy continue to become relevant in contemporary discussions. The debates about the definition and the subdivision of philosophy have been going on for thousands of years, and the relation between philosophy and science has become an important question at least since Newton’s *Principia*. One good example of a continuous metaphilosophical question is whether there is a good method for a rational reconstruction of the logic of philosophical research. While Hegel suggests

⁵ My translation.

⁶ My translation. Of course, some questions can be put slightly differently. Plant, e.g., suggests that “‘What is philosophy’ is better understood as the concrete question ‘Is *that* philosophy?’” (Plant 2017: 16).

⁷ I agree with Plant (2017) and Minkin (2021) that metaphilosophy is more than just a discipline – it is an inherent part of philosophy, something that accompanies philosophizing. It justifies the importance of dealing with metaphilosophical issues, as they have impact on how one does philosophy. I have further developed this point in Lewin 2023b.

⁸ Before one does it, one should consider finding a suitable demarcation criterion to distinguish philosophical practice from the metaphilosophical. A suggestion of such a demarcation criterion can be found in Lewin 2023b: 8 and 79f. and 2021b: 294–296.

a dialectical-speculative method in his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, in recent debates one can find examples of a paradigmatic approach based on Kuhn (Hartmann 2020; Gakis 2016; Apel 2011; Schnädelbach 1994), or of a research-programmatic approach based on Lakatos (Lewin 2021a and 2021b; Minkin 2021). Another example of metaphilosophical continuity is the topic of the relation between philosophy and its history. This topic is raised in the contemporary metaphilosophy of Timothy Williamson (see 2018: 98–110) and Nicholas Rescher (see 2021: 5–7 and 2014: 211–220) just as it was in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Jottings for the Progress of Metaphysics*, or in his lectures on logic (see Lewin 2022: 343–345). The role of conceptual analysis in philosophy was also a topic for Kant just as it is for T. Williamson (see Lewin 2023a; Lewin and Williamson 2023). One could try ordering these and similar topics into discourse formations, of which there would be three: (1) singular metaphilosophical topics (thought experiments, philosophy as a science, philosophy and the history of philosophy etc.), (2) systematic metaphilosophy (answering of several metaphilosophical questions from an analytic, pragmatic, phenomenological, etc. point of view), and (3) meta-metaphilosophy (‘What is metaphilosophy?’; ‘Of which discourse formations does metaphilosophy consist?’; ‘Is there unity in metaphilosophy despite dissent?’).⁹

To sum up: The existing metaphilosophical discourse formations can lead to the conclusion that there is some unity in metaphilosophy despite different historical and philosophical backgrounds. There is agreement regarding the subject area of metaphilosophy and its place within philosophy as a subdiscipline. Moreover, there is some continuity within metaphilosophical topics. One could say that the corpus of metaphilosophical topics has existed long before it could be identified as metaphilosophical. If one considers these aspects only, the philosophical preconceptions are not a threat to metaphilosophy as a rational discipline. The differences in methods and answers to metaphilosophical questions belong to metaphilosophical practice just as to any other philosophical discipline, be it epistemology, metaphysics, or ethics. But these are not the only aspects that are relevant for the assessment of the status of metaphilosophy.

⁹ For more about these distinctions see Lewin 2023b.

3.2. *A Normative Perspective: How to Develop an Even Stronger Discipline?*

The problem of the dependence of metaphilosophy on first-order commitments is more relevant regarding two other assessment criteria: inclusivity and universality. How inclusive is metaphilosophy (and how inclusive should it be) and how much universality do or must metaphilosophers claim for their theories? These are meta-metaphilosophical questions. As metaphilosophers want to understand and improve the philosophical practice, meta-metaphilosophical clarifications and norms are aimed at a better metaphilosophical practice. The normative meta-metaphilosophical dimension is not something optional. Metaphilosophers are obliged to pick a side—and if they do not explicitly, the side they have chosen is implicitly contained within their metaphilosophical theories. *At the top normative level*, a metaphilosopher can either strive for unity or disunity of metaphilosophy as a discipline. The latter happens if they claim metaphilosophy for themselves (a bold claim of universality of her approach) and exclude alternatives, or if they pass on the claim of universality of their metaphilosophical theories.

It is not apparent what Rescher's, Williamson's, and Frairopi's meta-metaphilosophical strategies regarding the criteria of inclusivity and universality are. Firstly, there is no sign of an extensive debate among them. The main reason for this is probably their different first-order tenets, commitments, and research traditions. Secondly, there are scarcely any remarks on how inclusive their metaphilosophies want to be. Rescher's two-leveled understanding of metaphilosophy allows him for a certain distance to his own philosophical position and tolerance of others (Rescher 2021: 156–186). But when it comes to decisions on how to judge different perspectives on philosophy, he follows his contextualist and pragmatist commitments, and not, e.g., the ones of a hardcore Husserlian phenomenologist. Williamson too shows a certain open-mindedness when it comes to other traditions and debates if they overlap with his research interests grounded in the analytic tradition. In "The Philosophy of Philosophy," he mentions that phenomenologists also have their own conceptual turn, the analytic tradition is not an exception (Williamson 2022: 16). But this is rather a sidenote, and the phenomenological account of conceptual analysis is not incorporated into his picture of philosophy. Frairopi, in turn, notes that he is not totally committed to the method of descriptive phenomenology, and considers alternative approaches (Frairopi 2016: 24, fn. 18). All three metaphilosophers

leave some space for philosophical diversity, but the status of this space is not clear.

The third opaque point concerns the principle of universality. Camus, Husserl, and the early Carnap claimed in a loud voice that their pictures of philosophy are universal, i.e., they represent the best possible way of thinking about philosophy. The point is not so clear with Rescher, Williamson, Fraiso, and other contemporary metaphilosophers. They seem to presuppose the same, but in a more subtle and tacit manner, in a contemporary style of philosophizing. It finds expression in the titles of their works that sound very general, such as “The Philosophy of Philosophy” (Williamson 2022) or “Metaphilosophy. Philosophy in Philosophical Perspective” (Rescher 2014). However, they do not make this point explicit. Do they claim that their metaphilosophies are valid for the whole philosophical community, or only in a certain tradition or domain of philosophizing? Are their metaphilosophical theories developed to convince the very diverse community of philosophers? One will not find an extensive direct answer to this question in their texts, as the problem of philosophical preconceptions has not yet received enough attention in metaphilosophical research.

One of the worries that is worth considering in this context was issued by Richard Raatzsch (2014, 55–56), but also in a certain way by Brendan Theunissen (2014: 112–114), Bob Plant (2012: 586–587), Robert Nozick (1981: 19), and recently also by Lewin (2020 and 2023b) and Daniel Minkin (2021). Metaphilosophy can be used as a ‘propaganda’ of the first-order philosophical commitments. One looks for ‘*the* metaphilosophy’ but finds analytic, pragmatic, phenomenologist, transcendentalist, Hegelian, etc. philosophy of philosophy. The label does not fit the content. Raatzsch’s way of dealing with this problem is a highly tolerant account of philosophizing, one could say a free or anarchistic—in analogy to Paul Feyerabend’s epistemological anarchism—metaphilosophy. Any philosopher, regardless of the background, can contribute to the understanding of philosophy. One can find interesting passages about philosophy in Wittgenstein just as in Hegel, Nietzsche, Russell, Heidegger, Meister Eckhart, and even Bill Watterson. One may allow all voices to be heard, engage in mutual learning across boundaries, and endeavor to construct a coherent philosophical framework that embraces diversity. This may also not be an unbiased approach, as it presupposes a commitment to an irreducible diversity, but this approach contains a convincing answer to the problem of universality of metaphilosophy. Each particular picture of philosophy is a welcome contribution.

There are several options for a further development of this approach. Firstly, one needs a *Copernican Revolution* in metaphilosophy. Philosophy should not revolve around different philosophers' commitments—philosophers should turn around philosophy and develop different metaphilosophies based on their diverse backgrounds. The more perspectives philosophers generate, the better and more diversified will the picture of philosophy become. Secondly, it should be stressed more that metaphilosophy is a collective and inclusive enterprise. When developing the best possible understanding of philosophy, metaphilosophers should see themselves as co-workers with diverse experiences and abilities. The problem of philosophical preconceptions in metaphilosophy should become a chance for a diversified picture of philosophy. One should know of this problem, accept it, and use it as a strength. There should be more exchange between groups of philosophers with different philosophical backgrounds, coming from different traditions, movements, schools, and areas.

In the end, the question is purely meta-metaphilosophical and normative. The future of metaphilosophy is dependent on a simple question: do we want a unified discipline? If not, there will be parallel research groups or parallel societies of scholars that will scarcely get in touch. In the worst case, they will simply ignore each other. Perhaps, parallel discussions will lead to an indifferentist view or to the end of the debates, which will be stated by a historian of philosophy in a hundred years. The disciplinary unity of metaphilosophy, however, as an epistemic ideal based on a philosophy-oriented approach focused on universality, inclusivity, and exchange between different philosophical traditions will lead to a continuous enrichment of metaphilosophy.

Conclusion

To conclude, I can summarize this article by attempting to update the mentioned two-level model of Rescher (2021: 175–181) to a three-level model. On the first, philosophical level, everyone is committed to holding different basic and strong philosophical beliefs. A state that can, but must not, include a philosophical *bellum omnium contra omnes*. On the second, metaphilosophical level, these philosophical beliefs are reproduced. The picture of philosophy reflects them, both in implicit and explicit metaphilosophy. A pragmatist develops a pragmatic metaphilosophy, an analytic philosopher puts forward an analytic philosophy of philosophy or even

a philosophy of analytic philosophy, a phenomenologist develops a phenomenological metaphilosophy. But at the meta-metaphilosophical level, this problem of philosophical preconceptions, metaphilosophical diversity and disagreement should be fully recognized and turned into a chance. An aggregate of metaphilosophical views can never become a discipline. A discipline, as the etymology of this word suggests, is a discipline because every participant in a discipline obeys certain rules. Not one philosophical community should decide how the rules should look like—the philosophical community as a whole should. This will inevitably lead to the ideal of metaphilosophy as a unified discipline, which implies philosophy-oriented metaphilosophy, focused on universality and inclusivity, and continuous exchange between philosophers with different backgrounds. Of course, not everyone will follow this ideal, in the end, it is an individual decision. But once this meta-metaphilosophical stance is taken, it will transform the understanding and practice of both the metaphilosophical and philosophical research. The statement “nobody is a metaphilosophical *tabula rasa*” (Plant 2012: 586; cf. Nozick 1981: 19) is valid for both directions: from the first-level philosophical commitments to the third-level meta-metaphilosophical decisions and *vice versa*.¹⁰

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¹⁰ One could call this idea “metaphilosophical reciprocity” – see Lewin 2023b.

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