

1. Methodological pluralism

Mainstream twentieth-century academic philosophy was, by and large, an a priori discipline done from the armchair. Leading practitioners viewed philosophy as the cousin of abstract conceptual disciplines such as logic and mathematics. Philosophical theories were ultimately answered based on *intuitions* about what is necessary or possible. A trained philosopher's intuitions were said to reliably indicate the truth about important matters such as knowledge, causation, rationality, beauty, goodness, free will, truth, and justice. Empirical evidence and scientific findings were thought to be irrelevant distractions.

Experimental philosophers approach matters differently. While acknowledging that intuitive judgment inevitably informs all human inquiry and that intuitions are often a source of evidence, experimental philosophers doubt the more extreme *exclusivist* methodological claims and presuppositions of pure armchair methodology. In particular, experimental philosophers think that empirical evidence and scientific findings also have an important place in responsible philosophical inquiry. Experimental philosophers are methodological *pluralists*.

In addition to the a priori methods of thought experiments, careful reflection on concepts, precise definitions, and charting the logical implications of theories, experimental philosophers employ empirical methods of cognitive and social science. These methods include controlled experimentation, statistical analysis, developmental studies, reaction time studies, patient studies, and brain imaging. What follows are some applications of experimental philosophy.

2. Police the intuitive data

Philosophy at its best proceeds by clear and rigorous argumentation. Arguments inevitably rely on premises. Some premises are (at least provisionally) accepted because they are either intuitively obvious or part of commonsense or what we would ordinarily say. X-phi can help settle whether a premise is “intuitive” or “commonsensical” or “what we would ordinarily say,” if its credentials are challenged. (Provide a “map” of commonsense.)

3. Generate intuitive data

Sometimes a philosophical debate veers into unanticipated and previously unexplored territory. X-phi can help to quickly gain evidence into which

claims in this territory are generally found “intuitive,” what assumptions have a legitimate claim to the title of “commonsense,” or “what we would ordinarily say.”

Relatedly, x-phi can *greatly accelerate* the generation of intuitive data. It often takes years for a group of philosophers to generate at least broad agreement on a constellation of intuitions relevant to problem. But it needn't take years to identify a critical mass of broadly shared intuitions. In a matter of days or even hours, X-phi can help generate hundreds or even thousands of judgments on dozens of cases.

4. Diagnose errors and origins

Philosophers are people too. Sometimes philosophical inquiry stalls because researchers commit errors that humans are prone to. These could include errors in judgment or interpretation. X-phi can help identify places where this has probably happened. It can also help identify the social, psychological and neurological processes underpinning the intuitions and judgments expressed in philosophical debates. If the apparent force of one side of a debate implicitly relies on error, then exposing it eliminates obstacles to progress in philosophy.

5. Discover complex patterns

Many patterns in the way we ordinarily think or talk are complex. Some are so complex that no amount of unaided reflection or naive social observation will reveal them. For instance, if judgments of a certain sort depend on four factors, each of which could take several possible values, we're easily overwhelmed and confused by the number of combinations and interactions. But things are different with the help of a careful experimental design and statistical analysis. X-phi can help to confidently identify such patterns pertaining to important philosophical categories.

6. Discover counterintuitive patterns

Some patterns in the way we ordinarily think or talk are counterintuitive. Some are so counterintuitive that even if reflection or observation suggested them, charity might well lead us to dismiss them as a misinterpretation or an artifact of incompetent procedure on the researcher's part. But these deflationary explanations can usually be ruled out by experimentation informed by a bit of creativity. X-phi can help to confidently identify such patterns pertaining to important philosophical categories.