



Editorial

You hold in your hands—or perhaps are viewing online—the first of four issues of the inaugural volume of the *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*. The *Journal* was inspired by the idea that the time had come for the American Philosophical Association to sponsor a journal serving the interests of the philosophical community worldwide, a fully generalist journal dedicated to publishing philosophically compelling articles in a timely manner.

The *Journal* was brought into being by the APA's board of officers, chaired by Michael Bratman, with the guidance of a seven-member ad hoc APA committee that met during 2012 and 2013. In December 2013 the *Journal* was officially announced and began accepting papers. The committee's aim was to create a home for work with the greatest potential value and impact across the discipline, a journal defined by its articles' quality, diversity, and liveliness, a journal that could serve as a model of academic publishing.

Thus constituted, the *Journal* encompasses the aspirations of philosophers from varied philosophical backgrounds that characterize the APA. Think of the *Journal* as affording you, the reader, a unique opportunity to participate in the establishment of not simply another philosophy journal, but a *preeminent* philosophy journal. Every member of the APA will receive printed copies of all four issues of our first volume. This means that almost 10,000 philosophers will have print versions of the papers in those issues on their desks, an impressive figure unmatched in the contemporary philosophical universe.

In reflecting on what it would take to create a platform that would attract papers of the highest quality in all areas of philosophy, we became convinced that the prevailing model of submission, evaluation, and publication is unwieldy and inefficient and that it can stifle unconventional papers, papers that take chances, papers that go out on a limb: *interesting* papers. The problem stems in part from pressures on junior faculty—and, increasingly, on graduate students—to add publications to their CVs. This results in numbers of submissions that can overwhelm the editorial process, especially the time-honored mechanism for evaluating submitted work. Referees are told, in effect, 'find reasons to reject this paper', and respond with reports that focus on all that an author might have done but did not do, citing positions or people not discussed and potential objections not addressed. The upshot is authors' hedging their bets by including tedious surveys of the literature and preemptive maneuvers designed to foreclose every

imaginable objection. Too often, this results in papers featuring a single interesting idea embedded in a ponderous defensive exercise—papers written by committee.

We ask referees to refrain from nitpicking and from directing authors to the work of others when this would likely result in a less interesting paper. The ideal report comprises an assessment of the submission—the referee’s considered opinion on its significance and quality—together with a few helpful comments for the author. The aim is to make refereeing less onerous and reports more useful to authors and to encourage the publication of papers that transform discussion rather than of papers that merely add an epicycle to an established treatment of some well-worn topic.

It is not easy to change the culture, however; despite our best efforts, we will undoubtedly turn back deserving papers. Any editor will tell you that as hard as it is to evaluate a paper on a subject that falls outside your immediate area of expertise, it is even harder to evaluate referee reports on papers addressing such subjects. In the *Journal*’s case, this is mitigated by a stellar team of specialist associate editors and a growing number of consulting editors.

The editorial team is dedicated to the idea that the world does not need yet another philosophy journal; the world needs a philosophy journal that serves philosophers by providing a venue for trendsetting—as distinguished from trendy—papers.

We are working together because we believe that if we can get the *Journal* right, we will have demonstrated that philosophers of every stripe can engage seriously without the kind of pettiness and cronyism that currently color the discipline. We are united in the conviction that the *Journal* will be a force for the good.

Our challenge is to ensure that a journal purporting to represent the full gamut of topics and approaches to philosophy succeeds. We will inevitably make mistakes. We will inevitably offend the easily offended. We believe, however, that we can achieve these goals by offering a vehicle for fresh, accessible scholarship governed by an editorial process designed to expedite decisions and have papers in print quickly.

Please help us. You can do this by submitting your most interesting work to the *Journal*—think of that paper you’ve wanted to write but for which the occasion hasn’t arisen—and by playing along with us if you are called upon to referee. (And please see the call for submissions at the back of this issue.) Together, we stand a chance of overcoming entrenched antipathies and nurturing fresh approaches to serious philosophical topics.

JOHN HEIL, EDITOR