# Philosophy for Public Administration

**Abstract** The chapter presents, describes and illustrates the functions that philosophy can perform when applied to public administration (PA). The functions that philosophy applied to a PA problem or theme can perform include: an enlightening function; a critical function; a gap filling function; an integrative function; and a normative function—one or more such functions in a combined way. The discussion of a number of scientific articles in the field of PA that employ and deploy a philosophical perspective as a core part of the argument is used in an illustrative way to highlight the actual performance of these functions in published scholarly work. This chapter articulates the approach in connecting philosophy and PA that we qualify as 'philosophy for PA'. The chapter finally expands on the possibility of combining a range of philosophies to address given PA problems as well as, more ambitiously, to match fields of philosophy with thematic areas of PA as ways of more closely interconnecting philosophy and PA.

**Keywords** Philosophy · Public administration · Philosophy for public administration · Functions of philosophy for public administration · Approaches to the application of philosophy to public administration

## INTRODUCTION

This direction of inquiry takes the move from the recognition that philosophy is already there: PA (we use the shorthand 'PA' to encompass the fields of public administration, public management, public governance and government, referring to both the scholarly study and the practice of it—see Chapter 1 for further discussion of definitions and terminology) does have existing guiding assumptions—all intellectual endeavours do (we may not notice them, but they are there)—and therefore mobilising philosophical thinking explicitly enables to address foundational issues in PA.

Analytically, in this chapter, we propose, illustrate and critically review possible 'functions' that the explicit application of philosophical thinking to PA problems can perform. Such functions are introduced and then illustrated through examples of published scholarly works in which one or more philosophical perspectives have been employed to address a PA problem or theme, thereby performing one or more of the functions considered. We finally propose a range of approaches whereby philosophical perspectives can be applied in a combined way to perform the outlined functions, thereby contributing to the investigation of PA problems and topics.

## FUNCTIONS OF PHILOSOPHY
## FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The *Functions* that the application of philosophy to PA problems can perform can be identified as follows:

- *Enlightening* function: Philosophy sheds light on the guiding assumptions of PA.
- *Critical* function: Philosophy enables to revisit the guiding assumptions of PA, including by identifying possible gaps or outright contradictions in the assumptions that are held, at a given time, in the field of PA.
- *Gap filling* function: Philosophical knowledge can provide constructs and approaches to fill, at least partly, the gaps in PA assumptions, notions and theories.

- *Integrative* function: Philosophy sheds light on the philosophical residue of any social (or other) science applied to PA, and enables or at least facilitates the integration of the multiple disciplinary perspectives that are employed to address public administration problems and themes.
- *Normative* function: Philosophy can provide the rationale for putting forward a normative-prescriptive argument about how the public sector (public governance, public administrative system, public services management) ought to be organised or reorganised.

These functions are considered and discussed in the remainder of this section. Examples of published scholarly works are provided in the next section: they illustrate the usage of one or more philosophical perspectives to examine and discuss a certain PA problem or theme and provide an instantiation and illustration of philosophical knowledge and understanding being used to perform one or more of the functions considered.

Starting from the enlightening function: this is in a sense the most quintessentially philosophical function of philosophy, as philosophy is inherently concerned with the acquisition of rational knowledge and understanding of reality as such, it is the 'science of reason' deployed to understand reality—and reason has been likened to a light, a lamp, enabling human beings to shed light on reality (this is also the root word of the Enlightenment—the cultural-intellectual-philosophical movement that developed in western Europe in the eighteenth century CE). It is also the primal function of philosophy as and when specifically applied to PA: if nothing else, philosophy enables to gain a deeper understanding of a given PA problem or theme by illuminating angles and corners of the problem that are beyond the reach of the social sciences—as a minimum because philosophy, differently from any other science, does not have, nor does it place, borders to its inquiry: it does not set out a defined object on investigation and set of methods to acquire knowledge about it; rather, it is curious about anything and everything and it deploys the power of reason to generate knowledge and understanding in all directions of inquiry.

The critical function is eminently philosophical too. The giant of philosophy Immanuel Kant considered knowledge to be about 'correct' judgements by the reason, where a judgement is a connection of two concepts, one being the noun and one the predicative in a sentence:

what is claimed about the subject of a sentence. Kant then analysed the conditions and limits within which the human reason can formulate judgements, in a major, gargantuan attempts to set out the conditions and limits of human knowledge. Applied to the specific and circumscribed remit of the field of PA, philosophy can provide the conceptual tools for critically revisiting and, if demanded by the outcome of the rational scrutiny, revising the assumptions that guide speculative as well as practical reasoning in public administration.

The gap filling function of philosophy is performed when philosophical knowledge and understanding is employed to address the gaps in extant PA assumptions, notions and theories. For example, assumptions about human motives and behaviours drawn from different social sciences may lead to paradoxical (if not incoherent or outright contradictory) accounts of individual's behaviour (selfish and altruistic, self-determined and hetero-directed, benevolent and malevolent, and so forth) and hence of the dynamics of administrative processes and public decision-making. A philosophical anthropology perspective may then be brought to bear to make sense of such paradoxes (statements that appear self-contradictory and false, and yet may contain a particular kind of truth—see Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004, p. 163, for a discussion in relation to public administration topics) or outright contradictions, for example by furnishing conceptual tools like the method of the levels of abstraction (Floridi, 2011, chapter 3) whereby, in a nutshell, reality can be studied at different levels, and paradoxes or contradictions may turn out to depend on the levels of abstraction chosen in the inquiry, and be overcome or turn out not to be in contradiction when the appropriate levels of abstraction at which the inquiry unfolds are identified: a task which (only) philosophy can perform. To further corroborate the gap filling function that philosophy applied to PA can perform, we point to the consideration famously been proposed by Waldo that, in the field of PA, theory may be derived not only from empirical evidence actually observed but also and perhaps foremost from philosophical reasoning or imagining about the world (see Overeem, 2025; Waldo, 1984); philosophy can therefore powerfully contribute to the filling of gaps in the highly varied—at times sundry— pool of theories, notions and assumptions that compose the corpus of PA knowledge.

The integrative function of philosophy can be understood as twofold. First, philosophical thinking can provide conceptualisations and intellectual frames that may enable to bridge apparently unconnected or

loosely connected theories and concepts drawn from the social (or other) sciences, each social science being apt at investigating its own chosen domain of inquiry, but less so at interconnecting its findings with those of other sciences. Through philosophical framing, therefore, unconnected or loosely connected theories and concepts get to be seen as part of a broader theoretical-interpretive framework. Second, the integrative function arises when philosophy enables to identify and understand the philosophical residue, the philosophical element that remains in any given field of scientific study as the irreducible questions that cannot be addressed within the confines of the specific discipline, with its definite object of inquiry and methods for the generation of knowledge. Since such questions cannot be entirely subsumed into social scientific categories, it is through philosophical thinking that such questions get highlighted and re-interpreted to make sense of them and complement social scientific knowledge. So, for example, economics originally belonged to moral philosophy and then set up home as an independent social science, and indeed one of the most successful social sciences, and at times even a very complacent one (Fourcade et al., 2015), yet its assumptions and concepts periodically require to get revisited, especially at certain intellectual junctures, as underlying questions about human freedom and human motives to act as well as questions about the inextricably multi-level interplay between means and (moral) ends resurface periodically to challenge those assumptions which had become widely held at a certain given period within the economics science. Since PA is an applied interdisciplinary field of study which utilises in a combined way various social science disciplines each with its own specific philosophical residue, and since, furthermore, PA is a field whose specific focus and domain is far from being unproblematically stated and its concepts are far from uncontroversially standardised (Raadschelders, 2005), then we may argue its ties with philosophy are even stronger than for other disciplines like economics, and the unresolved 'philosophical residue' mentioned earlier further gains in prominence, hence philosophical thinking may enable to integrate diverse and possibly differing (when seen within their own level of abstraction and disciplinary field) findings.

Finally, in the most classical 'last but not least', philosophy, or more precisely certain branches of philosophy like morality, ethics and political philosophy, also have an inherently normative thrust, which enables philosophy to also perform a normative function when applied to public administration. Specifically, political philosophy is inherently (albeit not

necessarily in all its areas) normative in its thrust: it is about how political institutions (of which administrative systems are a part) *ought to* be set up and operate. We notice the field of PA oscillates between a descriptive/explanatory stance of PA 'as a science' (Ongaro, 2020; Raadscheldes, 2008), and a normative/prescriptive one. This latter manifests itself notably in relation to the discussion of the administrative doctrines: the debate about how the public sector ought to be organised, with successive sets of administrative doctrines, like the New Public Management, New Public Governance, Neo-Weberian State, and so forth, each proposing its own set of recipes to address this inherently normative question (see Chapter 4 for a philosophically informed discussion of the ideational bases of such clusters of administrative doctrines). Political philosophy is key to providing intellectual grounding for PA in its normative stance. It is rarely applied to PA, albeit there are important exceptions, introduced and discussed by Zacka (2022). Ethics, morality and value judgements (axiology) are also central to normative stances in PA (for example, in relation to the dilemmas of street-level bureaucrats, Zacka, 2017). Philosophy, notably through the field of political philosophy and the field of ethics and morality (public ethics and moral philosophy/axiology), can perform a normative function when applied to PA problems and topics, by providing the rationale for putting forward normative-prescriptive arguments about how the public sector ought to be reorganised, and how public services ought to be administered and managed.

This section has aimed at providing an overview of the functions that philosophy can perform for PA. It has done so at an abstract and conceptual level: we now turn to illustrating through specific applications in the literature how such functions can be performed when specific philosophical perspectives, specific philosophies, get applied to address specific PA problems and themes. In the next section, we therefore further illustrate and flesh out our argument through examples of application of philosophy for PA, showing how research work that has applied specific philosophical perspectives to specific PA problems has, implicitly or explicitly, utilised philosophy to perform one or more of the functions outlined here.

## Examples: Mobilising Selected Philosophies to Address Public Administration Problems and Issues

This section presents and discusses a number of worked examples of the functions that philosophy—more specifically: certain selected philosophies and philosophical streams—have been made to perform for application to PA themes and problems. These scholarly works illustrate the range of functions that we have argued philosophy can perform when applied to PA problems. These works have been plucked simply for illustrative purposes, without any pretension of comprehensiveness, as would have been the case, e.g. through systematic literature review; on this point, that is, on the question of how many and how frequently scholarly works in PA rely on scholarly works in philosophy, see the contribution by Tang et al. (2025) which we consider in Chapter 3. An overview of the works is reported in Table 2.1. The selected contributions are discussed in the remainder of this section. They are presented starting from two contributions which address from a philosophical standpoint the topic of the creation of Public Value, a theory in the field of PA which is in many regards deeply entwined with philosophical consideration, to then consider philosophical perspectives that are closely interconnected with the teachings of institutionalised religions, both eastern and western, to finally revisit Hegelian and Weberian philosophy applied to PA, a 'classic' in the field of PA.

The work by Ongaro and Yang (2025) mobilises the philosophy of Critical realism to provide an integrated interpretations of four major conceptions of Public Value, a key notion in public governance and public management, which has itself given rise to an important strand of inquiry and debate. The four conceptions of Public Value are drawn from the work by Hartley et al. (2017), who make a valuable summary of the literature on the topic by distinguishing: (1) a managerially focused concept of creating Public Value that reflects normative agreements of what the public wants (e.g. Moore, 1995, 2013); (2) a policy and societally focused conception of public values as relative citizen consensuses that are detected from constitutions, policies and opinion polls (e.g. Bozeman, 2007, 2019); (3) a psychology-based approach and theory of basic human needs and objectified values (e.g. Meynhardt, 2009); and (4) a process focused approach to study the public sphere in which Public Value outcomes are debated and created (e.g. Benington, 2011).

**Table 2.1** Illustrative examples of scholarly applications of philosophical streams to public administration problems and themes

| Theme/contribution of philosophy to PA | Reference | Functions performed |
|---|---|---|
| Critical Realism and Public Value | Ongaro and Yang (2025) | Enlightening—Critical—Integrative |
| Personalism and co-creation of Public Value | Ongaro et al. (2025b) | Enlightening—Gap filling—Integrative |
| Non-violence philosophy and public governance | Baldoli and Radaelli (2022) | Enlightening—Gap filling |
| Supererogation and Public Value, Public Service Motivation, Administrative reforms | Biancu and Ongaro (2025) | Enlightening—Critical—Gap filling—Integrative |
| Deliberative mini-publics as Confucian institution and PA | Tong (2025) | Normative |
| Hegelian philosophy of administration—Weberian 'Proto-Existentialism' | Tijsterman and Overeem (2008) | Critical and Normative |

Grounded specifically on Margaret Archer's morphogenetic approach (Archer, 2007, 2012) and the framework of the three overlapping domains of reality wrought out by Bhaskar (1993, 2008)—namely: the Empirical domain, which includes observed events, practices and experiences; the Actual domain, which represents the level at which events (actions) happen; and the Real domain, which includes the underlying causal mechanisms—Ongaro and Yang provide an integrated view of the four conceptions of Public Value, which are seen as unfolding across different phases of the morphogenetic cycle, whereby 'Moore's and Bozeman's approaches treat public values as already objectified and concrete phenomena, the normative consensus at time = 1 (T1), that condition and enable agents' reflexive thinking over what they value, which occurs over a period T2–T3, which then leads to a stage (T4) where Meynhardt's approach to public values signals that as a result of agents' reflexivity towards valuing, public values—as structural and cultural elaboration—eventually become pronounced as objectified psychological needs on moral-ethical, political-social, utilitarian-instrumental and hedonistic-aesthetical dimensions. Finally, Benington's insights unpack what is beneath the empirical lived public valuing experiences from the perspectives of structure, culture and agency: it documents and dissects the

whole T1-T4 recursive process of Public Value creation, reproduction and transformation that is embedded and informed by the past, agential reflexive evaluation of the present, and their imaginary projective future (Ongaro & Yang, 2025, pp. 8–12 in particular).

The functions performed by philosophy for PA in this scholarly work—the philosophical perspective being in this instance Critical Realism as elaborated in particular by Archer and Bhaskar, and the topic in the field of PA being the creation of Public Value—include both the enlightening function and the integrative function. As regards the enlightening function, in fact, philosophy (and specifically in this instance Critical Realism) provides a novel and comprehensive way to interpret and 'make sense' of social science theories applied to a PA topic: notably, in the specific example, the topic of the creation of Public Value, which has occupied the minds of several PA scholars and innumerable practitioners around the globe. As to the integrative function, whereby apparently unconnected or loosely connected theories and concepts get to be seen as part of a broader theoretical framework, and the philosophical residue, the philosophical element that remains in a given field of study and cannot be entirely subsumed into social scientific categories, gets highlighted and re-interpreted, the chosen philosophical approach of Critical Realism enables to integrate four conceptions of Public Value and to shed light on aspects which are not fully resolved within an exclusively social science based approach. Four theories of PV can therefore be seen in an integrated way by applying Archer's morphogenetic approach: their connections are highlighted through the adoption of a philosophical perspective.

Before moving to the next example of a published work applying philosophy to PA, we may notice that the concept of Public Value is a notion with deep philosophical implications, given its inherent normative dimension as well as its constitutive links with philosophical notions like 'common good' or 'value' and 'valuing'; it therefore represents an area of inquiry in PA—a topical area—which is amply amenable to philosophical treatment, to being analysed from the angle of philosophising. We can therefore briefly sketch a few further lines of inquiry about how a different philosophical perspective may enable to gain understanding of the four main conceptions of PV as delineated above—leaving the full analysis of such perspective of inquiry to another book, to be written by another author. Given the very notion of PV in the contemporary literature originated in the West (it is in many regards a product of western scholarly traditions), it may be intellectually opportune to consider a philosophical

perspective from the East, in order to 'challenge' the assumptions of PV theorising that we have been considering so far and expanding the gamut of intellectual facets through which we see the theory and practice of PV (and in this way continuing an emergent strand of scholarly inquiry whose main thrust is the application in a combined way of both eastern and western philosophies to PA problems for enhancing our understanding of the latter; the rationale for this approach is delineated in Ongaro & Ho, 2025, and the special issue 'Eastern and Western Philosophies: Rethinking the Foundations of Public Administration', published as issue 3/2025 in the journal *Public Policy and Administration* and guest-edited by Ho and Ongaro, 2025, provides a first building block in this direction).

We may therefore take the perspective of Confucianism as an eminent philosophical strand which—alongside culture, politics and society—has also permeated the public governance and infused the very conception of the civil servant and the role of the public sector in a number of east Asian countries, and consider how it might be applied to the theory and practice of PV, and with what implications for the very theorisation of PV. Even a very preliminary and tentative initial application of Confucianism reveals the scale of the challenges such perspective may bring about. As a first point, we can start from the very notion of publicness—what is the 'public' in Public Value—and observe that, while modern western philosophy, notably political liberalism from John Locke onwards, frames 'public' and 'private' as antithetical, as contrasting poles, Confucianism rather sees a harmonious public-private continuum (Bai, 2020, chapter 6). This different conception of publicness may have startling implications. Let us consider Meynhardt's psychology-based framework of PV (one of the four conceptions of PV that are mainstream in the literature): from a Confucian perspective, we may question whether Maynhardt's framework (in turn based on the works of western psychologists) may not be able to represent adequately the 'Confucian mind', the psyche as culturally infused by the values and notions and practices and habits of Confucianism, notably in the way in which Confucianism conceives of the relation of the public and the private. Ultimately, the systematic consideration of a psychological, social and cultural Confucian perspective may lead to revising some of the premises of the PV theory, and it may open up novel paths of inquiry about the psychological foundations of PV theory.

As a second point of inquiry, we may query from an eastern perspective the profile of Moore's public manager (another one of the four

conceptions of PV that are mainstream in the literature: this was the first conception of Public Value to have been proposed in the contemporary literature, and a conception which is core to PV theory), that is, the conception of the bureaucrat-turned-public entrepreneur who becomes creator of PV. This conception too is framed in western terms and notions, which might get challenged from a Confucian perspective. The figure of the bureaucrat operating as an entrepreneurial public manager creator of PV who has to deal with an authorising environment, which is constituted of the legal framework and the role of elective officials, represents a profile of the bureaucrat steeped into the liberal-western conception of politics and bureaucracy, in which legitimacy stems from 'the people' (government 'by the people') and public decision-making powers are entrusted upon elected officials via electoral representation processes, and only thence bestowed upon tenured officials, thereby implying that bureaucrats must be 'authorised' by elected officials to undertake a given course of action: they must seek authorisation in order to gain the legitimacy to pursue courses of action which aim at creating Public Value. If we revisit this legitimacy and accountability chain from a Confucian perspective, we notice that some key assumptions get turned upside down when seen through this lens. In a Confucian perspective, performing the bureaucratic role inherently requires the adoption of virtuous behaviour (the Confucian notion of rule by virtue/rule by the virtuous), and virtue and morality prevail over law and legalism (this vision has been challenged in the Chinese scholarly debate by Han Fei Zi, an early opponent of Confucianism): in this sense, the notion of 'authorizing environment', within which the public manager operates, takes a very different shape, since a bureaucratic behaviour orientated to creating Public Value is inherently legitimate, it is legitimate per se, so to speak, in a Confucian framework, and virtue-based behaviour prevails over the legal framework, and it is the latter which has to be adapted in case (where there is contrast between the two). Moreover, the Chinese bureaucracy has never operated within an elective system western-style (in this different from other bureaucracies that have also been influenced by Confucian thought, like those of Japan and the Republic of Korea, and which have seen a western constitution foisted upon them after World War II), hence the Chinese bureaucracy has never encountered the dichotomy between the role of the elective and the tenured official—there is no such distinction in contemporary China, nor de facto has there ever been in the history of China. In this regard too, a Confucian perspective

brings profound challenges to the consolidated theorisation of PV, and it may open up novel paths of inquiry into the theory and practice of PV, notably in the direction of deeply revisiting the very notion of 'authorising environment'.

As a third point of consideration in examining the challenges brought about by the application of Confucian thinking, we may notice that the reading of PV theory through a Confucian lens may engender a Copernican revolution in relation to 'who' determines what Public Value is. The shift is from 'the public' (however defined) as being centre stage in determining what PV is at a given time and place, to the very bureaucrat taking the podium. Bozeman (2007) wrought out a framework for the detection via multiple channels (statutes, policies, opinion polls and so forth) of what the public values, so that the detection of public values as already objectified and concrete phenomena produces the normative consensus which may guide the public managers in their decisions in order to create Public Value (as we discussed above by applying Critical Realism to PV theory and noticing this is one stage of the PV cycle, indicated at T1). In a Confucian perspective, the core of the process occurs in a meritocratic, top-down, and paternalistic way: the Confucian perspective is one of 'government by the virtuous', in which bureaucrats are at the centre of the stage and make decisions 'for' the public, but not taking direction 'from' the public—it is government for the public, but not from, nor by, the public, albeit consulting the public continues to be a (complementary and ancillary) part of the process of defining what is Public Value. (We may notice the Confucian approach is a perspective which may evoke, for those educated in western philosophy, the Platonic government of and by the philosophers, delineated by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato in his work *The Republic*; Plato's 'common good' approach may have many points of similarity, or at least resonance, with aspects of Confucian thinking; it is instead the liberal theory of the social contract as it arose in the West since the seventeenth century to be in many regards at the antipodes of the Confucian perspective; an audacious attempt to combine liberalism as a political philosophy aiming at protecting universal individual rights while decoupling it from electoral representation and rather harmonising it with Confucianism is developed by Bai (2020), producing an interesting fusion of western and eastern elements, albeit within a firmly eastern-orientated philosophical perspective.)

Finally, with different theoretical underpinnings to Bozeman's approach, we have seen that Benington (2011) evokes the notion of

the public sphere as theorised by the (western) philosopher Habermas as central in the process of determining 'what the public values' and hence what is Public Value in a given political community at a given place and time. Here too Confucianism may bring about a Copernican revolution: in fact, in a Confucian perspective it is the (Confucian) sage who assesses what is Public Value in the given historical-political circumstances, with the complementary assumption that in matters of public goods and public services it is the meritocratic bureaucracy to be the venue where sages in such matters (public governance and public services) are to be found; the public sphere (to the extent this very notion may retain its meaningfulness in a Confucian perspective) gets to be shaped under profoundly different premises, centred on the figure of the sage rather than on the larger public (i.e. the totality of the members of the political community). Here too, the adoption of a Confucian perspective leads to querying some of the very premises of the theory and practice of Public Value and it opens up novel avenues of inquiry.

We may now return to the consideration of works published in the extant scholarly literature which explicitly apply strands of philosophy to PA problem. Ongaro et al. (2025b) revisit the philosophy of Personalism and apply it to a connected major PA problem, namely the co-creation of Public Value: the core theoretical preoccupation of this work is to explain the drivers of processes of co-creation, what enables such processes to occur. The authors detect and dissect the lineages existing between key notions elaborated in the philosophical stream of Personalism—these are the notions of common good, active citizenship, relational freedom and intermediate communities—and the notions of, respectively, public value, value co-creation, collaboration and participatory public policy, showing how those philosophical concepts underpin much of the theorising in the co-creation of Public Value literature, albeit their influence is hardly detected and recognised in the extant literature (this gap relative to the absence of a philosophical anthropology underpinning co-creation theorising and the potential of the philosophy of Personalism to fill this gap was first noticed in Torfing et al., 2021). The work by Ongaro et al. (2025b) also aims to make a broader argument, namely, to show how philosophical perspectives can provide ontological grounding in the conception of the human nature and the nature of human freedom for making sense of PA problems (thereby providing a philosophical anthropology for underpinning the theorising of Public Value co-creation—in some regards in line with Isaiah Berlin's theorisation of human freedom).

Specifically, a relational (as opposed to a libertarian) notion of freedom is here found to be able to underpin and make sense of the collaborative processes that enable the co-creation of Public Value, as well as to show some of the roots of the very conception of Public Value in the notion of common good.

This paper performs three of the functions of philosophy for PA that we have outlined. First, the enlightening function, by showing the ideational roots or lineages of the concepts employed in a PA stream of literature: it sets a stream of PA literature within a broader intellectual frame and an ampler, and preceding historically, strand of scholarly literature. It also performs a gap-filling function, in that it joins the dots between observed behaviours leading to co-creation of Public Value (as reported in the findings of social scientific studies on the topic, which also investigate the conditions under which these occur) and the roots of the social agency which is underpinning such behaviours and which is detected in a relational notion of human freedom. Finally, it performs an integrative function in that it may supplement the findings of social psychology studying the motivational structure whereby individuals may engage in collaborative efforts to bring about common solutions to public problems with a philosophical anthropology perspective shedding light on the roots origins of the relationality that underpins the communing amongst persons for the pursuit of forms of common good—a relational conception of human freedom.

A work by Baldoli and Radaelli (2022) draws from another philosophical perspective—indeed, more broadly a stream of thought which embraces ethical, political-philosophical, metaphysical and religious elements—to elaborate a political philosophy with extensive implications for public governance and for public policy and public services management, and especially for PA topics like the co-production of public services and the co-creation of solutions to public problems. This is the perspective of non-violence, most famously brought to the attention of the broader global community by Mahatma Gandhi. In their analysis, Baldoli and Radaelli employ philosophical ideas drawn from the Italian philosopher Capitini, including those of *compresenza* (compresence, referring to 'the connection constructed between all men, both living and dead, at the moment when they present themselves as moral subjects, in contrast with the given reality, and acting as members of an ideal community'—Capitini, 2000, 105—thereby pointing to nonviolent action as the moment in which humans embrace the life cycle overcoming

barriers across generations, species, time and epochs, see Capitini, 1998), *liberazione* (liberation, specifically referring to liberation from biological and historical determinism), and *apertura* (intended as openness to others). These ideas are creatively combined and integrated with teachings in the body of wisdom generated over the millennia by the meditation on the Hinduist—as well as Buddhist and Jainist—ideal of *ahimsa*, thereby providing an original and fruitful synthesis between an 'eastern' body of though—Hinduism—and a strand of western philosophy (Ongaro & Ho, 2025; see also Ongaro, 2021; Ongaro & Tantardini, 2023a, 2023b). Baldoli and Radaelli interpret non-violence through the lens of the consent theory of power, whereby governments are assumed to have power only until citizens allow them to exercise this power over them. Re-elaborated this way, non-violence can provide a theoretical lens for working out a bottom-up notion of citizenship, one which may have extensive implications for public policy and administration studies, and notably for capturing some of the political-philosophical underpinnings for theorising notions in PA like that of co-production and co-creation. The main function performed by philosophy for PA in this contribution (in our interpretation) is the normative function: to propose a political theory which, through a different interpretation of citizenship, has also implications for PA themes like those of collaborative governance, co-creation and co-production, and brings to the fore in a normative way a citizen-centric understanding of public governance and the management of public services.

Another perspective, which also intertwines religious and philosophical wisdom, which has been employed in scholarship to shed light on PA themes, is the theological-philosophical perspective of supererogation, whose conceptual contours for application to PA are outlined by Biancu and Ongaro (2025). The notion of supererogation has its roots in Catholic theology and it is used to denote actions which are morally positive yet they are beyond the call of duty, that is, the individual is not required to perform them, nor are they demandable: while they may be perceived as mandatory from a first-person perspective (*i.e.* by the agent at the moment of deliberation), they are not so from a third person perspective (*i.e.* from the point of view of an external observer). The agent feels they have to do what is not required nor demandable to the extent that it is a condition of possibility of liberty and humanity. To further flesh out the implications of the notion of supererogation in more practical terms, consider this passage from Biancu and Ongaro (2025, p. 72):

> Let's think of the three pillars of modern politics – liberty, equality, frater-
> nity […] Liberty and equality are usually considered as required. Protests
> around the world are always claims for either more liberty or more equality.
> The State, and therefore PA, must guarantee and protect them. Compared
> to them, fraternity is usually considered as supererogatory – it is good
> to have a more fraternal society, but it is not demandable not required.
> Rather, by contributing to create truly human and free subjects, the
> supererogatory attitude of fraternity needs to be understood as a condi-
> tion of possibility of both liberty and equality. When fraternity is missing,
> freedom and equality are purely formal. Fraternity makes them substantial.
> Since the liberal state needs citizens who are truly free human subjects,
> fraternity fulfils those premises on which […] the liberal State lives without
> being able to guarantee them by itself

The perspective of supererogation can therefore be seen as a viewpoint
from which to interrogate, from a moral philosophy and philosophical
anthropology perspective, the key issue of the 'duty' of and in the public
service, for both public servants and citizens. Biancu and Ongaro (2025)
apply the lens of supererogatory action to critically revisit key theories and
notions in PA, such as Public Service Motivation, Public Value manage-
ment and governance, and administrative reform models. Philosophy in
this framework performs both the enlightening function and the critical
function, by addressing questions of why public servants should engage in
certain actions and adopt certain behaviours at all. Philosophy here might
possibly also perform the gap filling and the integrative function: where
assumptions of the social sciences about the intentions and behaviours of
social agents may appear incomplete or remiss, the philosophical notion
of supererogation may fill the gap and lead to a different 'model of man'
(model of human behaviour), which may enable to make sense of certain
intentionality and behaviour by human beings as social agents in public
governance and public management processes.

Another, distinct and distinctive approach in the application of philos-
ophy to public administration is the one suggested by Tong (2025),
whose work provides a powerful illustration of the normative function
that philosophy, notably political philosophy, can and does perform. Tong
(2025) revisits an ancient idea which has roots both in eastern and in
western political-philosophical thinking, namely the idea of the random
selection from the population of representatives for inclusion in public
decision-making processes: the so-called deliberative mini-publics. Tong
then elaborates a sophisticated application of this idea to both Confucian

political meritocracy (likely the most prominent political philosophical alternative to liberal democracy) and Confucian democracy (a major attempt to combine Confucianism and liberal democracy in the design of public governance). The paper develops this idea and its application specifically by focusing a key public administration problem, namely the selection and promotion of public servants. It delineates how deliberative mini-publics could be introduced and used to improve processes of selection and promotion of public servants, a core public administration and management problem.

Both the critical function and the normative function of philosophy are performed in the work by Tijsterman and Overeem (2008). They revisit the political philosophies of Hegel and Weber in relation to the key issues of public service values and the relationship between bureaucracy (the civil service, the body of civil servants) and freedom. They notice that both differ from the Lockean (John Locke's) political philosophy in that they move beyond an exclusively negative notion of liberty centred on the idea of the need for limiting the power of the state so that the individual may have more freedom. More fundamentally and perhaps also more unexpectedly, they observe that the political philosophies of Hegel and Weber differ widely (also) in relation to the issues of public service values and the relationship between bureaucracy and freedom. Taking the move from highlighting the profound difference between Weber's 'proto-existentialist' notion of freedom (outlined especially in his works on politics and science as profession) and Hegel's view of freedom as anchored in the rational state, whereby the limitations stemming from the obligations set by the law do not hamper personal freedom, rather are the conditions of it, insofar as both subjectively such obligations are accepted with a free will and objectively the political order honours freedom. As summed up by Tijsterman and Overeem (2008, pp. 78–79): 'The point of departure of [Hegel's] dialectical mode of argumentation is the free will, which is the will that wills its own freedom. Starting with this basic principle, and taking the wills of other individual wills into account, Hegel thinks through how social life has to be organised in order to be free. The political order that logically flows from the free will as it enables freedom is the rational state [which] constitutes the framework in which these individual rights can be upheld. Respecting individual rights does not only concern the relation between citizens and government, but requires primarily that individuals of a society mutually recognise each other as persons and consequently take individual rights to be true'. In

other words, these values are foremost a predicate of society as a whole; individual rights are embedded in a political culture of which the notion of individual rights is a part[1]' (in interpreting this difference it is worth reminding the reader that both Hegel and Weber accepted the liberal 'negative' freedom of the individual person whose civil, economic and political rights have to be protected by the state).

In summing up Hegel's sophisticated notion of political freedom (and freedom tout court), Tijsterman and Overeem (2008, p. 79) observe that for Hegel: 'Freedom requires that one wills the rational state because only this state makes free life possible. The freedom of the citizens of the rational state has a dual nature; individuals can strive after their own interests *and* have to take into account the interest of the whole and agree with interventions in the name of this. Individuals have private freedom *and* have the freedom of citizens to deliberate about the common good'. Based on the appreciation of the profoundly different notions of freedom in Weber and Hegel, Tijsterman and Overeem draw important conclusions for a key PA topic, namely the conception of bureaucracy. In fact, 'Weber and Hegel conceive of the relationship between bureaucracy and freedom in diametrically opposed ways. While for Weber, bureaucracy poses a threat to liberty, for Hegel this does not have to be the case as the civil service is an essential part of any free state' (Tijsterman & Overeem, 2008, p. 80). It follows that, for Weber, 'every political order entails obligations and coercion, it necessarily limits the possibility to decide autonomously how one is to live. We should not understand Weber's stance only as species of the liberal negative conception of freedom. The point is that every order does not only diminish the free space of individuals to make their choices, but forces people to live heteronomously.

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[1] Given Hegel's thought has sometimes casually, and deeply wrongly, been associated with forms of totalitarianism, it is worth reporting this passage too by Tijsterman and Overeem (2008, p. 79) about Hegel's conception of individual freedom in its relationship to the state: 'Despite its fundamental character, the rational state does not, according to Hegel, absorb individuals wholly. The customs in which the idea of the state lives do not destroy its subjects' subjectivity; the individual and the modern state do not converge blindly or completely. "In the states of antiquity, the subjective end was entirely identical with the will of the state; in modern times however we expect to have our own view, our own volition, and our own conscience" (para. 261A). Individuals can distance themselves from the political order, be aware of their subjectivity, and from this subjectivity affirm the social order that at the same time underpins them. In order to do so, the individual must go through a process of formation (*Bildung*) that the institutions of social life, such as the family and civil society, offer (para. 270)'.

Every political structure of society predetermines choice and thus cannot be chosen freely, even if one personally agrees with it and would choose it if there was a choice. As a consequence, freedom is a predicate of individuals; the notion of a free society does not make much sense [for Weber]' (Tijsterman & Overeem, 2008, pp. 80–81). In this perspective, individuals can live a non-self-chosen life—and most citizens will do. Some, however, can break this 'iron cage': most likely not bureaucrats, the bearers of the rationalisation process since (according to Weber) 'bureaucratic office offers little or no room for this kind of freedom, being rule-bound and characterized by purpose-rationality' (Tijsterman & Overeem, 2008, p. 81). Rather, it is 'real' politicians who can realise their existentialist freedom 'through autonomous action in the pursuit of self-chosen ends […] it is the freedom of charismatic political leaders that Weber thought worth protecting. Indeed, for Weber the very "justification for electoral democracy lay in the scope it provided for the individual leader" […] Now we can see how Weber's advocacy of bureaucracy's subordination to politics flows from his understanding of freedom as existentialist choice' (Tijsterman & Overeem, 2008, p. 81).

Conversely, in Hegel's well-ordered state 'the laws governing social life do not infringe upon freedom but rather make freedom possible, because they are the embodiment of the basic (moral) principles that constitute the political community [..] As a consequence, the civil service (*Regierungsgewalt*) has [for Hegel] a distinctive and prominent role in the constitution of the rational state. This role is twofold. First, the core role of the civil service consists in executing the law by subsuming particular cases under the law […]. Second, civil servants play an important role in framing new laws, even though they must be deliberated and ultimately voted upon by the legislature and ratified by the sovereign monarch' (Tijsterman & Overeem, 2008, p. 81). This conception has implications also for how the civil service should be recruited and managed: in fact, 'As the civil service identifies with the interests of the state, Hegel calls them the "universal class." This means that, according to Hegel, civil servants have to be lifted out of civil society' (Tijsterman & Overeem, 2008, p. 81). This is a socio-cultural as well as a legal-managerial conception of the bureaucracy which has huge implications about how the civil service ought to function. Equally huge are the implications for how bureaucrats should approach their tasks: 'for Hegel, bureaucratic judgment does not consist in technocratic, rule-bound execution of the law (*technè*), as it does for Weber. Rather, it involves moral deliberation (*phronèsis*) of how a

particular case should be subsumed under the public values as expressed in the law. Whereas in Weber's view bureaucratic activity is characterized by purpose rationality, "for Hegel, bureaucracy is *not* a teleological organization with an externally imposed end to implement" (Shaw, 1992, p. 386). Especially in its function of preparing new laws, the civil service has also to engage in moral considerations' (Tijsterman & Overeem, 2008, p. 83); the authors then go on to notice that 'Within Weber's account of bureaucracy, such an understanding of legal and administrative action is impossible. He cannot accept the notion that a political community has a rational idea of how social life should be organized because the good life is beyond the domain of rational argumentation. As part of the process of rationalisation, laws themselves become more and more rational, but they do not have moral worth. The laws are contrary to freedom. As a consequence, bureaucratic values do not flow from the public value of freedom as clearly as in Hegel's state. There is a strong connection between Weber's idea of freedom being under threat in the modern world and the distinctive twist he gives to the idea of bureaucratic neutrality. The bureaucracy should not only serve no particular interests except that of the state, but be subordinated to political leadership as well. This normative requirement is not grounded in the ideals of the liberal democratic state, but in the attempt to save the freedom of political leaders. The other bureaucratic values, however, legality and efficiency, have a different status, as they are intrinsic to the phenomenon of bureaucracy' (Tijsterman & Overeem, 2008, p. 83).

Ultimately, both Hegel's and Weber's conceptions are a normative account of the inner workings of a bureaucracy, they state how the bureaucracy *ought to* function, and why. The bureaucracy as conceived by both scholars upholds the values of legality and efficiency; however, ultimately the role the bureaucracy performs in the political order and in policy-making is profoundly different for Hegel than for Weber, and the distinct roles attributed to the bureaucracy stem from a different notion of freedom. In the work by Tijsterman and Overeem (2008), philosophy (notably the political philosophies of Hegel and Weber) perform both a critical function—in that they enable to revisit the assumptions that guide speculative as well as practical reasoning in the field of public administration about the role of the bureaucracy—and a normative function, as they outline the configuration, functions and workings of the bureaucracy (of public administration) vis à vis the other political institutions and the citizens.

The revisiting of the works of Hegel and Weber also provides connections to two other direction of inquiry outlined in this book: one is the direction of inquiry we qualify as philosophy *of* public administration, as these philosophers delineate the contours of a philosophy of public administration as part of their broader philosophical system (notably Hegel, who outlines in detail a philosophy of PA as part of his broader philosophical system); we return to this perspective in the final chapter of this book (Chapter 5). The second direction of inquiry to which the revisiting of the works of Hegel and Weber contributes is that of *aligning* philosophy and public administration, as Weber's and especially Hegel's conception of the role of the bureaucracy may provide some of the political-philosophical ideational bases for the notion of the Guardian State, and on how to combine it with the Neo-Weberian State (these are discussed in Chapter 4). These directions of inquiry are expounded in subsequent chapters; here, we continue to investigate the perspective of philosophy for public administration, by addressing the question about what broader strategic approaches can be deployed for mobilising philosophy for public administration.

## Approaches for Advancing Philosophy for Public Administration

In the preceding section, we have seen examples of scholarly works bridging philosophy and PA. While the very contents of the works considered differed significantly (ranging from Hegelian philosophy applied to the PA topic of freedom and bureaucracy to Critical Realism applied to the theory of Public Value), the basic approach in terms of 'research strategy' employed by these works is similar, in that they all hinge on mobilising one philosophical stream (be it Critical Realism, or Personalism, or Non-violence, or Supererogation, or Hegelian thought, or the ancient political-philosophical idea of deliberative mini-publics) for application to one PA problem or thematic area. They all basically rely on a one-to-one matching between one philosophical stream and one PA topic, whereby the former is plucked for its potential to be applied to the latter (the exception is the work by Tijsterman & Overeem, 2008, which considers and contrasts two philosophies: Hegel's and Weber's).

In this section, we argue that other approaches are also possible and indeed could be even more powerful and fruitful for deploying philosophical thought for application to PA, albeit we immediately recognise

they might in practice be much less feasible to implement, especially for reasons of the sheer volume of intellectual and practical resources required of these approaches. This section thus discusses the approach implicit in all the works discussed in the previous section alongside two other possible approaches to mobilising philosophy for PA; the approaches that can be employed for advancing philosophy for PA are presented and discussed. We have labelled such approaches as follows (in italics the driving idea of each approach):

 (i) Mobilising *one philosophical stream*
 (ii) Mobilising and *combining a range of philosophies*
(iii) *Matching* fields of philosophy with thematic areas of PA.

They are presented in the remainder of this section.

### i. Mobilising *One Philosophical Stream*

This is the approach we have seen throughout this chapter. Philosophical streams that have been mobilised in PA scholarly works or that could be mobilised for their apparent potential to address at least some of the key issues in PA include, for example, Positivism, Constructivism, Pragmatism, Critical Realism, Existentialism, Phenomenology, Personalism, Analytical Philosophy, Philosophy of Language and so forth. To mention another example beyond those reported in the previous section, Zhang and He (2020) tackle the PA problem "what makes a public space public?", which is philosophical in nature, and mobilise Ludwig Wittgenstein's language analysis (philosophy of language) to examine and dissect this problem, to then discuss issues and problems of effective public governance, notably in the face of the revolutionary challenges posed by advances in information technologies. When any such philosophical stream gets applied to a given PA problem, the philosophy chosen will perform one or more of the above described functions of philosophy for PA, to a greater or more limited depth and level of problem/type of problematising depending on the PA issue that is being addressed and the 'fit' between the philosophical perspective mobilised and the PA problem object of study. Basically, all the works reviewed in the previous section adopt by and large this approach, with the exception of Tijsterman and Overeem (2008), which adopts approach (ii), albeit to the minimum

breadth as the range of philosophies considered numbers two only: the contrast of two opposing—in the view of the authors—philosophical stances, the resulting comparison thus enables to shed light on alternative conceptions of the role of the bureaucracy; this is an efficient research strategy: contrasting two perspectives in order to shed maximum light on the problem under investigation while deploying the minimum possible of intellectual resources compatible with the requirement of adopting more than one philosophical stream; such research strategy greatly advances feasibility, given the huge challenges involved in the mastering of philosophical thinking coupled with the requirement to master the PA problem that is being addressed.

The work by Whetsell (2025) is quite intriguing in regard to the approach of mobilising one philosophical stream for application to PA because of its declared ambition to have found '*the*' philosophy most suitable for PA. In discussing the contribution that the philosophy of Pragmatism (broadly conceived, very much in the line of Patricia Shields' elaboration and application to the field of PA) can provide to PA, Whetsell (2025) makes the argument that Pragmatism may represent an almost 'natural fit' for PA, that it may in a sense be the philosophical strand more consonant to the very 'intrinsic features' of PA as both a field of inquiry and a practice. His argument is based on laying out four 'principles' of Pragmatism—namely that Pragmatism is (a) 'practical', (b) 'pluralistic', (c) 'participatory' and (d) 'provisional'—and arguing that such distinctive features or principles correspond to inherent traits of PA as a field. It goes without saying, a number of objections can be raised to this argument: philosophers who work out and dedicate a 'section' of their overall philosophical system to PA, like Hegel, would clearly counter that *it is their very own philosophy to be the natural fit for PA, indeed on the ground (at least in the case of Hegel's philosophy) that their own philosophy is … the natural fit for the entirety of reality, thence of PA too as a section of it! (We discuss the meaning of Hegel's philosophical system having a section on PA further in Chapter 5.) From the more down to earth perspective of PA scholarship, objections can be raised on multiple grounds about the nature of the PA field and hence towards Pragmatism being 'the' philosophy for PA, rather than just 'one' philosophy for PA, not least for it being so entwined with one country and intellectual context, namely that of the USA. We may further notice that the relatively 'loose' character of Pragmatism—as opposed to, e.g. the more tightly knit and rigid continental European philosophical systems—may in

a sense facilitate its 'compatibility' hence applicability to the field of PA. All this being considered, as regards the classificatory approach we outline here, this contribution remains within this first category, namely that of one philosophy for one PA problem—albeit in Whetsell's ambition this one philosophy can, broadly speaking, be applied to the entirety of the field of PA, or at least to vast ranges of the problems and issues of PA.

Summing up, this first approach to philosophy for PA consists in identifying one PA problem and then plucking one philosophy or philosophical stream which appears especially apt to provide the ideational bases to address that PA problem, thereby making philosophy to perform one or more of the functions highlighted above (enlightening, critical, gap filling, integrative, normative). The identification of the PA problem comes first logically, in the sense that at first a PA problem has to be identified, before a philosophical perspective may be mobilised as the 'solution' to shed light on the problem; and it comes first generally also chronologically, although it may also be the case that the philosophical stream that gets mobilised is the 'preferred' philosophy—or one of the preferred philosophies—of the scholar (or practitioner) engaging with the problem, and this represents a case of 'solution in search of a problem'. Given the challenge for a(ny) scholar to master more than one philosophical stream and more than one PA problem, and to do so in such depth to be able to employ the former to tackle the latter, this may very often be the only realistically feasible form that scholarly works connecting philosophy and PA can take.

### ii. Mobilising *a Range of Philosophies*, Rather Than 'Just One', and *Combining* Them for Addressing PA Problems

This approach (of which we have seen an exemplar in Tijsterman and Overeem' work, 2008) hinges on combining two or more approaches (often by comparing and contrasting their respective explanatory power) for the investigation of a given PA theme or problem. The key idea here is that by expanding the range of philosophies that are being mobilised, and applying them in a combined way, a better grasp on the PA topic of investigation may be attained. A research strategy similar in thrust is that of connecting the thinking of philosophers to then show the combined influence on PA theory, as in Sager and Rosser (2009) who notice the influence of Hegel on the theorising of the modern bureaucracy of both

Woodrow Wilson and Max Weber, notably in relation to the issue of the politics-administration dichotomy.

A key research and intellectual strategy in this approach can be that of encompassing philosophical perspectives from different intellectual-civilisational traditions. For example, one approach may lie in mobilising and, crucially, combining both eastern and western philosophical perspectives to address PA problems. This approach has been pursued in the special issue in the journal *Public Policy and Administration* guest edited by Ho and Ongaro (2025) which has aimed at revisiting foundational issues in public administration by employing in a combined way both eastern and western philosophies. As a specific example, Yifeng Ni and Ning Liu (2025) combine one eastern and one western philosophical perspective to work out defining issues about the nature of PA as a field of knowledge. Specifically, they mobilise Wang Yangming's interpretation of the Xin Xue school of thought which initiated during the Song Dynasty in China and provided a counterpoint to the then dominant Li Xue school, and William James's philosophy of Pragmatism, for tackling a meta-theoretical issue in PA, namely the theory-practice divide. These two philosophical perspectives are combined to form what Ni and Liu refer to as the 'virtuous-pragmatic approach', whose main thrust is offering a novel and different perspective to tackle the issue of the 'theory-practice' divide in public administration. Their suggested approach is shaped by a combination of these two philosophies, and Ni and Liu's work is therefore illustrative of the combined approach to the application of philosophical thinking to tackle PA problems presented here.

Another work which considers in an interesting way a range of (political) philosophies for PA is Ansell (2025). The paper clearly adopts a normative perspective to the relationship of philosophy to PA. Ansell introduces the notion of 'public philosophy', defined as a system of principles and values that cohere (to some degree) and are invoked and utilised to guide public action and debate, thereby pointing to a normative use of philosophy and to a way to address the 'big question' of what principles and values ought to guide the (re-)configuration of the administrative state (the main reference in Ansell's contribution is PA in the USA, though his theoretical framing of the contribution of philosophy for PA can be applied more widely). The chapter discusses three political philosophies—populism, liberalism and civic republicanism—and contrasts the implications of each of these for the configuration of the public sector: a plurality of philosophical streams are therefore mobilised

and their contribution discussed, and in this sense, this contribution falls within the present approach, namely mobilising a range of philosophies and combining them for addressing a given PA problem. At yet another level, Ansell takes a broad perspective in discussing the role of public philosophy (the very term of 'public philosophy' being his coin), almost providing a sort of mapping of how the field of political philosophy can be employed for addressing normative concerns in PA. In this sense, Ansell's contribution can be seen as prefiguring (albeit at bird's-eye view level) the third approach we refer to below—approach (iii)—that of matching entire fields of philosophy (in this case political philosophy) with thematic areas in PA (in this case, the configuration of the administrative state).

We notice that approach (ii)—and even more so approach (iii) discussed below—may require a level of knowledge and expertise—in both manifold philosophical strands and in the field of PA—which may be hard to attain in practice by one scholar only, or even a team of co-authors (albeit not impossible, as the very work by Ni and Liu exemplifies). Such approach may require an important level of cross-disciplinary teamwork: the building of networks of teams (teams of philosophers versed in different specific streams, teams of PA scholars focused on different topical areas) working together around common problems, supported by a common framework of analysis.

### iii. *Matching* Fields of Philosophy with Thematic Areas of PA

The difference to the previous approaches is that in this approach the thrust is to identify fields/areas of philosophy as privileged intellectual sources for given thematic areas of PA, rather than singling out one specific philosophy for application to a given PA problem. So, for example, political philosophy can be matched to the PA thematic area of 'good governance', or to the PA topic of the issue of the legitimacy of populist elected government vs. the role of civil servants as guardians of liberal democracy (Bauer, 2023; Yesilkagit et al., 2024—we further revisit this topic in Chapter 4 when considering how to align philosophical perspectives and PA doctrines).

Embedded within such broader matching of fields of philosophy to thematic areas of inquiry in PA, it is then possible to apply one or a range of philosophies, individually or in combination (see point (i) and (ii) above), drawn from within the focused field of philosophy, to address

PA problems in the given PA thematic area. Developing approach (iii) can be seen as a longer term—yet highly salient—research programme involving to an even broader extent than approach (ii) a significant level of cross-disciplinary teamwork.

## Conclusion

This chapter presents, describes and illustrates the functions that philosophy can perform when applied to PA. Philosophy applied to a PA problem or theme can perform: an enlightening function; a critical function; a gap filling function; an integrative function; and a normative function—one or more such functions in a combined way. The discussion of a number of scientific articles in PA that employ and deploy a philosophical perspective as a core part of the argument is used in an illustrative way to highlight the actual performance of these functions in published scholarly work. Most of these articles mobilise one philosophical stream to tackle a chosen PA problem (we have reasons to believe these are representative of the extant literature, that is, that most of the very limited scholarly literature connecting philosophy and PA mobilise one philosophical stream to tackle the chosen PA problem). The chapter therefore expands on the possibility of combining a range of philosophies to address given PA problems, and to, more ambitiously, match fields of philosophy with thematic areas of PA as ways of more closely interconnecting philosophy and PA.

In the next chapter, we turn to another direction of inquiry—which in a sense is the one going the other way around: the direction of inquiry that aims at detecting the extent to which extant scientific works in the field of PA incorporate philosophy into their core argument, with the aim to trace back and 'unveil' the underlying (often implicit) philosophical premises and underpinnings of such works: the direction of inquiry of mapping backwards, from philosophy to PA.

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