

# INTRODUCTION

This book, an essay in the proper Montaignean sense, seeks to answer that most fundamental of philosophical questions: What is philosophy? It does so, however, in an unusual way: by refraining from proclamations about what philosophy, ideally, ought to be, and by asking instead what philosophy has been, what it is that people have been doing under the banner of philosophy in different times and places. In what follows we will survey the history of the various self-conceptions of philosophers in different historical eras and contexts. We will seek to uncover the different “job descriptions” attached to the social role of the philosopher in different times and places. Through historical case studies, autobiographical interjections, and parafictional excursions, it will be our aim to enrich the current understanding of what the project of philosophy is, or could be, by uncovering and critically examining lost, forgotten, or undervalued conceptions of the project from philosophy’s distinguished past.

This approach could easily seem not just unusual but also misguided, since philosophy is generally conceived as an a priori discipline concerned with conceptual analysis rather than with the collection of particular facts about past practice. As a result of this widespread conception, most commonly,

## INTRODUCTION

when philosophers set about answering the question as to the nature of their discipline, they end up generating answers that reflect the values and preoccupations of their local philosophical culture. Thus Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari answer the question, in their 1991 book *What Is Philosophy?*,<sup>1</sup> by arguing that it is the activity of conceptual innovation, the generating of new concepts, and thus of new ways of looking at the world. But this is a conception of philosophy that would be utterly unfamiliar to, say, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who suggested that philosophy is the practice of “shewing the fly the way out of the bottle,”<sup>2</sup> or, alternatively, that it is “a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language,”<sup>3</sup> and it would be more unfamiliar still to the natural philosopher of the seventeenth century, who studied meteorological phenomena in order to discern the regularities at work in the world around us, and had no particular interest in devising new concepts for discerning these regularities. Thus when Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy is the activity of concept coining, they should really be saying that this is what they would like philosophy to be.

Philosophy has in fact been many things in the 2,500 years or so since the term was first used, and here we will be interested in charting its transformations. We will be equally interested in exploring the question whether the activity of philosophy is coextensive with the term, that is, whether it is *only* those activities that have been explicitly carried out under the banner of *philosophia* that are to be considered philosophy, or whether there are also analogical practices in cultures that have evolved independently of the culture of ancient Greece that can also be called by the name “philosophy.” I will be arguing that they can and should be, but even if we restrict our understanding of philosophy to those cultural traditions that

INTRODUCTION

bear some historical and genealogical relationship to the practice in ancient Greece that was first called by this name, we still discover a great variety of divergent conceptions of what the activity in question is. Let us, in any case, in what follows, use the term “Philosophia,” with a capital “P,” when we wish to explicitly mark out the genealogical connection between authors, arguments, and texts throughout the broader Greek, Roman, Islamic, and Christian world, while using “philosophy” to designate cultural practices, wherever they may occur, that bear some plausible affinity to those cultural practices that fall under the heading of “Philosophia,” which, again, signals a particular historical tradition and thus, strictly speaking, a proper noun.

The sociologist Randall Collins, author of an extensive and very wide-scoped study of the development of schools of philosophy throughout history and at a global scale, identifies as philosophers those people, anywhere in the world, who treat “problems of the reality of the world, of universals, of other minds, of meaning.”<sup>4</sup> Collins does not discern any particular difficulty in picking out clear-cut examples of philosophical schools in different regions and centuries, and the problems he lists are not of particular or sustained interest to him as a sociologist. Yet there have been many self-identified philosophers who have not been interested in the problems in this list and have instead been interested in other, very different problems (for example, explaining “unwholesome vapours”). There are, moreover, many thinkers who have been interested in these problems but who have not belonged to the sort of schools of interest to Collins; they have had the right interests, but have lacked the sociological embedding to be able to come forward, socially, as philosophers.

Typically, where there is such a sociological context, philosophers have expended considerable effort to identify those

## INTRODUCTION

activities or projects that philosophy is *not*. Some of these are mutually exclusive in relation to at least some others. Philosophy, to begin with a classic distinction, is not sophistry. This contrast in turn breaks down into two further defining features of the activity. First of all, philosophy is concerned with finding the truth, whatever the truth may be, unlike sophistry, which is concerned, to use the well-known phrase, with “making the weaker argument the stronger.” Second, philosophy is practiced by people who are not interested in worldly gain. Philosophers do not accept money in exchange for their truth-revealing arguments, while it is principally for the sake of money that Sophists engage in argumentation. Philosophy moreover is the activity that deploys the laws of logic, or the rules of proper reasoning, in order to provide true accounts of reality. Here philosophy contrasts with traditions that we today think of as “religion” and “myth,” to the extent that these tend not to take inexpressibility or logical contradictoriness as weaknesses in attempted accounts of reality. On the contrary, it is often argued that logical contradiction, expressed in the form of “mysteries,” plays an important role in the success and durability of religions. Christianity, for example, endures not *in spite of* its inability to answer the question of how exactly three persons can be one and the same person, but rather *because of* the impossibility of answering this question. Philosophy has seldom been able to rely on mystery in the same way, even though it has often been called in to support mystic traditions using tools that are largely external to these traditions.

Philosophy, to continue, is often held to be the activity that is concerned with universal truths, to be discovered by a priori reflection, rather than with particular truths, which are to be discovered by empirical means. One way of putting this

INTRODUCTION

point is in terms of a contrast with an archaic sense of history, where this latter practice has both civic and natural subdomains, both of which are concerned with *res singulares*, or particular things. This sense of history also contrasts with poetry: Aristotle distinguishes in the *Poetics* between history and poetry on the grounds that the former tells only about actuality, while the latter is concerned with all possibilities, whether they in fact happen, or fail to happen. He writes that “it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen: what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity.” For Aristotle, philosophy is not concerned with particular things as intrinsically of interest, and therefore sees poetry and philosophy as more like each other than either of these is like history. “The poet and the historian,” he explains,

differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.<sup>5</sup>

The scope of poetry is wider than that of history, but poetry is also often contrasted with philosophy to the extent that the poets see no need to speak of the possibilities over which their thought ranges. Thus philosophy is like poetry and unlike history, on this old distinction, to the extent that it ranges beyond the actual, while it is like history and unlike poetry to the extent that its claims must not violate any appropriate

## INTRODUCTION

rules of inference. As we will see, however, this division of the various endeavors that goes back to Aristotle, while a common one, is by no means universally accepted: from Heraclitus to Francis Bacon, G. W. Leibniz, and many others, the focus on the actual, and indeed on the particular, has been seen as a crucial component of the philosophical project.

Where, now, is “science” in these distinctions? What we mean by “science” is generally closest to what was formerly called “natural history”: the methodical collection of particular facts in order to gain further knowledge about the actual world. There is also “natural philosophy,” which was long understood as the speculative project that parallels the natural-historical project of collection of particular facts. Seen as the joint endeavor of natural history and natural philosophy, science was long constitutive of philosophy, and the circumstances and consequences of its separation are among the questions to which we will be returning frequently here.

Philosophy, then, is not history, myth, poetry, religious mystery, or sophistical argumentation, and it is not, any longer, science. It is an intellectual activity that bumps up against these other intellectual activities, perhaps overlapping with them, or coming to their aid, while also remaining quite distinct from them. Or so we often think.

In truth the activity of philosophy is often more muddled. To invoke a geological metaphor, philosophy generally only occurs in ores, and the process of extracting it to obtain it in its pure form is generally very costly, and often damaging to the sought-after element. As a reflection of its muddled character, in its earliest usages “philosophy” is generally deployed pejoratively, to describe an activity of people who are confused, who fail to understand the precise nature of their un-

dertaking. This is particularly clear when we turn from “philosophy” to the agentive form of that noun, to the person who enacts or participates in or does philosophy: the philosopher.

Interestingly, while “philosophy” is only sometimes pejorative, variations on this word almost always are. From its first appearances in English in the late sixteenth century, the verb “to philosophize” has been almost without exception used to describe a pompous, posturing, or spurious sort of reasoning and has often been contrasted with true love of wisdom. Thus, for example, Henry More writes in the *Antidote against Atheism* of 1662, “My intent is not to Philosophize concerning the nature of Spirits, but onely to prove their Existence.”<sup>6</sup> This declaration is somewhat analogous to the bumper sticker sometimes found in the United States declaring: “I’m not religious, I just love the Lord!” That is, the speaker is conscious of the negative connotations surrounding the *type* of person associated with the activity in which he or she is engaged, and so insists that he or she is *only* doing the activity, without belonging to the type. The verb “to philosophize” is also often used to describe a sort of pointless and ineffectual expenditure of intellectual energy that changes nothing in the world; thus Keats’s imploring of the fish to do what he knows they cannot do, to philosophize away the ice on the rivers in wintertime.<sup>7</sup> In recent decades Anglo-American philosophers have adopted the phrase “to do philosophy.” It is common now to take philosophy as a clearly defined activity, as something that one “does” in the same way that one might do physical exercise. We also see a retrojection of this locution back into the distant past, as a translation of the Greek verb *philosophēin*. To find Aristotle speaking of “philosophizing” sounds archaic and somewhat degraded, while to find him reflecting on what

## INTRODUCTION

it means “to do philosophy” seems up to date and respectable.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the apparent disappearance of negative connotations to the agentive form of “philosophy,” “philosopher,” seems to parallel the shift in the verbal form from “to philosophize” to “to do philosophy.”

Evidently, the shift in both the verb and the agentive noun has much to do with the professionalization of philosophy, with the transformation of philosophy from something with which one might engage—whether pompously or humbly, fraudulently or honestly—as part of a way of life, to something that one is enabled to do only with the appropriate accreditation within a particular institutional setting. While professional philosophers in the developed world today might not wish to acknowledge that when they speak of “doing philosophy” they are speaking of a particular professional activity akin to practicing law or doing hospital rounds as a physician, it is unlikely that many of them would admit that philosophy is something that can be “done” in Tibetan monasteries or the winter encampments of the Inuit. Although the word is avoided, most professional philosophers today probably suspect that what Inuit are doing as they pass the long dark hours of winter speculating on the nature of time or the origin of the world is something closer to “philosophizing,” in the somewhat degraded sense of needless or fanciful intellectual expenditure.

On both sides of the shift we’ve identified, from questionable philosophizing to professional doing of philosophy, the term “philosophy” has generally been free of negative associations, standing, like some transcendent idea, above the shabby efforts of would-be philosophers to realize it in their own thought and work: somewhat in the same way “poetry” stands to both “poet” and “poem.” Philosophy and the self-identified philosophers who aspire to “do” it have a very different rela-



tion between them than, say, that between medicine and the physician, where the relationship appears to be something of reciprocal ennoblement. Medicine is a noble art because of the work of its practitioners, and physicians are noble because medicine is in its nature a high calling. In contrast, self-proclaimed philosophers must always be ready to defend against the accusation that they are not living up to the calling of philosophy, and are therefore philosophers only in name. In other words, philosophy is not necessarily present wherever there are self-described philosophers. Thus Thomas Hobbes writes of the ancient Greeks in the *De corpore* of 1655:

But what? were there no philosophers natural nor civil among the ancient Greeks? There were men so called; witness Lucian, by whom they are derided; witness divers cities, from which they have been often by public edicts banished. But it follows not that there was philosophy.<sup>9</sup>

These days, though you might get hit with a lawsuit for telling someone with a professional degree in philosophy that he is “not a philosopher,”<sup>10</sup> as Hobbes reminds us the simple presence of philosophers is not enough to guarantee the presence of philosophy.

**T**he present history cannot be written in a conventional chronological order, since straightforward chronology, from past to present, from them to us, inevitably implies some sort of commitment to the march of progress, whereas part of our purpose here is to show that philosophy’s motion throughout history from one self-conception to the next has been at best a sort of random stumbling, and at worst a retreat from an earlier more capacious understanding of the endeavor. What

## INTRODUCTION

therefore must be avoided is the sort of historiography in which past thought is construed as preliminary or propaedeutic to what would eventually emerge as mature philosophy. This approach is sometimes disparaged as “the royal road to me,” and it characterizes many of the most influential general surveys of the history of philosophy, notably Bertrand Russell’s famous *History of Western Philosophy* of 1945.<sup>11</sup> The idea of progress in historical processes has come under severe criticism by historians over the past several decades. Historical narratives that presume a gradual advance through stages, from a rudimentary or primitive stage in a process to a more advanced and perfected one, and that identify the agents of change as a select number of great people, mostly men, have been deemed methodologically “Whiggish,” and have largely been replaced by historical narratives that emphasize the limits of individual human agency and the adaptive sense of change within any given process. That is, change now tends to be conceived not teleologically, as change for the better, but simply as change that makes sense within a given context and a given local rationality. Thus, for example, the Industrial Revolution is not the result of the inventiveness and determination of a few clever European men but rather a gradual process of adaptation to new economic exigencies by players who could never have seen anything close to the full picture and that involved the incorporation of new technologies that had mostly been developed outside the European sphere. Similarly with military history: out with the brave and clever generals, in with an analysis of geographical and demographic advantages that favor one side, for a time, without ever ensuring the inexorable and unending ascendancy of one particular group over the others, as the star and the focus of history.

Significantly, Whiggish teleology has been largely left behind in the study of technology and science—fields where one *could* plausibly make a case that there is such a thing as real progress, and therefore that the history of the domain is, appropriately and accurately, a history of progress or ascendancy. Machines just keep getting better and faster, which is what technologists want them to be doing. How then could the history of technology not reflect this happy collusion between human will and reality? We can set this complicated question aside for now in order to turn to a related question that is more central to our present interests. Most philosophers, whether they wish to hold on to some idea of philosophical progress or not, will agree that philosophical progress is not exactly like technological progress. Philosophical arguments do not get “faster” or “more powerful” in the way that machines do. What is more, there is often thought to be an “eternal” dimension to the activity of philosophy, which renders progress impossible to the extent that past representatives of the tradition are conceptualized as our contemporaries, engaged with us in an “eternal conversation” that unites the living and the dead in a single activity, in which we are all potentially equal regardless of the century in which we are born. Almost no one would wish to say that Aristotle had all the resources available to him to be as advanced in physics as Einstein was, while very many people would, by contrast, be prepared to argue that Aristotle was as advanced in his contributions to, say, moral philosophy, as has been anyone who came after him.

It is not hard to see how conceptualizing philosophy as an eternal conversation with its past representatives could, though superficially transhistorical and even atemporal, nonetheless support a teleological or progress-based conception of the

## INTRODUCTION

history of philosophy. In taking the dead as our contemporaries, who are in no position to speak any more for themselves or to demand clarification or precision in our representation of their views, inevitably past philosophers get construed in our own image. But how can this be permitted to happen, when other disciplines with historical components, not least history itself, have become so sensitive in recent decades to the need for rigorous methodological reflection on historiography? The answer could well have to do with a simple lack of interest in the question of historical methodology *as* a philosophical question. That is, while philosophers, or at least the majority of philosophers in the English-speaking world, might be interested in the metaphysical problem of how we can know the past, they do not seem to be particularly interested in the problem of how we can know the past of philosophy itself, of how we can know that our characterizations of the aims and arguments of past philosophers are the correct ones. They are not interested in thinking about the way in which we deploy standards of evidence when considering textual sources, or secondary testimony, or other such philological matters. To take an interest in these questions would be to acknowledge that philosophy *has* a philological component, and therefore cannot be, simply, an unmediated, eternal conversation. And so, often, in the general refusal to consider the discipline as in part a philological endeavor, past figures come to be treated as mascots for positions that are deemed important today, whether these positions played an important part in the self-conception of the past philosopher or in the community in which he or she thrived. We tell stories about the past, and call it “history.”

“History” and “story” have the same etymology, indeed are the very same word in many languages, and there are some

who argue forcefully that storytelling is the most we can ever do in our efforts to reconstruct the past; after all, even if all the things we report about the past are factually true, they are still selected by us, and are favored over infinitely many equally true facts that did not make the cut. Ironically, then, while the Whiggish historian who tells us how *a* led to *b* led to *c* led to *me* is probably going to insist on her loyalty to the truth, she is telling stories like the rest of us; she is making history turn out a certain way by selecting a series of facts deemed salient enough to constitute history.

And yet there may be a way, even in acknowledging these difficult issues, to do it better, to give a more adequate account of the past, not because it gets more of the facts from the past right, but because it picks out and strings together those facts from the past that, together, cause us to believe that we now understand more clearly what some historical process has really been about. This belief need not be definitive, nor need it last forever. A compelling account of the past is not like a scientific discovery.

A story needs characters, and in the history of philosophy we observe the recurrence, in a number of different times and places, of a few basic types of thinker, all of whom have been held to be “philosophers,” notwithstanding the great differences between them.

There is, to begin, the Curiosus, the great forgotten model of the philosophical life. A principal concern of this book is to solve the mystery of his disappearance. He is the philosopher who expatiates on storms and tempests, on magnetic variation, on the fine-grained details of the wings of a flea. The Curiosus is often a Curiosa: many of the adepts of early modern experimental philosophy were women.

## INTRODUCTION

Curiosae and Curiosi believe that there is nothing shameful about knowledge of *res singulares*: singular things. These too can reveal the order of nature as a whole, and it is eminently the task of the philosopher, on their view, to discover this order. The paradigm statement of this approach to philosophy may well be found in Aristotle's defense of the worthiness of marine biology against unnamed critics: looking into the viscera of some sea cucumber or cephalopod, he proclaims, citing Heraclitus, who was caught by distinguished visitors lounging naked on a stove: "Here too dwell gods." This dictum was invoked in Aristotle's explicit defense of the philosophical value of the study of zoology. The Curiosus, a familiar figure of the seventeenth century, just prior to the emergence of the figure of the scientist, seems to have been the last of the philosophers to see the gods, so to speak, in the particular things of nature.

Second, there is the Sage. This is likely the oldest social role of the philosopher and predates by dozens of millennia the first occurrence of the word *philosophos*. The label here is to be understood in a broad sense, to include any socially revered figure who is held forth as a mediator between the immanent and transcendent realms, who is held to be able to speak for the gods or interpret what is going on beyond the realm of human experience. It includes, for example, the Brahminic commentators on the sacred scriptures of India, who have provided us with the textual basis of classical Indian philosophy. This social role is also surely continuous with that of shamans and like figures in nontextual cultures, even if it only starts to look to us like a philosophical or quasi-philosophical endeavor at the point in history when the mediating role of the priests is laid down in texts that display some concern for concep-

tual clarity and valid inference. It is a role occupied by women and men alike, even if women in this role have often been deprived of institutional or broad social recognition. Tellingly, the French term for a midwife, a role long held to involve wisdom relating to the human body and its place in nature, is *sage-femme*: a “wise woman” or “woman sage.”

Third, there is the Gadfly, who understands the social role of the philosopher not as mediating between the social and the divine, nor as renouncing the social, but rather as correcting, to the extent possible, the myopic views and misunderstandings of the members of his own society, to the extent possible. Socrates is a special case of the Gadfly, since he does not have a positive program to replace the various ill-conceived beliefs and plans of his contemporaries, in contrast with the various social critics or *philosophes engagés* who follow in this venerable and still vital vein.

Fourth, there is the Ascetic, who appears in what Karl Jaspers helpfully calls “the Axial Age,”<sup>12</sup> the age in which Buddhism and Christianity come onto the world stage, both positioning themselves as explicit rejections of the authority of the priests in their ornate temples. Cynics, Jainists (known to the Greeks as “gymnosophists” or “nude Sophists”), early Christians, and other world renouncers provide a template for a conception of philosophy as first and foremost a conformation of the way one lives variously to nature, or to divine law, or to something beyond the illusory authority of society, the state, or the temple. The Ascetic continues to be a familiar figure in philosophy throughout the Middle Ages, though now mostly confined within the walls of the monastery, and still has late echoes in secular modernity in figures such as Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche is generally seen as a peculiar individual, but

## INTRODUCTION

this may have something to do with the fact that there was by the late nineteenth century no longer an obvious social role for him to play. Asceticism as a style of philosophy had gone out of fashion.

Fifth, there is the Mandarin. This is a pejorative term, though unlike “Courtier” (as we will soon see) it describes an entire class of people rather than exceptional individuals who may emerge from that class. The term comes from the examination system that produced the elite class of bureaucrats in Imperial China, and may be easily extended to the modern French system that produces *normaliens*, and also with only a bit more stretching to the system of elite education in the Anglo-American sphere out of which the great majority of successful careers in philosophy take shape. Mandarins have a vested interest in maintaining what Thomas Kuhn called “normal science” and are typically jealous guardians of disciplinary boundaries, wherever these happen to be found in the era of their own professional activity. Like Courtiers, Mandarins often have wealthy benefactors (now corporate rather than royal), and they stay close to centers of power (top schools in philosophy today tend to be found within a short drive or train ride from the world’s major metropolitan concentrations of capital). But unlike Courtiers, they are able to pursue their careers more or less as if money were not an issue, and indeed are the ones quickest to denounce the Courtiers for their unseemly conduct. It is the Mandarins whose fate is most uncertain in the postuniversity landscape into which we may now be entering.

A well-known and much despised social role for the philosopher, the sixth and final type, is the Courtier. A recent popular book set up Baruch Spinoza as the noble Ascetic against the unscrupulous Leibniz, who was ready to sell his philo-



INTRODUCTION

sophical services to whichever European sovereign was willing to pay the highest salary.<sup>13</sup> We were meant to understand, from this narrative opposition between their two social roles, that Spinoza was *eo ipso* the better philosopher. It is as if we believe that one cannot be simultaneously ambitious and wise, simultaneously a worldly striver and a deep thinker. It is with the Courtier, too, for the first time in our list, that money makes its explicit appearance (though it was surely there in some of the temples of the priestly Sages as well). The more recent incarnation of the Courtier is the “sell-out,” or, to put it in somewhat more euphemistic terms, the “public intellectual,” who unlike the Gadfly is out there in society, not in order to change it, but in order to advance himself and his own glory. (The gendered pronoun here is intentional, and for the most part accurate.) But there is a problem in determining who fits this description and who does not; all philosophers need support, and few have the fortitude to retreat into pure asceticism. Those who get cast as Courtiers seem to be the ones who take earthly wealth and glory as the end in itself, rather than at most as a by-product of their pure love of wisdom. Or at least they are the ones who do a particularly bad job of concealing the fact that it is wealth and glory they are after. Whether, however, these desiderata are strictly incompatible with profound thought is an important question. Leibniz would seem to provide a counterexample to the claim that they are incompatible, but an interesting question remains, and indeed a question whose answer could tell us much about the nature of the philosophical project, as to why “Courtier” continues to function as such a potent *ad hominem* against the integrity of a philosopher.

This list, unlike Kant’s list of the categories of the understanding, is not exhaustive, and it is not obtained by rigorous

## INTRODUCTION

deduction. It could be amended and revised without end. One might also add the Charlatan, for example, the self-help guru who promises to explain everything you need to know. But what we will find is that our six types, and various hybrids between them, give us enough to make sense of the life work and the social impact of more or less everyone who has been called a “philosopher” over the past few millennia.

Six chapters follow, and each chapter will be visited by at least one of the six types just listed, speaking in his or her own voice. Each chapter will to a greater or lesser degree circle around some of the philosophical problems of interest to a representative of a given type. But each chapter will do more than that, too; each will, namely, seek to elucidate a particular opposition that has been brought into service by philosophers seeking to define what is and what is not philosophy. The position of the featured philosophical type with respect to the opposition explored in any given chapter will not always be perfectly transparent, and where this is the case the reader is invited to make the implicit connections on his or her own.

In chapter one we will focus in particular on the idea that philosophy is principally an endeavor that deals with universal truths as opposed to particular facts, and we will see significant evidence that such a conception of philosophy occludes from view a large portion of what people have been doing under the banner of philosophy for the past few millennia. Chapter one’s plaidoyer for the philosophical importance of singular things will return again and again throughout the book, and may be seen as a leitmotif, even as we move on to focus on other oppositions. In chapter two we will focus on the conceit that “philosophy” is a sort of proper noun, describ-

ing a particular tradition that descends from Greek antiquity, and we will contrast this idea with its opposites, which hold, variously, that philosophy is something that is practiced by specialists throughout the world in vastly different cultures, or even that philosophy is something that is entirely interwoven with culture and so is something in which all people participate qua culture-bound beings. In chapter three we will turn to questions of genre: the distinction between personalistic first-person writing and objective, treatise-like, third-person writing most of all, but also the distinction between literature and poetry on the one hand and philosophy-writing as a genre on the other. We will look at the ways in which these distinctions have served to bound philosophy off from neighboring endeavors, and we will question the legitimacy of this bounding. In the fourth chapter we will turn to the question of philosophy as an embodied activity, and we will consider the potential significance of the fact that in the history of Western philosophy there are in general very few instructions as to what we should be doing with our bodies while our minds are exploring the universal and the eternal. This point of difference between much Western philosophy and at least one familiar school of Eastern philosophy—familiar to the West, that is—will then convey us into a broader discussion of the problematic nature of the classification of philosophical traditions by reference to these familiar cardinal points of the compass. In chapter five we will turn to the distinction between “analytic” and “continental” philosophy, as well as to related provincialisms, in the aim of discerning what more significant divisions between approaches to philosophy these may be concealing from our view, and we will return, once again, to lessons drawn from both chapters one and two: the importance to philosophy

## INTRODUCTION

of attention to singular things, and, among these, the singular beliefs of people who belong to intellectual cultures other than our own. In the sixth and final chapter, we will turn to the difficult question of the relationship between philosophy and money: whether the two are incompatible, and, if not, what risks we run when we permit the two to join forces.