

# Preface

The essays in this volume are based on The Royal Institute of Philosophy's annual London lecture series for 2007–8. In the series a number of distinguished philosophers were asked to consider and elaborate their own conception of their subject.

In doing so they considered such questions as whether philosophy is an art or a science. Or is it neither? Can we discern progress in philosophy? Do philosophical positions ever really die, or do they just reappear in new guises? Can any philosophical position ever be definitively established? Or refuted? Can we discover wisdom through philosophical reflection, as many earlier philosophers had hoped? Or is philosophy no more than an underlabourer to the sciences, and a clarifier of our day-to-day concepts?

It is fair to say that none of the contributors to the volume thinks of philosophy as no more than an adjunct to the natural sciences. Most, if not all, doubt that in its own methods it should aspire to the methods of the sciences. Their own positive accounts of philosophy's methods and possibilities are, though, varied and at times surprising, and should spark the interest of anyone involved in philosophy.

The Royal Institute of Philosophy would like to thank all the contributors to both lecture series and volume, and also Adam Ferner for preparing the index.

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