



Metaphilosophy: Philosophy in Philosophical Perspective

Nicholas Rescher

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The definitive mission of metaphilosophy is to facilitate an understanding of how philosophy works—the aim of the enterprise, the instrumental and procedural resources for its work, and the prospect of its success. Nicholas Rescher unites two facets of metaphilosophy to show that historical perspective and forward-thinking normative, or systematic, metaphilosophy cannot be independent of one another. The descriptive, or historical, metaphilosophy provides an account of *what has been thought* regarding the conduct of philosophical inquiry, and the prescriptive, or normative, metaphilosophy which deliberates about what is to be thought regarding the conduct of philosophizing. Rescher argues that metaphilosophy forms a part of philosophy itself. This is a unique feature of the discipline since the philosophy of biology is not a part of biology and the philosophy of mathematics is not a part of mathematics. Ultimately, the salient features of philosophizing in general—including the inherently controversial and discordant nature of philosophical doctrines—are also bound to afflict metaphilosophy. Thus, only by a careful analysis of the central issues can a plausible view of the enterprise be developed.

Metaphilosophy: Philosophy in Philosophical Perspective challenges the static, compartmentalized view of metaphilosophy, providing insight for scholars and students of all areas of philosophy.

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