

Announcement of the 2026 Conference
The Second International Online Conference of the Journal *Philosophies*:
“Philosophical Unity of the Diverse Forms of Inquiry”
Held online on October 26-30, 2026
Conference Website: <https://sciforum.net/event/IOCPh2026>
Conference Theme: “From Ontic Unity to Epistemic Defragmentation”

Keywords: Metaphilosophy; Integration as a tool for understanding; Tradition and innovation in philosophy

Important Dates

- **Extended Abstract Submission Deadline: 15 August 2026**
- **Notification of Abstract Acceptance: 15 September 2026**
- **Registration Deadline: 20 October 2026**

Synopsis of the Conference Theme and Objectives

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The journal *Philosophies* invites contributions to its upcoming Second International Online Conference, “Philosophical Unity of the Diverse Forms of Inquiry,” to be held on October 26-30, 2026. This event has a broader theme than the First International Conference of the journal *Philosophies* “Intelligent Inquiry into Intelligence” held in 2025 ([The 1st International Online Conference of the Journal *Philosophies* - Intelligent Inquiry into Intelligence-Contributing to the 2025 IS4SI Summit](#)), but it can be considered a continuation of its very successful predecessor. Not only does its design follow the same main features, such as the focus on engagement in interaction involving invited speakers, panelists, and the audience, ample time for moderated discussions, and early dissemination of materials presenting all contributions, allowing all participants to prepare for exchanges of views and opinions. Its theme, From Ontic Unity to Epistemic Defragmentation, directs the attention of the philosophical community to the facilitation of understanding in epistemic processes through the integration of inquiries and possibly by the enrichment of philosophy by new methods. Naturally, understanding presupposes some form of intelligence and can be placed in the sequence intelligence – rationality – understanding. However, its relation to knowledge is much more complex, and even the status of the steps in this sequence is debatable. Are these distinctions a matter of quality or degree?

The theme of the Second Conference is more general and metaphilosophical in its call for reflection on the role of philosophy in searching for a unified view of reality derived from

various forms of inquiry, and overcoming the barriers created by differences in their methodological tools. The First Conference had a similar objective of searching for the common ground, but in a more restricted context of the study of intelligence. Now, we invite contributions with reflections on a more general subject of the role of philosophy in integrating studies in more diverse contexts, of course, including the study of intelligence as one of them.

Following the mission of the *Philosophies*, the general goal of the conference is to promote interaction and mutual stimulation between philosophical reflection, scientific research, and other forms of intellectual inquiry, including diverse forms of expression for philosophical reflection in art, music, drama, and literature. The journal is intended not only as a venue for publishing philosophical works in the traditional style and works relevant to the enrichment of philosophy through bridging it with diverse forms of inquiry developed in other domains of intellectual pursuit of knowledge, but also as an environment for fostering intellectual interaction, beneficial not only for philosophy but also for other contexts of human activities. The upcoming conference has as one of its objectives a self-reflection on the role of philosophy in guiding science, technology, economy, and other domains of modern life in their present unprecedented disruptive developments.

It has been announced that half of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 2025 went to Joel Mokyr of Northwestern University, for his discovery that technological innovation must be accompanied by scientific understanding of *why* natural phenomena involved in innovative practices occurred, before it leads to sustained economic growth [1]. However, the expression “scientific understanding,” frequently used in reports celebrating this highly recognized achievement in the study of innovation, is misleading, as it hides the fundamental role of philosophy in understanding the results of scientific inquiries. Progress in scientific research is driven mainly by the questions of the type of *how*, not *why*, and the answers are sought within the highly specialized disciplines with their specific methodologies. Attempts to broaden these narrowly focused questions are not always welcome in the scientific community, and meet with the exclamation of the dictum “shut up and calculate,” made famous in the context of physics by David Mermin [2], infamously frequently misattributed through the Matthiew effect to Richard Feynmann [3]. The need for crossing disciplinary borders has been commonly recognized, but let’s not be deceived by official declarations of love for interdisciplinarity, which is used more often as a fashionable word than a concept of clearly identified methodology. We are not much closer now to the elimination of intellectual fragmentation in the exploration of reality than at the time when its detrimental influence was originally recognized in the context of university education at the end of the Second World War, and soon later made famous by C. P. Snow as a split into the Two Cultures.

The issue is deeper than centrifugal forces of specialization generated by the ever-increasing volume of information necessary to acquire expertise. The fast development of information technology and its methods of information retrieval have made it a secondary issue. A much deeper and more difficult obstacle is the conceptual and methodological diversification and

fragmentation. This subject was already addressed in the three Special Issues of Philosophies devoted to the Contemporary Natural Philosophy, presenting a very wide range of unifying ideas stimulated by the tradition of Natural Philosophy from which multiple scientific disciplines have been born, but with the outlook at the future benefited by the intellectual experience accumulated in the century of its increasing dissolution into the complex of emancipated, specialized disciplines, allowing the elimination of past errors, such as uncritical acceptance of reductionism [4-6].

However, before seeking the methods of epistemic integration, it is necessary to consider the question about the ontic unity of reality and the feasibility of a unified vision of reality with its own long tradition and checkered history of opposite answers. Thus, first we have to inquire whether we can be sure about the uniqueness and objective character of reality. The answer to this question is already a nontrivial philosophical problem with a long tradition setting the foundation for ontology. Then comes the question about the comprehensibility of reality that sets the foundation for epistemology.

Albert Einstein considered the faith in the comprehensibility of reality a necessary condition for science, which he associated with a form of religious belief: “But science can only be created by those who are thoroughly imbued with the aspiration toward truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion. To this there also belongs the faith in the possibility that the regulations valid for the world of existence are rational, that is, comprehensible to reason. I cannot conceive a genuine scientist without that profound faith. The situation may be expressed by an image: science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind” [7]. He did not address philosophy directly, and his expression of the situation by the image invoking religion has been misunderstood and abused frequently to convince the general audience about his supposedly traditional religious beliefs, but if not the entire paragraph, then the entire essay shows that, in his intention, the image was rather “Science without philosophy is lame, philosophy without science is blind.”

It is the faith in reality being comprehensible to reason and the necessity of the aspiration toward understanding, which indirectly but unequivocally invokes the unity of the comprehending and understanding entity equipped with reason. This is even more obvious when understanding is considered a cognitive attitude, and therefore is a characteristic of an individual human mind.

Certainly, comprehensibility of reality can be considered in many different ways. For instance, in the very influential so-called *togetherness principle* of Immanuel Kant from his *Critique of Pure Reason*, expressed in a short, frequently quoted statement, “Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (A51/B76), has understanding always paired with receptive perception (sensibility) as a tool for synthesis of the latter’s content into concepts, “But it’s the role of the understanding to bring this synthesis to concepts, and in this

way to provide our first knowledge [...]” (A656/B684). Thus, even here, we can see understanding associated with unity, although as a unifier rather than a product of unification.

Understanding can also be considered a more abstract expression of the relationship between the epistemic and ontic status of theoretical study, expressed without direct reference to cognition. While the process of acquiring understanding in this meaning is almost always a collective undertaking involving individual contributions, either coordinated into a synchronic cooperation or accumulated on a diachronic scale, illustrated as “standing on the shoulders of giants”, distributed understanding in a perfective aspect without a unifying mechanism is self-contradictory. Understanding may be considered an emergent intellectual phenomenon, but its achievement requires unity of that which understands.

The search for unity can be considered in the context of the role of philosophy as a unifier of specialized disciplines of science, but the same arguments apply to its role as a unifier of other studies usually not identified with science that have become fragmented into specialized fields, and above all, as a unifier of scientific, technological, humanistic, and cultural inquiries. In the disciplines not identified with science or technology, the resistance to involving philosophy may be much weaker, but even in them, it is easy to imagine the scorn, “shut up and collect your data.”

The questions about the unity of diverse inquiries, the unity within inquiries, and their relation to understanding have a long philosophical tradition, but they have never been exhausted or given definite answers. Hopefully, the contributions to the conference will bring new perspectives on this subject, and with them new questions. These new perspectives may arise from the developments within scientific disciplines or cultural studies. For instance, modern physics, in particular quantum theory, made the traditional separation of ontology and epistemology obsolete. With this comes a very different view of reality and its understanding. Cultural studies and philosophical works from independently developed cultural traditions may provide both alternative questions and alternative answers to shared questions.

The issues related to building a holistic view of reality and the understanding of understanding have recently acquired special status with the rupture brought by the fast development of information technology, and in particular of Artificial Intelligence AI. Some abilities of the Generative AI systems are shockingly impressive, some are very disappointing, but in both cases, the performance of these systems is not well understood, even for their creators. The good performance brings hope for crossing disciplinary borders and assistance in human understanding. At the same time, the lack of understanding of their work brings fear of lost human control. This makes the role of philosophy as a guide for technology not only of great importance, but also of high urgency.

The novelty of this role raises the question about the adequacy of philosophical methodology in facing new challenges for humanity. Philosophy, with its long tradition of historicism, seeking

understanding through the unification of the diversity of views and positions into a diachronic narrative, has only relatively recently enriched its methodology by entering into a close relationship with logic, including mathematical logic. This relationship was expressed in the development of analytic philosophy in general, and of logical empiricism in particular. Probably the most influential early work in the direction of marrying philosophy and mathematical logic was Bertrand Russell's 1919 book *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* [8]. However, Russell's book was not about mathematical philosophy but philosophy of mathematics. In the century that passed from that time, it is not easy to identify any works directly promoting the development and use of mathematical theories as tools for general philosophical inquiry outside of logic, mathematics, or mathematical sciences. Almost as a rule, the expression "mathematical philosophy" in the title of a book or article means that it is actually about the much more restricted philosophy of mathematics or the use of mathematical logic in a philosophical context of disciplines saturated with mathematical methods [9,10]. Some works actually involve mathematical formalisms in philosophical studies, but only as auxiliary tools and without comprehensive programmatic ambitions.

However, recently, the idea of mathematics as a tool for philosophy has acquired not only a programmatic but also an institutional form. The mission of the Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy, established in 2011, has as its mission "[...] bring[ing] together researchers who apply logical, probabilistic, statistical, and computational methods to a wide range of philosophical problems—from the foundations of logic, language, and mathematics to central questions in epistemology, philosophy of science, decision and social choice theory, and the philosophy of physics and artificial intelligence" [11]. The recognition of the importance of this initiative is reflected in the fact that its original initiator and present Co-Director, Hannes Leitgeb, became this year's double laureate of the prestigious Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Award and Frege Award of the Society for Analytic Philosophy.

Mathematical philosophy, understood this way, opens a very powerful toolbox for the study of the integration of diverse forms of inquiry. Mathematical formalization of scientific disciplines not only contributed to their progress but also created opportunities to form bridges between disciplines through the increased level of abstraction. Mathematical tools in philosophy may support the same process unrestricted to the domains of studies that did not acquire or develop formal methods. They may also help in the philosophy of science, where the majority of works use interpretations of scientific theories as an intermediary, instead of entering the study of the theories directly. Furthermore, mathematical philosophy may be more effective in solving problems arising from the use of statistics or computational methods in scientific practice.

The idea of the involvement of mathematics as a tool for philosophy rather than an object of its study may be useful in the promotion of the enrichment of philosophical methodology, because it was the first discipline that applied its results to the development of its own philosophical metastudy – metamathematics that serves as a formal foundation for logic. This intellectual experience may be useful for seeking other forms of methodological enrichment of philosophy.

The possibility of such enrichment can be found in the works of Allan Turing, whose original work, published in the 1936 paper *On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem*, intended as a contribution to the philosophy of mathematics, not only set foundations for a new discipline of science with its enormous consequences for technology, but also opened a new direction in philosophical work.

Yet another direction of enrichment, in this case, at an early stage of its development, can be identified in the study of life. Of course, living systems have been a subject of philosophical interest for a long time. However, more recently, the results of the study of life in its systemic perspective started to be considered as a potential philosophical tool, e.g., in the works of Michael Levin and his collaborators [12].

Thus, in short, we seek contributions to the metaphilosophical discussion of the philosophical unity in the methodological and thematic diversity of inquiries as a way to facilitate understanding of reality. The theme of unity includes questions about the methods of its achievement, the adequacy of the present philosophical methodology, and the possibility of its enrichment by new mathematical, statistical, or computational methods.

The following outstanding topics and questions related to the theme and objectives of the conference are stated above as examples, rather than limits of interest for submissions. The references that are provided in some cases are **not intended as patterns to follow** but rather as sources of additional information about the content of concisely formulated in this listing.

- **Uniqueness of Reality:** This topic includes the tradition of the study of the one-many opposition, going back at least to Parmenides in European philosophy, but also being the central theme of Eastern philosophical and religious inquiries. It includes the issues of the opposition between objectivity and subjectivity, between rationality and intuition, introspection and empirical/behavioral observation.
- **Multiple Ways in which Understanding is Understood or Misunderstood:** As usual, the high frequency of the use of this term in a large variety of contexts of everyday conversations without consistency makes its meaning opaque. The topic includes the relationships of understanding with knowledge, intelligence, rationality, consciousness, etc. Moreover, the questions about non-human intelligence (extensively discussed at the 1st IOCPH) lead to the questions about non-human rationality (with its empirical confirmation at least in the case of non-human primates [13]), and non-human understanding.
- **The Value of Understanding:** This topic has a very extensive literature from multiple perspectives, but thus far predominantly in cognitive aspects [14-16].
- **Is the Unity of the Object of Understanding Its Necessary Condition, or Its Product?**
- **The Study of Understanding in the Context of Artificial Intelligence (AI):** This is currently a subject of hot discussions about the possibility and practicality of AI understanding. Recent studies focusing on Generative Pretrained Transformer AI provide

empirical arguments for the claim that human capacity of understanding, understood as the ability to model reality instead of modeling language, cannot be achieved in AI in its present architecture [17-23]. However, this may be a result of inadequate effort in searching for architectures that support understanding, instead of performance (e.g., speed) in other tasks. Understanding in the context of AI is a subject of many myths. One of the more frequent motifs is the myth of the Technological Singularity in the form of superintelligent entities escaping human understanding. If we share with Einstein the “religious” faith that reality is rational, that is, comprehensible to human reason, the superintelligent demon can be exorcised. Of course, there are many natural and human-generated phenomena beyond human present understanding and control, but the belief in some intelligent systems that are essentially incomprehensible is just a form of another, not very sophisticated religion. Let someone who is in absolute understanding and control of their actions and thoughts be the first to claim the inevitability of superintelligence that transcends human understanding. Is there any way such a superintelligence can be conceptualized without contradicting the comprehensibility of reality?

- **Criteria for Understanding in Education, Psychology, etc.:** The present interest in assessing understanding comes from the questions about the possibility that the AI systems, in particular, whether the Generative Pretrained Transformer AI systems can acquire the capacity for understanding [22,23]. However, the assessment of understanding is a very old issue in the philosophy of education and its practice. Curricula of all levels of education put acquiring understanding at the priority list of objectives. However, this consensus breaks up when the question arises of how to assess or measure it. What is left is another consensus that the present system of testing students is completely ineffective in such matters. What makes the task additionally difficult is a commonly recognized fact not only in education but also in the psychology of discovery that understanding is coming (or at least is realized) instantly. Even very advanced mathematical or scientific ideas crystallize in a flash of acquired understanding. As the famous recollection by Henri Poincaré reported in *The Psychology of Mathematical Invention in the Mathematical Field* by Jacques Hadamard, “At the moment when I put my foot on the step [of the omnibus] the idea came to me, without anything in my former thoughts seeming to have paved the way for it [...] but I felt a perfect certainty. On my return to Caen, for conscience' sake, I verified the results at my leisure.” [24] Is this instantaneous character of acquiring understanding the evidence for the role of intuition or irrationality? What does it tell us about human understanding?
- **The Role of Statistics as a Practical Tool of Inquiry:** It may seem that statistics and statistical inference, which are currently used in all domains of human activities, should serve the purpose of interdisciplinary integration well. However, its use may even deepen the divisions. Statistics is very frequently used without any reflection on its role in the process of inquiry. Its users just look for what is considered a bottom line – a sufficiently low p-value. Is there any other “commonality” in the large variety of disciplines where statistics is applied? Statistics is often considered from the perspective of a computer application. The

effect is, as it is frequently lamented in the mass media, that 75% of results in medical sciences are irreproducible. Most likely, in many cases, it is a result of methodological errors. However, there are also philosophical matters involved. In statistical practice, very rarely are the conditions required by mathematical statistics satisfied. While theorems are true in the limit at infinity, practitioners are satisfied with a “magically” sufficient value (even in the most fundamental case of the Central Limit Theorem). When asked, practitioners answer “because the long practice shows it works.” Does it? These are not problems of the philosophy of mathematical statistics, but of statistical practice, which can be resolved only when philosophy acquires appropriate formal tools.

- **Involvement of Statistical Tools in the Generative AI:** The design of the systems of the Generative AI involves statistical methods. There is a natural question about the commonalities of the failures in both contexts of AI (hallucinations) and traditional scientific methods (irreproducibility of results). Are they an indication of the lack of understanding? If yes, then in AI systems or researchers interpreting data?
- **How Can We Justify the View of Understanding Outside of the Context of Human Cognition?** [12,25]
- **What are the Cross-Cultural Differences in the Views on Understanding?** [26-28]
- **Understanding and Meaning:** Understanding can be related to meaning in multiple ways, as understanding the meaning of a symbol, word, sentence, argument, theory, etc. How to explain this multiplicity?
- **Criterion for Understanding as the Ability to Model Reality:** This modeling can be of different types, such as mental models, formal, mathematical models, etc. What is the role of model-based reasoning in understanding?
- **The Role of Emergence in Understanding:** How does the ontological status of collectives forming structures and emergent phenomena impact understanding of reality?
- **The Relationship between Abstraction and Understanding:** Does the ability of abstract thinking facilitate understanding? Is it a necessary condition for understanding reality?

We invite contributions to the conference addressing its themes as described in this announcement. Contributions do not have to literally address the topics or questions provided here, but their relevance, if not obvious, should be justified in the requested extended abstracts of submissions. Also, we don't want to avoid skeptical views and welcome contributions expressing criticism or concerns about the opinions or claims expressed in the announcement. For instance, we welcome submissions opposing not openly expressed in the announcement but obviously implied view of the necessity for the integration of inquiries, with arguments such as the possibility of the loss of sovereignty in highly advanced, specialized fields, potentially slowing down their progress, or other critical opinions about the unifying role of philosophy.

Those who are interested in contributing to the conference are asked to submit an extended abstract of 300-500 words. The upper limit is just an expectation, not a requirement. The

accepted extended abstracts will be displayed on the conference website to support the preparation of all participants for discussions and interactions at the event.

To facilitate the interactions between the participants of the conference and their mutual understanding, the authors of contributions should avoid, if possible, the use of specialistic jargon, and the works presented at the conference involving mathematical, statistical, or other scientific formalisms should be accompanied by sufficiently extensive explanation and interpretation to be comprehensible to the wider audience. Using the apocryphal aphorism frequently used and ascribed to Einstein but never traced to any of his writings, **“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.”**

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