



Second Philosophy: A Naturalistic Method

Penelope Maddy

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Many philosophers these days consider themselves naturalists, but it's doubtful any two of them intend the same position by the term. In this book, Penelope Maddy describes and practices a particularly austere form of naturalism called "Second Philosophy". Without a definitive criterion for what counts as "science" and what doesn't, Second Philosophy can't be specified directly - "trust only the methods of science!" or some such thing - so Maddy proceeds instead by illustrating the behaviors of an idealized inquirer she calls the "Second Philosopher". This Second Philosopher begins from perceptual common sense and progresses from there to systematic observation, active experimentation, theory formation and testing, working all the while to assess, correct and improve her methods as she goes. Second Philosophy is then the result of the Second Philosopher's investigations.

Maddy delineates the Second Philosopher's approach by tracing her reactions to various familiar skeptical and transcendental views (Descartes, Kant, Carnap, late Putnam, van Fraassen), comparing her methods to those of other self-described naturalists (especially Quine), and examining a prominent contemporary debate (between disquotationalists and correspondence theorists in the theory of truth) to extract a properly second-philosophical line of thought. She then undertakes to practise Second Philosophy in her reflections on the ground of logical truth, the methodology, ontology and epistemology of mathematics, and the general prospects for metaphysics naturalized.

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