

# Philosophical Temperament

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## Abstract

Many philosophers have worried about what philosophy is. Often they have looked for answers by considering what it is that philosophers do. Given the diversity of topics and methods found in philosophy, however, we propose a different approach. In this article we consider the philosophical temperament, asking an alternative question: What are philosophers like? Our answer is that one important aspect of the philosophical temperament is that philosophers are especially reflective: They are less likely than their peers to embrace what seems obvious without questioning it. This claim is supported by a study of more than 4,000 philosophers and non-philosophers, the results of which indicate that even when we control for overall education level, philosophers tend to be significantly more reflective than their peers. We then illustrate this tendency by considering what we know about the philosophizing of a few prominent philosophers. Recognizing this aspect of the philosophical temperament, it is natural to wonder how philosophers came to be this way: Does philosophical training teach reflectivity or do more reflective people tend to gravitate to philosophy? We consider the limitations of our data with respect to this question and suggest that a longitudinal study be conducted.

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