

The popularity of thought experiments in philosophy does not correspond to the degree of acceptance of this tool. The main objections against the use of thought experiments in philosophy are based on the assertion that: (1) thought experiments accept some facts instead of verifying them; (2) thought experiments are "intuition pumps" which create illusions rather than true beliefs; (3) science should not be cultivated based on fantasy, (4) thought experiments are not clear arguments. On the other hand, there are many proponents of the use of thought experiments. According to positive views, thought experiments: (1) capture available data into new conceptual frameworks; (2) through some kind of intuition, they give us access to the platonic world of necessary truths; (3) serve as models of possible worlds and induce the disclosure of moral or metaphysical intuitions. Thought experiments, because of being based on imagination, are also a great tool for clarifying abstract problems, which is successfully used in popular philosophy books. Because most philosophical theories are based on thought experiments and philosophers do not agree on the nature of this tool, there is a need for a methodological analysis of thought experiments.

The purpose of this research project is to analyze thought experiments in philosophy in terms of their origin, structure and function. In the first stage of my work I will present the history of the concept of the thought experiment and will discuss the most important positive and negative approaches to thought experiments. I will show that real and thought experiments have a similar structure, but what distinguishes them is that thought experiments are based on highly counterfactual situations, that is, situations which are in principle impossible to realize in real world. I argue that the key to understanding the role of thought experiments in philosophy is to examine under what conditions the possibility of conceiving or imagining a state of things makes that state of things metaphysically possible. My goal is to show that the main cognitive function of philosophical thought experiments is - by coherent description of the imaginary situation - providing reasons for reasonable presumptions about metaphysical claims.