

## **SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE BALKAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY**

### **“THE USES OF NARRATIVES: FROM PRACTICE TO EPISTEMOLOGY AND BACK”**

The uses of narratives, the story-like accounts of particular subjects, are well recognized in various areas of human knowledge and practice. Narratives are ubiquitous both in daily life and in sophisticated professions such as medicine and criminal investigation. They are also common in art, science, and the humanities. The ubiquity of narratives has been associated with the important roles they play: from yielding understanding to serving as justifications for certain actions or as arguments in favor of chosen theories or stances. The multiple uses of narratives, however, raise questions which cannot be easily settled and which, therefore, have become a subject of continuous debate. Do narratives deliver truth or are they intrinsically “just-so stories”? Related to this epistemological question is the methodological one regarding the status of so-called narrative-based medicine: should it be treated as a strict alternative to the currently dominant

evidence-based medicine or should it be viewed as its important complement? While it has been broadly accepted that narratives provide understanding, it remains controversial whether they do so because they offer a kind of genuine explanation. Should narratives have to meet certain criteria in order to claim an explanatory role? Or, if instead we take the stance that narratives provide non-explanatory understanding, in virtue of what are they able to do so? It seems to be beyond question that narratives can play a justificatory role. It is uncertain, however, whether narrative arguments are indispensable to scientific discovery or have been introduced into scientific discourses simply to increase confidence in the established theories that these narratives seek to defend.

Given the salience of the epistemological and methodological controversies surrounding the uses of narratives, it is surprising that so far so little

effort has been devoted to addressing these controversies in a systematic way. The aim of the special issue of *Balkan Journal of Philosophy* for 2021 is thus to contribute to the developing investigations into the epistemology of narratives and their practical applications. We invite papers that address epistemological and methodological questions concern-

ing the uses of narratives, both from a general theoretical perspective and in the context of specific areas of science, art, the humanities, and various professional practices.

From the Editorial Board of  
*Balkan Journal of Philosophy*