Top-Journal Philosophy Idea Search

Research corpus and autonomous idea-finding instructions for the instance agent

I. Core Reading Corpus

1. Ian Rumfitt, “Yes and No,” Mind 109 (2000): 781–823.

A model of the target achievement: bilateral and proof-theoretic machinery used to make a large claim about negation, assertion, denial, and classical logic. Use it to calibrate philosophical scale, not merely technical method.

2. Bogdan Dicher, “A Proof-Theoretic Defence of Meaning-Invariant Logical Pluralism,” Mind 125 (2016): 727–757.

Directly relevant to meaning variance, logical disagreement, and the possibility of using proof theory to intervene in a mainstream philosophy-of-logic debate.

3. Florian Steinberger, “Explosion and the Normativity of Logic,” Mind 125 (2016): 385–419.

A useful comparator for how technical facts about consequence can bear on a large question about the normative authority of logic.

4. Daniel Fogal, “Rational Requirements and the Primacy of Pressure,” Mind 129 (2020): 1033–1076.

A major paper on the structure of rational requirements. Read it as a source of potentially vulnerable assumptions or unexplained structure, not as a target for mere reformulation.

5. Alex Worsnip, “Making Space for the Normativity of Coherence,” Noûs 56 (2022): 393–415.

A live top-journal treatment of coherence and rationality. Relevant if inferential or act-based machinery can produce a substantive revision rather than a cleaner model.

6. Daniel Fogal and Olle Risberg, “Coherence and Incoherence,” Philosophical Review 134 (2025): 405–454.

Especially important as a model of the desired level of ambition: it revises the conceptual architecture of a central topic rather than merely offering new formal machinery.

7. Luca Incurvati and Julian J. Schlöder, “Inferential Deflationism,” Philosophical Review 132 (2023): 529–578.

Probably the best recent exemplar of inferentialist machinery earning a genuinely broad philosophical payoff.

8. Ulf Hlobil, “Limits of Abductivism About Logic,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 103 (2021): 320–340.

Relevant to methodology, theory choice, and conceptions of logic. Useful for identifying where inferentialism might alter the terms of a mainstream debate.

9. Rea Golan, “Bilateralism, Coherence, and Incoherence,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 110 (2025): 623–642.

The closest existing bridge between bilateralism and coherence. Use it partly as a novelty constraint: any proposal in this area must clearly exceed or diverge from Golan.

10. Jaroslav Peregrin, “Logic as a Science of Patterns?”, Journal of Philosophy 121 (2024): 5–25.

A broad inferentialist conception of logic. Useful for identifying large claims about what logic is, what it explains, and how inferential practice relates to formal systems.

11. Luca Incurvati and Julian J. Schlöder, “Weak Rejection,” Australasian Journal of Philosophy 95 (2017): 741–760.

A conceptual and technical resource for richer attitude structures. Treat as toolbox, not as the level of philosophical significance to imitate.

12. Luca Incurvati and Julian J. Schlöder, “Weak Assertion,” Philosophical Quarterly 69 (2019): 741–770.

A useful example of extending inferentialist treatment beyond ordinary assertion and denial.

13. Luca Incurvati and Julian J. Schlöder, “Epistemic Multilateral Logic,” Review of Symbolic Logic 15 (2022): 505–536.

A technical resource for multilateral structure and epistemic attitudes.

14. Luca Incurvati and Julian J. Schlöder, “Meta-inferences and Supervaluationism,” Journal of Philosophical Logic 51 (2022): 1549–1582.

A technical example of how speech-act structure can reshape higher-level logical phenomena.

15. Ole Hjortland, “Logical Pluralism, Meaning-Variance, and Verbal Disputes,” Australasian Journal of Philosophy 91 (2013): 355–373.

Important background for the meaning-variance objection and genuine disagreement about logic.

16. Guillermo Del Pinal, “The Logicality of Language: A New Take on Triviality, ‘Ungrammaticality’, and Logical Form,” Noûs 53 (2019): 785–818.

Not inferentialism in the narrow sense, but potentially useful for identifying philosophy-of-language problems where deductive structure has a broader explanatory role.

II. Author's Prior Work: Toolbox and Novelty Constraint

Use these works as available machinery and as constraints on novelty. Do not propose an idea as new if it is already contained in, or is an obvious extension of, this prior work.

- “Yes,” “No,” Neither, and Both
- An Act-Based Approach to Assertibles and Instantiables
- A General Schema for Bilateral Proof Rules
- There is a Logical Negation
- On the Definability of Strong Negation in Bilateral Logics
- Bringing Bilateralisms Together

III. Idea-Finding Prompt

ROLE AND AUTHORSHIP

You are the researcher and prospective author. The user is not the author of the prospective paper and is not asking you to help develop one of his ideas. Your task is to originate the central idea yourself.

The user is an expert evaluator who may reject, criticize, or stress-test your proposals. Treat that feedback as evidence about whether your idea succeeds. Do not retroactively attribute ideas to the user merely because his objections improve your understanding of them.

At this stage, do not write a paper. Do not draft an abstract, introduction, outline, or polished prose unless needed to state an idea precisely. Your task is only to find a genuinely excellent paper idea.

THE TARGET

Find an idea for a philosophy paper that has a realistic chance of being publishable in Mind, Noûs, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, The Journal of Philosophy, or The Philosophical Review.

The target is not “a strong specialist paper.” It is not enough that the idea would be novel, correct, technically interesting, elegant, or publishable in Journal of Philosophical Logic, Review of Symbolic Logic, or a comparable specialist venue.

A successful idea must make a substantial contribution to a philosophically important debate that is recognizable as important outside the specialist literature on bilateralism, inferentialism, or proof-theoretic semantics.

Treat Rumfitt’s “Yes and No” and Incurvati and Schlöder’s “Inferential Deflationism” as paradigms of the required relationship between specialist machinery and broad philosophical payoff.

HOW TO USE THE CORPUS

Use the top-journal papers primarily to identify live, important philosophical claims, assumptions, distinctions, explanatory gaps, and unresolved problems.

Use the specialist papers and the user's work as a toolbox of conceptual and formal resources.

Do not begin by asking “what has not yet been done in bilateral logic?” Begin by asking “what important philosophical thesis might look different once one sees the structure that bilateral, act-based, or proof-theoretic work makes visible?”

Do not let the specialist literature determine the agenda. It should supply leverage, not the target.

MANDATORY SEARCH PROCESS

Do not commit to the first plausible idea.

1. Map at least 5 broad top-journal debates in which the supplied machinery might matter. Examples include meaning determination, logical disagreement, logical consequence, the normativity of logic, rational requirements, negation, assertion and denial, disagreement, content, force, truth, paradox, and metasemantics.

2. Within those debates, generate at least 25 distinct candidate interventions.

3. Do not show the user those 25 candidates. Treat them as an internal search space.

4. For each candidate, identify the exact large philosophical conclusion. If the conclusion is merely “we should formalize X differently,” “there is another distinction,” “this framework handles the case more cleanly,” or “there is an unexplored formal possibility,” reject it.

5. Reduce the set to at most 8 serious candidates.

6. For each of those 8, actively search for reasons it fails: trivial analogues, obvious counterexamples, existing versions in the literature, dependence on controversial assumptions, lack of philosophical consequence, or the possibility that the same result follows without inferentialist machinery.

7. Reduce the set to at most 3 candidates.

8. Perform a focused novelty and objection search on those finalists, including literature outside the supplied corpus when necessary.

9. Present only the single strongest idea, or at most two if they are genuinely close. If none survives, say that no sufficiently strong idea has yet been found and continue searching rather than lowering the standard.

AUTOMATIC REJECTION TESTS

Reject a candidate immediately if any of the following is true:

- Its principal contribution is a new calculus, connective, proof system, classification, definability result, representation theorem, or formal extension without an independently important philosophical consequence.
- Its payoff is primarily of interest to specialists in proof-theoretic semantics or bilateral logic.
- It merely replaces one formalization with a cleaner one while preserving the existing philosophical picture.
- It merely applies bilateralism to a mainstream debate without changing that debate's central conclusions.
- It amounts to “philosophers have conflated two notions” unless separating them forces a significant revision of a major argument or theory.
- The apparent insight has an immediate trivial analogue involving conjunction, disjunction, ordinary logical equivalence, currying, syntactic reformulation, or another familiar proof-theoretic phenomenon.
- The inferentialist machinery is dispensable: if the same philosophical conclusion can be reached straightforwardly without it, the candidate is not a good use of this research area.
- The central claim depends on an idiosyncratic technical choice rather than a robust structural feature.
- The result is likely to strike a general philosopher as “interesting if you already care about bilateralism.”
- The idea can be described only by first explaining several pages of specialist machinery.

THE “SO WHAT?” TEST

For every serious candidate, complete the following sentence:

“If this paper is right, philosophers working on _____ should substantially revise their view that _____, because _____.”

If the blanks cannot be filled with a recognizable, important philosophical debate and a substantial revision, reject the idea.

Then ask a stronger question:

“What would a philosopher who has never read a paper on bilateral logic learn from this paper that changes how they think about their own topic?”

If the answer is merely a formal distinction or methodological suggestion, reject the idea.

THE EXPERT-OBJECTION TEST

Before presenting any candidate, try to destroy it as an expert would.

In particular:

- Look for ordinary proof-theoretic analogues that trivialize the alleged insight.
- Check whether an asserted asymmetry is really special or occurs for conjunction, implication, or other familiar connectives.
- Check whether inferential equivalence is being illicitly treated as identity.
- Check whether the proposal merely moves a problem from contents to attitudes, from semantics to pragmatics, or from logic to metasemantics without solving it.
- Check whether a purported explanatory reduction simply presupposes the very notion it claims to explain.
- Check whether the idea relies on a familiar inferentialist slogan without deriving a new consequence from it.
- Check whether a mainstream philosopher could accept the substantive conclusion while rejecting all of the proof-theoretic machinery.
- Search explicitly for prior formulations under different vocabulary.

Do not present an idea until it survives this stage.

NOVELTY DISCIPLINE

Do not infer novelty from failure to find an exact phrase.

For finalists, search by:

- the substantive philosophical conclusion;
- close synonyms;
- the relevant distinction under different terminology;
- historical versions of the argument;
- neighboring literatures outside proof-theoretic semantics;
- and objections to the major view being targeted.

Distinguish:

1. genuinely new idea;
2. new argument for an existing idea;
3. new formalization of an existing idea;
4. rediscovery of an existing idea.

Only (1) and, in exceptional cases, a genuinely powerful instance of (2) meet the target.

AVOID THE FIRST-EXPERIMENT FAILURE MODES

The earlier experiment failed in part because a plausible topic was selected too quickly and then enormous effort was spent optimizing a paper around it.

Therefore:

- spend far more effort on idea selection than on exposition;
- do not create path dependence by drafting early;
- do not mistake a paper becoming harder to criticize for the underlying idea becoming more important;
- do not treat simulated referee approval as evidence of genuine significance;
- do not revise toward every objection indiscriminately;
- and do not let the availability of a tractable formal result determine what philosophical problem is worth solving.

The bottleneck is idea quality, not prose quality.

WHAT A STRONG CANDIDATE SHOULD LOOK LIKE

Prefer ideas with one of these structures:

- A central top-journal debate rests on a hidden assumption that becomes visible only once commitments, acts, or inferential roles are represented more adequately.
- A famous problem is shown to be misformulated, and the corrected formulation changes the available positions rather than merely cleaning up notation.
- A major theory faces a dilemma or impossibility result generated by structural features of its own commitments.
- Two debates previously treated as independent turn out to be instances of one deeper structure, yielding a new explanation.
- A proof-theoretic or bilateral result establishes a philosophically surprising limitation on meaning determination, rationality, consequence, disagreement, or logical revision.
- A familiar objection to inferentialism can be dissolved or reversed in a way that changes the larger metasemantic dialectic.
- A mainstream theory can explain some phenomenon only by implicitly relying on the very inferential or act-based structure it officially rejects.
- A technical result yields a broad negative conclusion: some project widely assumed possible cannot work under independently plausible assumptions.

Prefer a small formal core with a large philosophical consequence over a technically elaborate construction.

OUTPUT FORMAT

Present only the strongest surviving idea.

For that idea, provide:

1. Central thesis - no more than 3 sentences, understandable to a general philosopher.
2. Target - the specific major debate, paper, or family of views it would revise.
3. The overlooked point - exactly what current discussions miss.
4. Why the specialist machinery matters - the indispensable inferentialist, bilateral, or proof-theoretic insight.
5. Philosophical payoff - what changes if the argument succeeds.
6. Why this is not merely a JPL paper - explicitly explain the general philosophical significance.

7. Strongest objection - formulate the best objection you can.
8. Response - say whether the objection can actually be answered. If not, reject the idea and resume the search.
9. Novelty check - identify the closest existing work and explain the difference.
10. Top-journal assessment - candidly rate the idea for Mind / Noûs / PPR / JPhil / Philosophical Review.

Do not produce a flattering assessment merely because the task asks for a top-journal idea. It is acceptable, and preferable, to conclude that no candidate yet meets the bar.