

Notes for
LECTURE THREE

18 May 1965

While I can mention subjects of metaphysics, such as being, ground of being, nothingness, God, freedom, immortality, becoming, truth, spirit, their full concept – like any strong concept – cannot be given in a verbal definition but only presented through a concrete treatment of the constellation of problems which forms the concept of metaphysics. In the second part of the lecture I shall give you models of these.¹

Decisive for an understanding of philosophical concepts – the history of terminology.

The concept of metaphysics goes back to Aristotle, and specifically to the arrangement of the corpus Aristotelicum by Andronicus of Rhodes, 50–60 BC, in the first century before Christ, in which the main work of Aristotle devoted to that area, μετὰ τὰ φυσικά, was placed after the Physics. Insertion 2 a

[Insertion 2 a:] as early as the Neo-Platonists this name, with its technical implications for editing, was interpreted in terms of content: μετὰ τὰ φυσικά = that which goes beyond nature, or, precisely, what is ‘behind nature’ as its cause. [End of insertion]

The term therefore arose from a principle of literary arrangement; a name for the subject was lacking because this subject was not a thing among things.

Ins. 3: The traditional subdivision of metaphysics.

[Ins. 3] traditional *subdivision* of metaphysics:

(1) Ontology = theory of Being and of existing things (2) The nature of the world (cosmology) (3) of human beings (philosophical anthropology) (4) Existence and nature of the divinity (theology). Echoes of this in Kant, whose *themes* were prescribed by precisely what he criticized. This is good in that he does not think indiscriminately, and bad through its inhomogeneity with regard to his own nominalist assumptions.

Distinction between speculative and inductive metaphysics. All these are specifically *dogmatic* categories, relating to a prescribed and positively teachable area of subject matter, i.e. they aim at a *merging* of theology and metaphysics. But as the subject matter is itself problematic and no such doctrine can be advocated, I mention these categories, the pedantry of which makes a mockery of the subject, so that you are aware of them, without going into them further.

A similarly traditional distinction is drawn between deductive and inductive metaphysics (likewise not without hints from Aristotle)

Inductive metaphysics an artificially devised auxiliary concept intended to prop up a collapsed structure by adapting it to the very thing which has disintegrated it. Like relatively increasing misery²

Inductive = empirical = scientific.

Experience is therefore to be used to justify what transcends it. Heidegger's approach of analysing Dasein to gain access to ontology has similarities.

Something as apparently open to experience as Dasein, i.e. essentially the experience of the individual subject of himself, is supposed to give insight into the nature of being, despite the limits and randomness of this experience. Of course, this presupposes the metaphysical privilege of the human being, who defines himself in calling Dasein the ontic which at the same time is ontological, and is therefore transparent, qua consciousness, with regard to its constituents.³

However easy it is to point out the contradictions in an inductive metaphysics – that alone is no objection, unless one simply eliminates the contradiction in the way customary in science.

There is, in fact, a concept of metaphysical experience – though not one which can be grasped by the usual means of induction or with reference to a self-revealing ontology. Perhaps, to begin with, simply a reluctance to accept the accepted. E.g. 'Luderbach', dead animals.⁴ Why is the bank called a bank?⁵

In presenting some of my own reflections on metaphysics⁶ in the second half of the lecture series, I hope I shall be able to give you an idea of what I call metaphysical experience. But I can say already that, within the theory as a whole, it is a *moment*, not itself the whole, not

something immediate to which one could resort, in questions of metaphysics, as if to something ultimate, absolute.

*The entwinement of metaphysics with thought, inaugurated so emphatically by Aristotle in opposing hylozoism,⁷ is irrevocable.
[End of insertion]*

One can indeed say now that metaphysics began with Aristotle.

Bibliography here.⁸

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