



DISCOVERY SERIES – FOUR METAPHYSICS

The term was first used as a title for a group of works by Aristotle. One work on “the things of nature” was called “Physics.” His other work was written after he wrote on Physics and thus originally meant “after the physics.”

1. General Ontology: The most basic aspect of metaphysics which focuses on:
 - the nature of existence itself. It involves all those features that characterize all the different kinds of entities that exist
 - it is possible to group things that exist in various ways ranging from very specific to very broad types of classification (Categorical Analysis)
 - A. Two Main Views on categories of reality
 1. Aristotle – Substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, posture, state, action, and passivity. What is most crucial to Aristotle’s view is his approach to the categories in that he took them to give us real divisions in an actual world.
 2. Kant – For him, the categories he lists are not divisions of the world as it is itself, but rather they express the divisions of the world as it appears to us as knowing subjects. There is debate as to how many categories Kant advocated.
2. Special Metaphysics – Are humans free or determined? Is there a soul or just a mind? How do people change? Is there such a thing as causation? In light of the positions one adopts in general ontology, one will have more conceptual tools to employ in working on the topics in special metaphysics. For example, if someone says that a carbon atom is a substance, the insights of general ontology will help to clarify how this should or should not be understood.
3. Methods of Approach
 - A. Naturalists hold that reality is exhausted by the spatiotemporal world of physical objects embraced by our best scientific theories. In this view, science is the best

approach to investigating the world. Metaphysics is not the study of reality – science is – especially scientific talk of reality.

The difficulty with this position is that even the scientist must use language. It is part of metaphysics to analyze and clarify our use of language. Thus metaphysics is conceptually prior to science.

B. Metaphysical study should take into account the things we already know to have reason to believe are true before we begin to do metaphysics.

-Metaphysics focuses on what we know from the critical use of common sense.

-Knowledge from other subjects (such as religion) can aid us in certain truths.

Metaphysics can help us to clarify these. For example, the Christian belief that man is made in the image of God would lead us to reject that it is fine to treat others with indignity and escape without assigning some value to human life. Morality and virtue have their place.

-Certain intellectual barriers can be removed. If naturalism is all a person is willing to hold, there is an automatic barrier set up to the abstract. For instance, humans have a conscience, make decisions, have beliefs, and experience emotions. Once again, an origin for this according to one explanation is that man is made in the image of God.

C. Show Metaphysical Problems that arise . In problem-solving, note what it is that gives rise to the problem. For example, two roses seem to emit the same exact scent. Does that mean that the same exact scent is in both roses at the same time?

D. Use thought experiments. Thought experiments include such things as the “actual world,” an “impossible world,” and a “possible world.” The benefit to this is the role of thought as sources of counterexamples for assessing metaphysical claims.

E. Metaphysical Study includes universal issues. It helps the intellect form habits that free it from accepting only issues and truths within the bounds of sensation. Advocates of strong empiricism claim that all knowledge is limited to what can be directly or indirectly tested by sensory experiences. Metaphysics is concerned not with illusions or mere speculation, but rather that strong empiricism is an inadequate epistemology for accounting for what we can know in general.

CONCLUSION: There have been many examples of abstract entities: properties, relations, sets, numbers, and propositions. Properties are entities that can be exemplified by many things at the same time (e.g. redness, goodness) and relations are

entities that can relate two or more things and can be in two or more groups at the same time (e.g. brighter than , farther than, larger than).