
UNIT 1 ETYMOLOGY: DEFINITION AND SCOPE

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit explains to you:

- The etymology of the term ‘metaphysics’ from both the Western and Indian perspective
- The classical definition of ‘metaphysics’ as the science of being as being
- The general scope of ‘metaphysics’ which includes both material and formal objects

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is a primary fact of human life and experience. There are three elements that constitute knowledge: subject, object, and the act of knowing (cognition). The subject *is* the one who knows; the object *is* the thing that is known; and cognition *is* the mental act which makes this object known to the subject. The subject *is*, the object *is*, and the cognition *is*. In other words, the subject is a being insofar as it is ; the object is a being insofar as it is; and the cognition is a being insofar as it is. They are beings insofar as they *are in Being* which is the Being of beings. No knowledge seems to be possible without Being. Knowledge takes place in Being, through Being, and by Being. Here Being appears as the core and ground of knowledge itself, and hence of all knowledge, whether empirical or philosophical. Hence, metaphysics is implicit in all knowledge, in the structure of all judgments, all questions, and all desires which imply the ‘affirmative experience of something’. Such an affirmative experience of something covers the whole range of actuality and possibility, of what is and what remains to be, of the whole and part, of one and many.

1.2 ETYMOLOGY OF METAPHYSICS

Western: The traditional explanation is that the term ‘metaphysics’ was coined by Andronicus of Rhodes (C. 70 B.C) for those collected works of Aristotle placed ‘after physics’ (*ta + meta + ta + phusika*). The term thus had only a methodic value. It was only a coincidence that this section placed after physics, treated of realities *beyond* the physical properties of beings. Hence in the course

of time ‘metaphysics’ (*ta+ meta + ta + phusika*) came to mean that department of philosophy which deals with those features of beings that are hyperphysical, super sensible, and immaterial. This seemingly reasonable explanation, though uncritically accepted by most philosophers and historians, appears to be a little far-fetched. For it would have been too much of a coincidence for the concept of metaphysics to be successfully adapted so as to contain the science of transcendent reality. Kant actually declared his suspicion saying that the expression is too felicitous to be regarded as the result of chance. Hans Reimer deserves the highest praise for pointing out the misinterpretation and explaining the real origin of metaphysics. According to Reimer, Eudemus (Aristotle’s immediate disciple, the author of the *History of Theology* and the first editor of the teacher’s works) must have invented the name *ta +meta + ta + phusika*. When Eudemus edited the works, the science ? which from a Platonic standpoint Aristotle called the ‘first philosophy’? was attached to other relevant treatises, and was given this title. Andronicus followed Eudemus and preferred the same name because he too considered the original name ‘first philosophy’ to be unsuitable for an educational purpose. Hence, Reimer concludes that we must reject the hypothesis of the accidental bibliographical origin of the term, since it was a deliberate use for educational purposes. The word did not originate from somebody’s being at a loss as to what to call a book, but rather is the most suitable designation of the first philosophy, a concept presumably based on the orthodox tradition from Aristotle and his immediate followers.

Indian: Though the term ‘metaphysics’ is of Western origin, there are terms in Indian philosophy that have equivalent meaning of the Western understanding of the same. Perhaps, the oldest term used in the Vedic literature to communicate it is *Brahmodya* (c. 9th century B.C). *Brahmodya* means speculative discussion about *Brahman*. In the Upanishads (800-600 B.C) it came to be denoted by the words *atmavidya* (science or knowledge of the self), *paravidya* (supreme science or transcendental knowledge), and *brahmavidya* (science or knowledge of *Brahman*). In the oldest books of the Buddhist Pali canon, the word *ditthi* (*drshti*) stands for the metaphysical viewpoint. In the *Gita*, metaphysics is *adyatmavidya* (science of the self). The *Gita*, by bringing together the science of the self and dialectic (*vada*), indicates the close connection between the two. The *Vaisesika Sutra* (1st century A.D) mentions *sidha-darsana* (perfected vision of all existing things arising from merit). Prasastapada (6th century A.D) understands it as the vision of the perfected, and considers it as a kind of perception achieved by enhancing the power of the senses through certain techniques, or by inference, or by intuitive knowledge present in all.

1.3 DEFINITION OF METAPHYSICS

General Metaphysics or Fundamental Ontology, the core and ground of all knowledge and philosophy, is the science of being as being. Metaphysics is the core and ground of human knowledge as it underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all other departments of knowledge.

It underlies all other departments: It underlies all other departments since its principles are the detached and disinterested drive of the pure desire to know. The unfolding of the pure desire to know takes place in the empirical, intellectual, and rational consciousness of the self-affirming subject. All questions, all insights,

all formulations, all reflections, and all judgments proceed from the unfolding of that drive. Hence, metaphysics underlies logic, mathematics, and all other sciences.

It penetrates all other departments: For, other departments are constituted of the same principles as that of metaphysics. They are particular departments related to particular viewpoints. Yet, all departments spring from a common source and seek a common compatibility and coherence. Hence, they are penetrated by metaphysics.

It transforms all other departments: Metaphysics originates from the experience of something'. It is free from the realization of particular viewpoints. It distinguishes positions from counter-positions in the whole of knowledge. It is a transforming principle that urges positions to fuller development. By reversing counter-positions, it liberates discoveries from the shackles in which they were formulated.

It unifies all other departments: For, other departments respond to particular ranges of questions, whereas metaphysics deals with the original and total question. In this way it moves to the total answer, transforming and putting together all other answers. "Metaphysics, then, is the whole in knowledge but not the whole of knowledge." A whole is whole with all its parts and dependent on them; but it is not identical with the parts. So, the principles of metaphysics are prior to all other knowledge, and metaphysics presses them together in the unity of a whole.

Metaphysics as the Core and Ground of Philosophy: Rene Descartes wrote to Picot who translated the *Principia Philosophiae* into French: 'Thus the whole of philosophy is like a tree: the roots are metaphysics, the trunk is physics, and the branches that issue from the trunk are all the other sciences....' In 1949, Martin Heidegger, in his lecture *The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics*, analysed the thought of Descartes and came to the conclusion that the roots should have a ground for their support and nourishment. Such a supporting and nourishing ground of metaphysics is Being itself or 'Nothing'. Heidegger's brilliant analysis of the Cartesian metaphor ignores the vast difference between the roots of a tree and metaphysics, and between the roots of a tree and the ground in which the roots are. One can easily uproot a tree, separating it from the ground in which it is rooted. In the same way, one cannot separate metaphysics from its so-called ground, 'Being' itself. For the roots of metaphysics are identical and inseparable from its ground, since it is the latter which constitutes and distinguishes metaphysics from all other sciences, i.e., Being itself is the formal object of metaphysics. Hence metaphysics is not only the root of philosophy but its ground too.

Metaphysics as Science: Human is never permanently satisfied with a superficial knowledge of things. One seeks to penetrate the veil of phenomena and grasp the *noumena*. This is due to Human's insatiable craving for knowledge. The increased knowledge in widely separated fields calls for unification and systematization of the scattered items of knowledge. This is the origin of science. According to its traditional meaning, science is the *sure and evident knowledge of things from their causes or systematic body of knowledge*. In this sense metaphysics seems to be supremely a science; for metaphysics arrives at the first

efficient cause and the ultimate final cause of all things. From the viewpoint of causal explanation, metaphysics is the highest type of science. Its starting point that ‘there is something’ is immediately known. From its immediately known starting point the procedure of metaphysics is demonstrative with a further reflection on the sensitivo-rational experience of the being or ‘something’ of sensible things, which has both necessary and contingent characteristics. The reasoning of metaphysics bases itself only on the necessary features. The being of any sensible thing is necessarily dependent on a prior efficient cause, on the ultimate subsistent Being. Hence the reasoning of metaphysics is never based upon the accidental character of a sensible thing’s being. Of course, metaphysics lacks the incomparable advantage enjoyed by the experimental sciences, which is verification through further sensible experiences. For instance, molecules were reasoned to form transference of odours and diffusion of gases. Their activity was verified in numerous experiments, and in recent years very large molecules became visible through the electron microscope. No such double check for its conclusions is possible in metaphysics. It has only the much harder way of checking each link in the demonstration through reflection. Accordingly, the agreement among astronomers or chemists or physicists is enviable, while the agreement among metaphysicians at any historical period is notoriously lacking. Therefore, metaphysical doctrines are neither ‘theories’ in any modern acceptance of the term, nor are they conjectured hypotheses proposed for experimental verification. In fact they are demonstrated conclusions resting solely but evidently upon the immediacy of their starting points and the cogency of reasoning processes which qualify them to be scientific. Metaphysics as science, which provides us with sure and evident knowledge of things from their causes, also has its own object, starting point, fundamental notions and principles, method, and justification.

1.4 SCOPE OF METAPHYSICS

The scope of metaphysics includes both its material and formal objects. Generally, matter (in philosophy) indicates the indeterminate but determinable element, and ‘form’ the determining element. These relative meanings of ‘material’ and ‘formal’ are also found in the theoretical sciences, especially when there are questions of the ‘material object’ and the ‘formal object’ of a science. *Material Object* is the definite realm or definite subject matter which a science deals with. For instance, man, inanimate matter, the stars, the earth, language, religion, law, etc. *Formal Object* is that special aspect of the material object which is under consideration or study. A definite material object that is taken as the general matter to be studied will have too many knowable aspects to be grasped fully in a single intellectual consideration. To arrive at a well-founded total view, one will have to approach it in quasi-partial studies, i.e., through formal and analytic abstraction of the various aspects of the object. The material object so considered in a definite aspect is thus called the formal object. *The material object of metaphysics* includes all things which fall under the notion of being, such as actual or possible, abstract or concrete, material or immaterial, finite or infinite. *The formal object of metaphysics* is the study of ‘being as being’, *ens in quantum ens*. That is to say, metaphysics does not restrict itself to any particular being or part of that being, but rather treats what is *common to all beings*, namely Being which is the ground of beings since all beings are in Being. Being is not a particular thing though it embraces everything in itself. That which is not particular is still

something or in some way. Hence, Being is that which is in some way.

Of course, our *knowledge of Being is an act of intuition*, because of the indubitable, inseparable, and immediate self-presence of being as being to my knowing and is a pre-predicative certainty which precedes the formation of all explicit concepts and judgments. But this intuition is so imperfect that it does not yet say anything explicit about identity or participation, unity or plurality, etc. Because of this imperfection of our intuition we are forced to express the knowledge of *Being* by means of a *judgment*. Now that the problem facing us is no longer that of being as being but the problem of one and many, we will have to investigate more accurately the nature of the predicate which is common to all, and ask ourselves how a predicate that does not express any plurality, finiteness, imperfection, or indetermination can be predicated of distinct, manifold, finite, imperfect, and determinable subjects. This investigation will have to show how the most universal concept expresses everything at the same time, but simultaneously falls short because of its inadequacy. Taken in an absolute sense, *Being pertains to everything*: the necessary, the real, and even the possible, the object known and the knowing subject, the concept and what is conceived, what is perceived and what is purely proposed in imagination or thought, and even the purely apparent. Therefore, Being or 'something' is the absolutely all-embracing notion. It is a general notion. By 'general' is meant one which refers to many. Thus it means here that 'Being' is predicated of each of many beings distributively as multiplied in these many. *Being is the absolutely general notion*, because it is predicated not merely of a group of beings but absolutely of all. If Being is the absolute general notion, *it cannot be defined*; for, a definition places the concept defined under a more general thought content or genus (higher class) and indicates how it differs from other concepts falling under the same genus by means of a specific difference. But the notion of Being does not fall under a higher, more general concept and therefore it is not a species. It is the first known in which everything else that is known, thought, or proposed is already present and presupposed. We can describe the notion of Being only if we recognize a certain structure in it. Like all our concepts, it is not perfectly simple, but shows a certain dichotomy of bearer and form. Being is that which is, that which has 'Being', that which has a reference to 'Being', and through which 'Being' *is*. If Being is considered as a predicate, it is a participle and emphasizes the participation in 'Being'. If it is used as a subject, it is a noun and stresses that which participates in 'Being', the bearer or the subject of 'Being'. Now a question arises: Is Being known by abstraction?

Abstraction is the operation by which the mind leaves aside abstracts *from* certain aspects of a being. When the intellect abstracts it *out* of the whole complex of a being, it does so as it discovers that other beings also exhibit this same feature. The more the content of a thought is abstract and leaves aside more particular contents, the more does its extension become general, universal, and predicable of a large number. The opposite of abstraction is contraction, which is a process by which the mind again adds the aspects which were left behind through abstraction to the central characteristic of a being. Since this central feature was universal, contraction will limit a concept from the more universal to the more particular. Accordingly, an increase in comprehension is accompanied by a decrease in extension. The abstraction in question is generalizing abstraction, called '*total*' abstraction. It is a logical process in which one and the same concrete whole, e.g., John, is considered under an increasingly more general aspect, for

instance, as human, sentient being, living being, or corporeal being. It means that the being from which the concept is abstracted is not expressed as to one of its parts only but as a whole: the totality is expressed but not totally. For this reason the concept obtained through total abstraction can be predicated of more particular concepts and of the individual being, e.g., John is a human, or a human is a sentient being. If we suppose that the concept of a being is the most abstract in the sense of total abstraction, it would retain only that in which the many beings agree, but leave aside that in which they differ. The differences would be expressed in differentiating concepts that stand independently alongside the notion of Being. They would have to be added to it through contraction, as positive enrichments of its content, if one wanted to arrive at the knowledge of the various beings. Thus there would be a plurality of concepts. Nevertheless, these many thought contents would have to constitute a certain unity, no matter how imperfect.

Hence the notion of Being and the differentiating concepts would have to show a certain similarity with one another. But then, this similarity itself through a process of abstraction could be isolated in a higher and more general concept and so on to infinity, without ever allowing us to reach the absolutely supreme and first notion. However, because of the unity of thinking as well as that of the thinkable, there has to be a supreme and all-embracing concept. Hence the most general concept cannot be obtained through abstraction which leaves aside the differences. Therefore, this concept is of another nature than abstract concepts. It has to also include the differentiating concepts, not merely potentially as in concepts that are obtained through total abstraction, but *actually*. Thus it is not possible to perform a perfect conceptual separation of that in which beings are similar, and that in which they differ. Otherwise, since they are similar in this that they all *are*, their dissimilarity would have to lie in something that is beyond *Being* i.e., in non-Being. But non-*Being* cannot be the foundation of a difference; for to differ is *to be* different, to be in a different way. Therefore, the various beings differ in *Being* itself. Accordingly, the differentiating concepts, which express the distinct modes of *Being* of the various beings, such as subsistent, accidental, material, or spiritual, do not contain absolutely anything. But in that case they are not additions to the notion of Being. Consequently, they must lie within the content itself of Being as its *immanent precisions*. Thus it follows that the notion of Being is not abstract in the proper sense of the term 'total abstraction.' The notion of 'Being' extends to all beings not only insofar as they are similar but also insofar as they are dissimilar, and contains them in all aspects. For this reason we call the notion of Being '*transcendental*'. It is not only the absolutely general concept, transcending all other concepts in extension, but it is at the same time absolutely all-embracing, inasmuch as it somehow includes all other possible thought content. Being transcends every genus and all differences: it contains in an eminent way not only the highest abstract concepts or genera but also the differentiating concepts, and therefore also the concepts of species.

Everything in every concept is permeated with the notion of Being. The term 'transcendental' is opposed to 'categorical'. A concept is 'categorical' insofar as it falls under one of the categories or predicaments which are the fundamental concepts. These are positively distinct and thus opposed to one another and do not agree in a higher general concept obtained through proper abstraction. It is to these categories that univocal concepts of genus and species are reduced. 'Transcendental' belongs first of all to 'Being'. For this reason we give the name 'transcendental properties of being' to the properties which flow from being as

being. Such characteristics, flowing from the identity of Being with itself, are the following: unity, truth, goodness, and beauty. In a somewhat *broader* sense one may consider as transcendental properties those which pertain not to all beings but to beings having a higher mode of *Being*, inasmuch as they do not include any imperfection in themselves. 'Transcendental' in the Kantian sense is opposed to 'empirical', and applies to *knowledge* insofar as this knowledge is not concerned with objects but with the subjective *a priori* possibility of knowing objects. 'Transcendental' should also be distinguished from 'transcendent', i.e., what transcends a given order of *being* and is independent of it. With reference to the cognitive object, 'transcendent' means that which is above the cognitive immanence of the object. With respect to the world of experience, it indicates what lies beyond the world of experience. And with regard to the finite, it applies to what transcends everything finite. Accordingly, the difference between the transcendental notion of Being and abstract general concepts lie in this: 'Being' belongs to a being not only because of its similarity but also because of its dissimilarity with the other beings; whereas the unity of the abstract-general concept results from its abstraction.

True, the notion of Being actually contains anything whatsoever that in any way has a reference to 'Being', and includes even the differences through which the various beings are in their own way. But as a concept or intermediary representation of our thinking, it is unable to give us adequate knowledge of the universal interconnection uniting 'everything that is'. This imperfectness consists in the fact that although this idea contains the different modes of *Being* actually, it contains them only implicitly and confusedly. Despite their being contained in this notion, they are not yet known explicitly and distinctly. For this reason, sometimes the term 'improper' abstraction is used with respect to the notion of Being, for it does not leave anything behind but yet does not say everything explicitly. Thus there is need for other concepts. However, these concepts are not wholly and entirely different, but only more explicit renderings of what is already contained in the notion of Being. Accordingly, the development of thought consists in an immanent / explicit rendering of the notion of Being. Thus in an increasingly more adequate way, everything which through *Being* is possible and all its realizations are brought to explicit knowledge in more determined concepts. It is only in this way that the full richness of the notion of 'Being' reveals itself. The transition from the confused notion to the explicit grasp of 'that which is' depends on experience and the insight contained in it. It is only through experience that we are placed in the presence of the various modes of *Being*, which we cannot immediately deduce from the general notion of Being itself. If Being is the absolute general notion, it belongs to everything. But if at the same time it is transcendental, and thus contains not merely potentially but actually the differentiating concepts, how can it be predicated of the various beings and aspects of *Being* in the same undifferentiated sense? In other words, the notion of Being is predicated of many, in a sense that is neither absolutely the same nor entirely different. It has a unity of meaning because its sense reveals not an absolute but a *relative similarity* in the judgments we make about different beings commonly called '*analogy*'. The function of the starting point of metaphysics is to supply the basic data concerning the object of metaphysics, i.e., science of being as being (which is also analogous).

The scope of metaphysics also includes its starting point. A science is always a logically ordered system, i.e., the various parts of a science are logically coherent; one part is justified by another. Scientific statements are deduced from another. However, this process cannot go on to infinity. Ultimately one must arrive at premises that no longer are conclusions of a reasoning process within the limits of a given science, but have their truth established through direct observation by the senses or their foundation in another science. Somehow every science is bound to have fundamental data that can serve as the starting point. In other words, the function of the starting point is to supply the basic data concerning the object considered in the science.

The physical sciences have their starting point in the concrete data of the senses obtained through observation or experimentation. The *anthropological and cultural sciences* have a broader starting point. It is constituted not only by sense experience but also by man's intellectual reflection upon himself. The *mathematical sciences* have their starting point in number, line, surface, or body. The starting point of *philosophical sciences* is intellectual reflection on the general data of experience, with respect to the being of man and things outside man. The *theological sciences* have the data of revelation as their starting point.

The question about the starting point of metaphysics comes at the beginning of metaphysics itself. The starting point must be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin. We can already identify some significant views on the starting point of metaphysics among the metaphysicians. Some of them are the following:

Judgment as the Starting Point of Metaphysics (Advocated by Joseph Marechal)

Every particular act of knowledge reveals a characteristic duality when it is expressed in a judgment: *reference and assertion*. Knowledge always refers to something or someone and makes an assertion about this something or someone in either an affirmative or a negative way. To know something or someone always means to know it or one as being this way or that way, or not this way or that way, i.e., as *judgment*. *Judgment* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object by way of affirmation or denial. Every particular judgment may be considered as a reply to the question: Is the being in question as it is asserted to be in the proposition? This question is raised on the basis of a series of previously accepted suppositions. For instance, if the question refers to the 'what' or 'how' of a person or a thing, it presupposes that they *are*. If it is concerned with the actual occurrence of a particular event, it assumes a framework of successive events. If it aims at essential relationships, e.g., between certain numbers, it assumes that a world of numbers is possible. All such presuppositions when put into the form of questions again, allow more profound assumptions to reveal themselves. Ultimately, they all point to one and the same most fundamental presupposition which excludes all other suppositions: *something* (no matter what) *is* (no matter how).

Judgments are of two kinds: Direct judgment (immediate judgment) and indirect judgment (mediate judgment). *Direct judgment* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object, empirically or transcendently. *Empirical direct judgement* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object as presented to our senses, e.g., this is a pen. *Transcendental direct judgment* is an

act of the intellect in which we say something of ‘something’ which is directly and immediately but implicitly present in all human experiences, e.g., ‘this is something’. *Indirect or mediate judgment* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object derivatively, e.g., ‘all men are mortal’. Every judgement also has two aspects: concrete synthesis and affirmative synthesis (objective synthesis). *Concrete synthesis* is a synthesis which joins a predicate of itself universal with an individual subject, and thus restricts the concept to this individual alone, e.g., *this is a pen*. *Objective synthesis* (affirmative synthesis) is the position of correspondence between ourselves, as possessing the complex totality of sensible and intelligible signs, and the thing which is represented or signified by them, e.g., *this is a pen*. *Objection*: Every judgement presupposes at least an implicit awareness of the one who judges. Notion of self is apriori to judgement itself. Hence judgement cannot be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin.

Question as the Starting Point of Metaphysics (Advocated by Martin Heidegger, Karl Rahner, Emerich Coreth, Otto Muck)

‘Human Questions’: Question is something final and irreducible. Every attempt to question the question is itself another question. This question is a metaphysical question. The metaphysical question is the reflexive articulation of the question about Being, which pervades the ground of human existence itself. In this way, it is the transcendental question which does not merely place something asked about in question, but also the one questioning and his question itself. It is the starting point of metaphysics. One can ask oneself whether the question concerning the starting point of metaphysics is itself a starting point which does not make any further logical and critical presuppositions. This turns the question back upon itself and discloses that the question in the beginning is unavoidable, and that at least questioning in itself is given as an unavoidable and non-arbitrary beginning. For if the question concerning the starting point was itself improper or meaningless, then questioning the meaninglessness of the question concerning the starting point of metaphysics would be another question. *Objection*: No one can raise a question about something of which one does not know anything at all, as question is the quest for the unknown from the known. Every question presupposes some knowledge of the questioned, and at least some ignorance of it. Knowledge and ignorance imply affirmation and negation (denial) which are the characteristics of judgement. Hence question cannot be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin.

Pure Desire to Know as the Starting Point of Metaphysics (Advocated by Bernard Lonergan)

Being is the objective of the pure desire to know. The *Desire to know* is the dynamic orientation manifested in question for intelligence and for reflection. It is the inquiring and critical spirit of man. It moves man to reflect, to seek the unconditioned. It prevents him from being content with untested theories and legends. By raising questions for intelligence and reflection, it excludes complacent inertia. For, if the question goes unanswered, man cannot be complacent; and if the answers are right, man is not inert. The *Pure Desire to Know* differs from other desires. This pure desire is to be known by giving free rein to intelligent and rational consciousness, and not by comparing with other desires. It compels assent to the unconditioned. *This pure desire has an objective*. The objective of the pure desire to know is the content of knowing and not

merely the act of knowing, i. e., *what* is to be known (that which is to be known). The fact of asking or questioning results from the *pure desire*. (Pure desire is prior to questioning and judging ? the starting point of metaphysics). Hence, Being is all that is known and all that remains to be known. It is at the root of all that can be affirmed or conceived. It underlies all judgement and formulation, all questioning and the desire to question. In this way it is all-inclusive. *Objection:* The objective of the pure desire to know is Being. Being is the motivating force of the desire. The pure desire already presupposes Being, which is known and remains to be known. Hence the pure desire to know cannot be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin.

Experience of Something as the Starting Point of Metaphysics

The starting point of metaphysics is the experience of 'something', as it manifests itself in various forms. Experience means a special form of knowledge derived from the immediate reception of the given or of the impression in contrast to discursive thought, mere concepts, authoritatively accepted opinions, or historical tradition. When experience presents itself, it is a special kind of supreme certitude of irrefutable evidence. It is concerned with facts. It tends to experiential evidence. It can never reach apodictic evidence. For it does not know whether or not its opposite is wholly unthinkable because of its absolute impossibility. Nevertheless, in its own way it can reach indubitableness, i.e., if it is affirmed in its very negation. It does not mean that the content of the act denying such an experience implies the affirmation, but that the very exercise of this act implies it. Experiences which in this way are inevitable and undeniable may nonetheless be said to be apodictic to a certain extent; for they are present as soon as one is there, experiencing and observing. They may be called *primordial experience*. Their apodicticity is based only on one's experience of one's Being and of whatever is given together with one's *being* as one experiences it. To deny such experience is not the same as to negate the unqualified Something or Being, but to negate the 'being' of the negating 'I'.

Hence it is certain that everyone has this experience of 'something'. This experience of 'something' is an inescapable experience. One may escape from a particular experience, but one cannot escape from experiencing something. The most fundamental and radical question one can raise is this: Is there anything at all? The answer can either be a negation or an affirmation. If it is a negation it should be thus: 'There is nothing'. Such an answer is self-contradictory as the answer affirms a negation which is again 'something'. Hence absolute negation is impossible. For, paradoxically, every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. An affirmative experience of 'something' is not 'that which is not' but 'that which is' or 'Being'. Thus, experience of 'something' or Being is the ultimate starting point of metaphysics manifest in other forms too.

In other words, the experience of 'something' constitutes the cognitive ground of the absolutely necessary, which presents itself as the foundation or the 'why' of the facts, as the condition of their possibility, their reality, and their hypothetical necessity. However, the fact which is experienced is not *in itself* the ontological ground of the absolutely necessary; for the necessary is necessary even in the hypothesis. Only the insight that the necessary is independent of the facts is a metaphysical insight; for it arrives at truths which are true of necessity, even if

the world of experience would not exist or would be entirely different. Thus we may speak in a twofold way of the starting point of metaphysics: First of all, insofar as the pursuit of metaphysics is concerned, the starting point lies in the undeniable but necessary affirmation of *Something* or *Being* of the experienced real being that I am and that of the other real beings, if there are any, with whom I find myself together. This necessity is only hypothetical, for it is based on my own experience. It consists in the undeniability of whatever is implied in the act by which I experience that I am. Secondly, the starting point lies in the absolute, essential necessity of ‘something’ or *being* as *being* which reveals itself to some extent, but only imperfectly and inadequately, in the reality of my *being*. This necessity consists in the undeniable absolute identity of *Being* with *beings* while *Being is in beings*. This most undeniable fact of Being with beings while Being is in beings, is the starting-point of all other fundamental notions and principles.

Check Your Progress

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain the etymology of metaphysics and define it.

2) What is the scope of metaphysics?

1.5 LET US SUM UP

No knowledge is possible without Being. Being is the core and ground of knowledge itself, and hence of all knowledge. Metaphysics, which is the science of being as being, is implicit in all knowledge. The term ‘metaphysics’ was coined by Andronicus of Rhodes for the work of Aristotle that was placed after physics. However, the word probably did not originate from somebody’s being at a loss as to what to call a book, but rather is the most suitable designation of the first philosophy, a concept presumably based on the orthodox tradition from Aristotle and his immediate followers. Though the term ‘metaphysics’ is of Western origin, the terms such as *Brahmodya*, *atmavidya*, *paravidya*, *brahmavidya*, *drshti*, *adyatmavidya*, and *sidha-darsana* used in Indian philosophy can also communicate the same meaning. These terms imply in some way the meaning of metaphysics as the core and ground of all knowledge, or as the science of being as being. Metaphysics is the core and ground of human knowledge as it underlies,

penetrates, transforms, and unifies all other departments of knowledge. As it is the core of all knowledge, it is also the core and ground of philosophy. Metaphysics is also a science, since it is a systematic body of knowledge with its own certain and definite starting point that ‘there is something’ which is indubitably and immediately known. From its immediately known starting point, the procedure of metaphysics is demonstrative with a further reflection on the sensitivo-rational experience of the being or ‘something’ that has both necessary and contingent characteristics which enlarge its scope to include both material and formal objects.

1.6 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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