

BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY

METAPHYSICS and METAPHYSICS AND EDUCATION

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WHAT IS META PHYSICS

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that studies the ultimate nature of reality or existence. It asks questions such as ‘What exists?’ or ‘What is real?’ Metaphysicians seek an irreducible foundation of reality or ‘first principles’ from which absolute knowledge or truth can be induced and deduced. The term *metaphysics* is derived from the Greek words “*meta*” means (“beyond”, “upon” or “after”) and *physika*, means (“physics”). Literally it refers ‘those things after the physics.’ Aristotle’s writings on ‘first philosophy’ came after his treatise on physics, therefore, Aristotle’s editor, Andronicus of Rhodes, named them metaphysics.



TYPICAL METAPHYSICAL QUESTIONS

- What is reality?
- Does God exist, and if so, can we prove it?
- The problem of evil?
- Are human actions free, or are they determined by some forces outside of our control?
- Do minds/souls exist, or are humans' simply complex physical objects?
- What is time?
- What is the meaning of life?
- Is there life after death? etc.

ASPECT OF METAPHYSICS

COSMOLOGICAL ASPECT

Cosmology consists in the study of theories about the origin, nature, and development of the universe as an orderly system. Questions such as these populate the realm of cosmology: “How did the universe originate and develop? Did it come about by accident or design? Does its existence have any purpose?”



ASPECT OF METAPHYSICS

THEOLOGICAL ASPECT

Theology is that part of religious theory that deals with conceptions of and about God. “Is there a God? If so, is there one or more than one? What are the attributes of God? If God is both all good and all powerful, why does evil exist? If God exists, what is His relationship to human beings and the ‘real’ world of everyday life?”



ASPECT OF METAPHYSICS

ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECT

Anthropology deals with the study of human beings and asks questions like the following: What is the relation between mind and body? Is mind more fundamental than body, with body depending on mind, or vice versa? What is humanity's moral status? Are people born good, evil, or morally neutral? To what extent are individuals free? Do they have free will, or are their thoughts and actions determined by their environment, inheritance, or a divine being? Does each person have a soul? If so, what is it? People have obviously adopted different positions on these questions, and those positions influence their political, social, religious, and educational ideals and practices.



ASPECT OF METAPHYSICS

ONTOLOGICAL ASPECT

Ontology is the study of the nature of existence, or what it means for anything to exist. Several questions are central to ontology: “Is basic reality found in matter or physical energy (the world we can sense), or is it found in spirit or spiritual energy? Is it composed of one element (e.g., matter or spirit), or two (e.g., matter and spirit), or many?” “Is reality orderly and lawful in itself, or is it merely orderable by the human mind? Is it fixed and stable, or is change its central feature? Is this reality friendly, unfriendly, or neutral toward humanity?”



METAPHYSICS AND EDUCATION

Even a cursory study of either historical or contemporary societies will reveal the impact of the cosmological, theological, anthropological, and ontological aspects of metaphysics upon their social, political, economic, and scientific beliefs and practices. People everywhere embrace answers to these questions and then live their daily lives in keeping with those assumptions. There is no escape from metaphysical decisions; unless one chooses to vegetate and even that choice would be a metaphysical decision about the nature and function of humanity. Education, like other human activities, cannot operate outside the realm of metaphysics. Metaphysics, or the issue of ultimate reality, is central to any concept of education, because it is important for the educational program of the school (or family or church) to be based upon fact and reality rather than fancy, illusion, error, or imagination.



METAPHYSICS AND EDUCATION(CONTINUE)

Varying metaphysical beliefs lead to differing educational approaches and even separate systems of education. Why do Adventists and other Christians spend millions of dollars each year on private systems of education when free public systems are widely available? This is due to their metaphysical beliefs regarding the nature of ultimate reality, the existence of God, the role of God in human affairs, and the nature and role of human beings as God's children. At their deepest levels, men and women are motivated by metaphysical beliefs. History demonstrates that people are willing to die for those convictions, and that they desire to create educational environments in which their most basic beliefs will be taught to their children.



THANKING YOU

