



Rosa Veritas
Learning



Metaphysics in Action

Study Topic 1

I Am a Spiritual Being

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Rosa Veritas
Learning

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STUDY TOPIC 1

I Am a Spiritual Being

Outline

We begin our exploration of *Metaphysics in Action* by considering:

- A concept of Metaphysics
- The nature of 'Spirit Truth' and applying it in your life
- You as a spiritual being
- Yourself as an individual

What Is Metaphysics

The word 'metaphysics' means 'beyond the physical'. It deals with principles and laws which determine what happens in our lives. It enables us to see the causes working in our existence.

Therefore, metaphysics is a way of comprehending who you really are:

- On a spiritual level
- On a physical level
- And metaphysics gives principles which can assist you to live fully, on both a physical and a spiritual level. It enables you to realise your potential.

Metaphysics is a philosophy, but it is also a way of life. So metaphysics is not a philosophy which you can sit down and study in an armchair. Until it becomes a way of life, a way of being, a way of seeing the world – we cannot claim to be a metaphysician.

You will not be a metaphysician at the end of this Unit, just as a someone who plays some music is not a musician at the end of a few weeks of studying an instrument. It takes constant and long practice, but eventually the skills you practise will be present as a natural ability. What is taught and what you experience in this course is like a seed which can grow within you if you nurture it.

The Nature of Spiritual Truth

Metaphysics has to do with unseen things. The metaphysician has learned to look at the unseen causes that lie behind the effects that we see and experience in the world. The metaphysician has been trained to see beyond the external situation into the heart of the matter.

By enrolling in this Unit you have taken the first step towards this 'spiritual perception', for these unseen truths are only for those who can spiritually perceive. They are not for the person who thinks they know it all, or the person who lets things slide. They are for the person who *wants* to know more.

Spiritual truths are revealed either through direct revelation from the spiritual worlds, or through traditional wisdom teachings. These truths have never altered and can never alter. That is why we speak of the wisdom of the ages. The teachings may be phrased differently and placed in a different context, according to the age, but the essence of the teachings remain the same. What was true yesterday is true today, in terms of the heavens. Truth is eternal. But how it is interpreted, of course, is determined by the age in which we live. So spiritual truths are of cosmic significance and yet have a personal application.

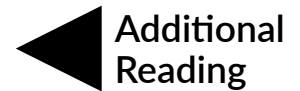
We must realise, though, that just as global weather patterns change, so the conditions which govern our physical existence also change from time to time. If the conditions stayed the same, there would be no possibility of growing and becoming more spiritually mature. For instance, in the past, humanity was concerned with its physical welfare – how to grow food, how to survive. Now that we have mastered that, the mind has become important. So the conditions of our lives have changed, we live in a different age and we have the opportunity to grow accordingly.

Growth and changing your patterns of living, in a practical sense, is the essential purpose of this unit. And in a larger framework, transformation is the essential reason you are alive today. The spiritual impulse within you wants to ensure that when you put your head down for the last time you are a different being from the one who was born into this world so many years ago.

We can fight this transformation process, or assist it. The choice is ours. Metaphysics is a study of spiritual principles which will help us co-operate with the spiritual powers which are working to transform us.

Additional Reading: 'Practicing Metaphysics'

see page 20 ([HERE](#))



The Mystery Schools and Metaphysics

Some of what we teach through Rosa Veritas Learning, as metaphysics, belonged to the elementary teachings in the mystery schools of an earlier age. The candidates, the ones who wanted to be initiated, were taught certain principles and exercises to prepare them for direct experience of the spiritual worlds. In those days metaphysics was taught in secret and there were many tests to pass before the student was judged worthy.

Today we teach metaphysics in an open study environment, where there is no mystery or secrecy. However tests and initiations are inherent in the subject of metaphysics. The nature of these tests is different now, but still just as difficult to pass through. These tests are more inward now. That is, you will find barriers within yourself to the knowledge that is taught here. You may find some of what we teach difficult. You may want to give up. You might not understand everything. Sometimes you won't agree with the information. Sometimes the way the information is given may upset you.

This is the way it happens. Little barriers within self arise. When this happens, be patient. Be willing to let these unsettling ideas just sit in the back of your mind. One cannot learn metaphysics in a few weeks, but in the fullness of time the jigsaw puzzle will be complete. So be prepared to wait for some of the answers to come, in future weeks and months.

In ancient times the mind as we know it now was not developed, so obviously the teachings were given differently from the way we teach now. The teacher taught and the pupils comprehended through telepathic communication – in utter silence. But that was thousands of years ago. No longer can we teach in that way.

The rise of Greek philosophy, in the fifth century BCE, signifies that human evolution had reached a stage where spirituality could be put in the form of concepts and understood with the mind. Prior to that, spiritual teachings were communicated through myths, legends, symbols, and ceremonies or rituals of initiation.

The early Greek philosophers were the first metaphysicians because they placed spiritual teachings in an intellectual framework, something which had never been done before. Conditions had changed and humanity was ready to grasp heavenly things. Metaphysics is therefore associated with the mind and thinking. It is a picture of

humanity reaching up to the heavens trying to grasp and make the spiritual worlds their own, rather than being subject to the whims of the Gods. That is one reason the Greek culture stands out from other ancient cultures.

Additional
Reading



**Additional Reading:
'The Historical Development of Metaphysics'**

see page 24 ([HERE](#))

You Are a Spiritual Being

Above the entrance to the temple of Apollo at Delphi the words 'Know Yourself' were inscribed. All who entered the temple to learn the mysteries had to keep these words in mind. Today we have different spiritual needs from the ancients, and therefore we present metaphysics in a modern form. But the starting point is the same, we begin with self, and we ask the question: **Who am I ?**

This is an age-old question. What is our essential nature? The answer we give to this question determines the answers to all of the other questions we face as human beings. Who or what we think we are determines our responses to all of life's situations. And how we identify ourselves is also how we limit ourselves. Today we are often identified by what we do, rather than by what we are. On meeting other people, the first question is often, 'And what do you do?' In this study topic we are more interested in the answer to the question 'Who are you?'

We know we're physical beings, but we also know that we are more than that. We have a sense of an invisible dimension of self. If we didn't we would never ask questions like 'Who am I?', 'Where did I come from?', 'Where am I going?' Looked at from a purely physical point of view, you came from your mother's womb and you will go to the grave. That is physically observable, so why ask the question unless you think there is an unseen or unknown element at work in birth and death?

Metaphysics states, without qualification, that you are a spiritual being. Essentially, on the highest level of your being, you are spirit. Let's state this as a metaphysical principle.

Principle



PRINCIPLE 1
I am a spiritual being.

We are not spiritual because we may meditate, or because we are vegetarians, or because we believe certain things. We are spiritual because the human spirit is part of our nature, regardless of what we do or believe.

Characteristics of Spirit

This human spirit is part of God / the Ultimate Being and is eternal. It is what gives us a sense of our ongoing existence and the need to plan for the future. It is the spirit in us that makes us restless and spurs us on to greater heights and achievements.

It is the spirit which sets humanity at the crown of creation; we are different from other living creatures on this earth. We stand upright. We can think; we can speak; we can change; we can love; we can create.

However, we have been taught over the centuries that we are sinful creatures and that God is separate from us. That is the great deception we live in, in the western world. It is a lie because God and human beings are interrelated. We would not be what we are if the spirit were not part of our nature.

Part of studying metaphysics is learning to recognise the divine within self, and to ascribe to self all the qualities you have hitherto ascribed to God. If you see God as the ultimate authority, then start seeing that there is also no greater authority than your own self. If you believe you have to have faith in God, then begin by having faith in yourself.

Studying metaphysics involves a shift in how we see God and therefore a shift in how we see ourselves. This can also be stated as a metaphysical principle:

PRINCIPLE 2

To be fully human is to be fully divine.



We have therefore redefined the word 'human'. It is usually used to make excuses for our imperfections, such as in the statement, 'I am only human'. And there is certainly that side of our nature, but that is not the divine part. On the highest level, to be fully human is to be fully conscious of the divine spirit within you.

Spirit Is Eternal

All of the scriptures of the world, east and west, agree on one thing: spirit is eternal.

So part of us is eternal. We have a sense of this at times, especially when someone close to us dies. The death of a loved one brings us face to face with eternity. For a moment, we experience an inner emptiness and a feeling which says, 'I know the spirit of my friend lives on'.

But in our day to day living, we cannot comprehend that we are eternal beings. Because we are so strongly identified with our physical existence we often don't think or act in terms of eternity.

How can we express the concept of eternity? How can we express our own spirit more fully?

Firstly, by claiming it for ourselves and realising that there is a divine aspect to all we do and are. Secondly, we express our spirit by realising that we are eternal beings, with an existence which stretches from the dim past into the future. Most people think in the short term and model their thinking and actions accordingly. Studying metaphysics helps us keep our eyes on the ultimate goal of our existence, and not just what we are going to do next week.

A Symbol for Spirit

With our twentieth century western minds we have difficulty grasping the nature of spirit, for the simple reason that our minds work according to earthly concepts. In this respect, stories, symbols and myths can still help us, as they did the students of old.

For instance, the circle is a symbol of eternity because it has neither beginning nor ending. The circle is also a symbol of spirit because it depicts completeness and wholeness. Often we need symbols to portray spiritual truth, because truth cannot be fully grasped by the earthly rational mind.

Finding Spirit Is Like Peeling an Onion

Another way of understanding spiritual truths is through analogy. This story is one such example.

Once upon a time a wise old gentleman invited a young man, who was seeking to understand the truth of his being, to come to his place for dinner. The young man gladly accepted his invitation and he found the old man's little cottage on a farm.

He offered to help the old man prepare the meal, and was asked to peel the onions. Not knowing much about cooking he peeled an onion until he thought it was done and asked if it was ready. The old man said no and he had to keep peeling. So he kept peeling till he was halfway through the onion and asked again if it was okay. The old man

said that he had to keep on peeling because he had not reached the real onion yet. The old man said he wanted the real onion.

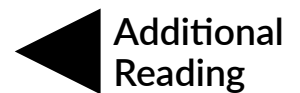
The young man thought, 'This silly twit must mean the little pit that lies inside the onion.' So he went as far as that – by this time the big onion had become virtually nothing. But the old man said he still wasn't there yet. So he continued on until there was nothing left and the old man said, 'Now you've got the real onion.'

Where would your mind tell you to stop in peeling the onion?

It would perhaps be good for us to go through a similar exercise. If you discard your job, your different relationships with your family and friends, your home, your clothes, your body, your feelings, beliefs, opinions and thoughts, then finally you come to the point where there is nothing left – that is, from the earthly point of view. Everything we identify with is gone, yet we remain. This essence is spirit.

Additional Reading: 'Who Am I?'

see page 37 ([HERE](#))



Activity: The 'Who Am I?' Exercise

Settle yourself and get comfortable. Shortly you will look at the reflection of your face in the mirror and ask the question 'Who am I?' Allow an answer, 'I AM ...' to rise up from within you. Do not force it or make up an answer with your rational mind. You can verbalise it or become aware of the answer mentally. Then ask the question again, 'Who am I?' Allow the response to rise from within you.

Continue this process at your own pace. Experiment with how you verbalise the question 'Who am I?' Place different emphasis on the words and experiment with changing the tone of your voice. Do this until there is no longer any recognisable response. When this happens you have contacted your essential being. Your being is that which is: it is the life and truth within you. Your I AM makes life worth living. Simply enjoy the sense of being an I AMness. You have passed through the mind and the emotions and at this point you are in touch with your spiritual being.



Feel the strength, the aloneness, and the beauty of your I AMness. Acknowledge your I AM and the purpose for which you have incarnated into the world. Honour your individuality and over the these eight study topics commit yourself to developing a lifestyle and frame of mind in which your real self can play a big part.

This is how it was at the very beginning of earthly evolution, before the physical world as we know it came into existence. There was only spirit. Everything had its origin in the depth of spiritual nothingness. From that void everything has emerged. So what we think of as nothing, was anything but!

Entering Into the Physical

Spirit is synonymous with God / the Ultimate Being so originally we were at one with God. But we had no consciousness of that oneness, just as a drop in the ocean has no notion of the expanse of the sea.

Imagine yourself as a spiritual being, perfectly happy and contented. There was no desire then, because there was no self-consciousness and everything was ours anyway. So there was nothing we wanted or needed. There was therefore no pain or suffering. It was very different to our present earthly existence.

The story of how we as spiritual beings came to be earthly beings is a long story that cannot be fully explained now. It is dealt with in great detail in Unit ES1 entitled Esoteric Understanding of the Human Being.

For the moment we have to answer the question: Why didn't we stay in that sublime state? The divine plan was that we become self-conscious beings. For this to happen we needed to become earthly and aware of ourselves as separate identities. So we descended into this world.

Very gradually, over a long period of time, our human spirit became increasingly identified with the human body. The first result was that as soon as we became physical we lost our freedom. No longer could we dart around like a ray of light because being in a material form fixed us to a particular place and time. We now identify with a particular country and culture and with a particular time period. Therefore, when we examine who we are we tend to think of ourselves as we are now in this time and place, rather than as we were thirty years ago or as we will be thirty years hence.

The second result was that we became aware of ourselves as separate beings. This awareness was certainly not as sharp as today, but it was a beginning. In those days it could be described more as a 'group

consciousness'. Our survival depended on the tribe. A person who went out on their own couldn't survive. So a tribal consciousness existed at first.

We still see this tribal consciousness today. Group consciousness is observed in any situation where the group dominates the individual and tells the individual what to do and what to think, according to the best interests of the group. It is, of course, seen in the animal kingdom where herds of beasts travel and live together for their mutual benefit. In our society we see group consciousness at work in the unions, at football matches, in ethnic violence, and so on. One has only to look globally to see where group consciousness is at work, and how.

The third result of our descent into the world was that each time we incarnated into the physical body we became more deeply enmeshed in the consciousness provided by the physical senses. So our spirit lost its contact with the heavens and we started to see ourselves as physical beings. We identified with matter and forgot we were spiritual beings. We therefore could no longer remember the purpose for which we came into the world. And today we see much of this sense of 'purposelessness' in people's lives.

The aim of spirit's 'involution' into matter was so that it could know itself, so that we could become self-conscious beings. The story of the human race is really the story of the growth in consciousness.

In the evolutionary scheme of things, unconsciousness always precedes consciousness. We were once unconscious. Then we gained the ability to be conscious on a group level. Finally, today we have gained the ability to be conscious of ourselves as individuals. So there has been progress from unconsciousness to group consciousness to self-consciousness.

We see this reflected in the process of the development of a human being. The growth from babyhood to childhood to adolescence to mature adulthood is the path of growing consciousness. We pass through the group conscious stage, within the family, but it must be transcended.

It is the presence of the spirit within us which brings with it the possibility of self-consciousness. The consciousness we have through the physical body is less than human, it can be likened to that of the animals – and if we stay on that level we have problems. When our thinking is dominated by the physical world and the group consciousness of our culture we are less than human, less than our potential and we are not functioning on that divine level.

Aloneness

When we entered into the physical body we became separate from one another. Today, psychology speaks of the evils of loneliness and teaches us to avoid being alone. But there is a great difference between loneliness, the longing for company and aloneness, the strength to stand alone.

It was not the plan of evolution that you should be lonely. The plan was that you should be alone. We can, of course, have relationships and be surrounded by many people and still feel lonely. So it is a state of mind. You have to become comfortable in your aloneness. You have to say to yourself, 'Isn't it wonderful to be alone.' You have to say to yourself, 'No, I won't turn the television on tonight because then I will no longer be alone.' Or 'No, I won't turn the radio on early in the morning. I have to accept the fact that I am alone.' The purpose of evolution, the purpose of entering into incarnation, is to become self-conscious and this begins by accepting your aloneness.

In our aloneness we have to think and make our own decisions because no one else will do it for us. This is to progress along the path to full self-consciousness. And then the physical level can become the expression of the divine.

This can be stated as another metaphysical principle:

Principle



PRINCIPLE 3

Aloneness is a virtue, loneliness is a disease.

To be alone means to accept yourself, to be at ease with yourself and this is extremely important in metaphysics. The acceptance of self enables other qualities to be added. If you can honestly say, 'I accept my aloneness, and I am at ease with myself', then you are ready for spiritual development.

The Birth of the First 'I'

The purpose of entering into a physical body was to separate us from one another and give each of us an identity. So through means of the body and its senses, our first sense of identity came about. We can call this the first 'I' or the ego. Suddenly we could say, 'I can see', 'I can feel', 'I can think', 'I eat', 'I suffer pain', 'I love music'.

The Birth of the Second 'I'

Our first 'I', the ego, has everything to do with the earth. It is our personality which has been conditioned by so many factors. Without it we couldn't operate in this world. We need the physical 'I' to survive and deal with our physical existence. But a second 'I' must arise and work through the first 'I'. This second 'I' can be called the I AM or the Real Self and it has something to do with the kingdom of heaven, not the earth. The second 'I', the I AM, is spirit in a conscious form.

The I AM is still in its infancy. This is to be seen in the fact that we know our physical selves very well, but not our spiritual self. Our I AM is an indication of our awareness of ourselves as divine spiritual beings, and so far we are not very aware of this.

The Two "I's"

So today we have:

- The first 'I' – the ego, the identity we have as a result of being in the physical. This is the personality we have. The word 'personality' comes from the Latin persona which means 'mask'. It is the mask we wear.
- On a deeper level, behind the mask if you like, there is the second 'I' the I AM, the spiritual self or real self.

If you have followed this reasoning the I AM arises as a result of our earthly existence. This means that the ego is a necessary stage we must all pass through before we can become aware of ourselves as spiritual beings. It also means that our physical nature is as important as our spiritual nature, for it is out of our physical existence that the I AM is born.

Let's state this as the fourth principle:

PRINCIPLE 4

There is an ego and a real self within me.
I have an earthly identity and a spiritual identity.



A metaphysician is one who has discovered the second 'I' within self. The growth of the second 'I' is not easy. It sets up certain inner conflicts, for spirit is not always in agreement with the world. Metaphysics is a way of dealing with these conflicts, so that the lower nature, the ego, serves the higher.

Our problem is that we confuse our first 'I', the ego with our second 'I', the real self. We think our ego is the real thing. But if you peel away the layers of your being, like an onion, then the ego disappears, the emotions disappear, even the mind disappears and eventually only the I AM remains, which is the real you.

In metaphysics we train and discipline the ego, so that you control your ego, rather than being controlled by it. But you do need your ego to be someone in the world and to stand up to outside pressures, without caving in.

Additional
Reading



Additional Reading: 'Dare To Be Human'

see page 41 ([HERE](#))

The Aim of Metaphysics

When we become totally self-conscious we will have no need of the physical around us. We will then return to a purely spiritual existence. This is the story of involution and evolution:

- Spirit enters matter in unconsciousness through the process of involution.
- Spirit arises from matter in full consciousness through the process of evolution.

So our task is to develop our awareness of ourselves – as spiritual beings in the world – and become fully human. We are in this body to develop the ability to manipulate and transform matter so that it is obedient to spirit and to develop the I AM. This involves training and disciplining the ego so that it serves the real self.

This is where difficulties arise, for the ego does not want to be replaced by the real self. Therefore the path of spiritual growth is not an easy one and it would be misleading to say otherwise. The promise of metaphysics is not that life will be easier, but that it will lead to the transformation of your personality.

In this process, one of the greatest tools we have is our mind and our ability to reason things out. This is also one of the greatest signs of the I AM, the spirit within us.

The reason why the Greek civilisation marked such a turning point in the evolution of the human race was because they were the first people to try to consciously grasp spirit and its workings in this world through their thinking and reasoning powers. We too have to develop

our mind, because it is only in 'consciousness' that spirit arises out of matter.

To be more conscious and aware of ourselves and our actions, thoughts and feelings is therefore one of the aims of Metaphysics in Action. The process of becoming more conscious requires us to go beyond the mask, the ego, the personality, the outer and examine the unseen spiritual causes and motivations behind the physical.

PRACTICE

Putting the Principles Into Practice

My Journal and my Goal

Keeping a journal is a helpful way of keeping track of your progress during this unit. If you do not normally use a Journal, choose an attractive book in which you will want to write. Keep it close at hand, perhaps by your bed, and each day record significant experiences and understandings. When you come to the end of this unit, your Journal will be a record of how you have developed and the progress you have made towards your goal.

One of the fundamentals of metaphysics is that you exist on earth for a purpose. You are not fully conscious of that purpose, but it is there within you. Shortly you will set a goal through contacting your inner self and this will provide a focus for your energies and a conscious course of action which will contribute to the larger purpose of your life.

What Kind of Goal?

This goal can be to do with:

- A characteristic you have which you want to enhance.
- A quality to develop.
- A habit to change.
- A discipline to adopt.
- A target to achieve.
- Making an idea a reality.

The goal can relate to:

- Relationships, or work, or your home.
- Communication.
- The development of skills.
- Your self-image.
- Health.

- Creative expression.
- Exploration.
- Restoring balance.
- The completion of a task.

Activity:
Receiving a Picture or Word of Guidance

The aim of this exercise is to enable you to formulate a goal for the course by first contacting a deeper level within yourself:

- First you need to get a picture or word in meditation.
- Then to use the mind to put this into the form of a goal which is relevant to your present situation.
- Then you need to focus your attention on your goal for the course. You may not have anything formulated, but there is already within you a goal, a purpose, which has led you to enrol for this course. It is simply a matter of allowing that goal to enter into your conscious awareness. Your concentration now is on your goal.



Put down your pen and relax yourself. Now listen to the recording.

AUDIO RECORDING #1

Listen now to Audio Recording #1 that is part of the learning materials for this unit.

Go to www.rosaveritas.org/ms1-audio



Activity:
Formulating a Goal for the Unit

You will now formulate your goal with your conscious mind. Analyse the picture, or words, in terms of what you know about yourself and where you are at. Put your goal into a form which you can understand with the mind, and work with. Do that now on a piece of paper.

Your goal may be a quality you want to develop, or a difficulty or problem to be overcome. You might want to communicate more



clearly. You might want to be more decisive. It may be health-related. You may want to contact the spiritual part of you.

Listen to what has come up within you, and select the thing that you most want to work with, that you know you can work towards as you work through this Unit.

Be very specific about how you want yourself or the situation to change. It has to be so clear that when you wake up every morning you know what you are aiming for, and it is clearly within your mind.

Look at the wording. You may want to alter what you have already written down, perhaps to make it clearer or more realistic.

The wording of your goal is important. Make sure it is definite. Avoid statements like:

- ‘I will become less negative.’ This statement focuses on the negative.
- ‘I will try to be more giving in my relationships.’ It doesn’t sound very convincing, does it?

Better statements are, for example:

- I am going to ...
- My goal is to achieve / provide / ...
- At the conclusion of this Unit, I will be able to ...
- I have set my sights on ...

Activity



Activity: Filling in the Journal

At the beginning of the Journal use a page on which to set out the goal you have decided to work towards during this Unit.

Now write your goal into this page of your Journal, under the heading ‘My Goal’. It is best if you can phrase it in one simple and clear specific sentence. You may also want to include some notes of explanation or expansion for your own benefit.

If you are still not sure about your goal then ponder upon it, and formulate it during the coming days. We all have things which we are working towards, consciously and unconsciously.



Activity:
Choosing a Principle from this Study Topic

In each study topic you will come across certain metaphysical principles in the notes which can help you reach your goal. Each time you will select one of the principles from these notes and work out how you can apply this principle in your life to assist you in achieving your goal.

The principles given in this Study Topic were:

1. I am a spiritual being.
2. To be fully human is to be divine, and to be divine is to be fully human.
3. Aloneness is a virtue, loneliness is a disease.
4. There is an ego and a real self within me. I have an earthly identity and a spiritual identity.

Now turn to your Journal and write the heading 'Study Topic 1'. Choose one principle which you think will help you during the coming weeks. Write it at the top of the page under 'A metaphysical principle learnt this study topic'.

Then write the heading 'Practical application towards achieving my goal' and write down how you will use the principle. This is where you tailor the principle to suit your own needs. For example:

- You might use it as an affirmation.
- Or you may bring it into your mind when faced with conflict, etc.
- You may wish to use the principle to review your actions each day – that is, say to yourself that action was due to my ego, that action was due to my real self.
- Or you may deliberately set out to spend time alone and experience what it is like. This entry must be specific so that every day, when you wake up in the morning, you know what you are working on and how you will go about it.



Activity:
Self Evaluation

Metaphysics is a method of training in self-observation. Before beginning each new Study Topic you will have the opportunity

to record your success in applying the principle you chose. So when you have been working for a while with your application of a principle from this Study Topic 1, before starting the next Study Topic 2, create a new heading in your journal, 'Results of the application my chosen principle of focus'. Be honest with yourself.

WRITING

Written Task #1

'How does the notion that you are a spiritual being change your view of life?'

You may choose to send this written work to your tutor. This will be necessary if you wish to have your completion of the Unit confirmed by Rosa Veritas Learning.

ADDITIONAL READING

Practising Metaphysics

An interview with Mario Schoenmaker

In this interview, Mario Schoenmaker, founder of Rosa Veritas Learning, discusses how the application of metaphysical principles lead to a fulfilled and purposeful life.

What exactly is metaphysics, and on what basis are its principles formulated?

These two questions require separate answers. First, what exactly is metaphysics? I have been trying for years to formulate a short one-sentence answer to this. The most basic answer is that metaphysics is the ability to go beyond one's self. What that means can best be explained by an example. Suppose you are driving your car and suddenly someone cuts in front of you. The normal reaction is to say, 'You so-and-so!' A metaphysician, however, thinks twice, knowing that to say that is actually to curse the other person. So the metaphysician controls the normal human reaction and either says nothing or says, 'That driver couldn't have realised I was so close.' That is going beyond one's instinct and emotions.

But metaphysics is more than that. The word comes from the works of Aristotle, a Greek philosopher of the fourth century BCE. He wrote a book on physics and then a second one in which he came to grips with the origin of all things, including the human being. This book became known as *Meta Physika* ('after' or 'beyond' physics). In it Aristotle discusses the ground of our being, why we are alive, what is the purpose of our existence and where existence ends. Metaphysics grapples with all these problems.

So the principles of metaphysics are based on the perception that we are not simply bodies made up of muscle, blood and bones which enter into the world at one point in time and disappear at another. Rather, we have within ourselves greater abilities than we imagine. There is a spiritual ground within us and we must start working from that spiritual ground.

How does metaphysics differ from other approaches to life such as positive thinking, for instance?

Positive thinking uses some metaphysical principles. The metaphysician certainly does not accept defeat or limitation in their thinking or achievements. But metaphysics is not solely occupied with this area. It goes to the core of your existence and asks why you are here, in this world, in this body, in this culture, in this environment and what your task is as a spiritual being. In answering these questions, metaphysics gives the solution to many of the problems people unnecessarily load upon themselves.

What about metaphysics and psychology?

Psychology is based on the functioning of the mind, rather than on soul knowledge, which is what the word psychology actually means. Metaphysics on the other hand is occupied with the soul. We have to go beyond the mind until we come to the soul essence of a person. Let us be frank: the mind has been brainwashed, conditioned by society, religion and other philosophical systems. Metaphysics tells you to be free of all these belief systems and to look at situations clearly, to dare to ask questions until you reach a position from which you can operate in freedom.

This is done through re-education. When I use the word 'education' a picture immediately comes to mind of a child sitting in a classroom, with an instructor pouring information into the child. But the word 'education' comes from 'educare', a Latin word meaning 'to bring out'. Metaphysics is not a brainwashing technique. Rather, it frees people so that their own natural abilities come to the fore in a positive, creative and uplifting way. It brings out of you the knowledge and wisdom which has been there for aeons of time.

You cannot learn metaphysics in half an hour. It is a life discipline. By learning and practising metaphysical principles you gradually and gently alter your thinking, emotions and lifestyle and then automatically you start becoming a metaphysician. It's just like becoming a musician. The first time you sit at a piano you can hardly play the notes, but after ten years of playing you can be a virtuoso. You have mastered the piano.

People constantly strive towards attainment in material things. Why is it that we feel this need to strive for something?

The answer lies within the human soul. The soul wants to achieve. Whether it is in material things, business, money-making, marriage, relationships or religion, the human soul wants to achieve and be a success. But you become discouraged when you meet with negativity and lack of encouragement from those around you and your soul dries

up. You give up and become negative and critical. Eventually you have nothing vital or alive to say to yourself or to others any more. Imagination stops and life becomes a drag. Metaphysics reverses this trend.

In the past the church satisfied people's needs, but this no longer seems to be so. Is there a way that metaphysics can help here?

Yes. Religion and the church have played a tremendous role in the evolution of consciousness in the world. Now religion no longer plays this vital role because of the rise of a more intellectual consciousness in humanity. Religion and old-fashioned sermons and 'Jesus saves' campaigns have very little to say to the modern mind. But metaphysics, which is even older than Christianity, is attractive to people today because it does not insist that you believe blindly. All the metaphysician asks is that the pupil experience the reality of the teachings for himself or herself.

Can a person apply metaphysics in their career?

If a person applies metaphysical principles in their chosen career, the first thing they will be aware of is that a certain charisma starts to grow within them. People will begin to relate to that person more easily. A metaphysician seems to spread a sense of trust around them, and others think, 'I can trust that person. That person loves me without wanting anything from me.'

Secondly, that person has a greater ability to communicate. In the case of a doctor or a lawyer, say, communication becomes easier because now they relate to the soul rather than to the mind. For example, a lawyer may have taken up law because his parents told him to. At forty years of age he finds that he hates sitting in his office listening to the people who come to him and he hates going through files. Suddenly metaphysics enters his life and because of what he experiences within himself, he finds that his office now becomes something of a confessional and he has great opportunities to help people.

What is the effect of applying metaphysics on a personal level?

The first thing you always do is to say 'Thank you' to any and all situations. You don't pass the buck or excuse yourself. You take responsibility for yourself. A would-be metaphysician shows initiative and gives energy to whatever he or she is doing. The biblical injunction, 'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might' is a sound metaphysical principle.

Metaphysics is easy to apply even when you first begin to study it. Having a smile on your face, being able to thank and to bless those

you meet, giving credit where credit is due, makes a great change to your existence and to the lives of others who come in touch with you.

So are you saying that there is a lesson for us in everything we experience?

Nothing happens by chance. That is another principle of metaphysics. Whatever happens in your life – good, bad or indifferent, the formation of relationships, the breakdown of relationships – everything has significance and is a means of learning.

Take, for example, a man and woman who have a relationship for two or three years. Then suddenly one of them decides to say goodbye and the other party is deeply hurt. But if you meet that same person twenty years later, and ask ‘Do you still feel the same pain and hurt as you did then?’, that person will smile and say, ‘No. I learnt something from that experience. I’m the wiser for it.’ Now that is what metaphysics is saying. The moment something happens to you, you can project yourself beyond it. The situation is still there, but you do not have a great attachment to it.

Many people have been indoctrinated with the idea that there is nothing good about them? How can metaphysics help to overcome this indoctrination?

Medical science says that if you want to cure a disease, you give the person an antidote and then these two fight with one another and the disease is killed. In metaphysics we do the same thing on a spiritual and mental level. We give an antidote to that indoctrination. A human being is not frail. A human being is very, very strong. So the antidote we give to people who feel and think badly about themselves is to say, ‘You are not weak; you are a divine being. Now accept yourself.’ And it works.

Finally, could you explain why there is a need for metaphysics today?

The need for metaphysics is great today because people, as thinking beings, have turned away from old-fashioned religion, yet still feel an emptiness. We have reached the top in terms of intellectual development and now need a religion or philosophy to match our intellectual development. Metaphysics is such a philosophy.

You do not have to commit intellectual suicide in order to experience this discipline. What is more, metaphysics does not say, ‘You must not ...’ Experiencing metaphysics brings greater freedom, so the main reason we need metaphysics today is to enable us to become more individualistic, more free and more at one within self.

ADDITIONAL READING

The Historical Development of Metaphysics

Understanding the way something has begun and developed helps us to understand its present state. For example, if we know that many of the first Australian settlers were Cockneys, we can better understand why the Australian accent is as it is.

We attribute the beginning of metaphysics as a philosophical quest to the Greeks, going back six centuries before Christ. That is not to say that no-one prior to that time had pursued the answers to the great metaphysical questions of God and humanity. There is evidence of such a quest, for example, in the book of Psalms, where the Psalmist asks, 'What is man?' The very ancient teaching of the Book of Job in the Old Testament also has to do with coming to understand the meaning of our existence in this world.

However, as a more or less organised study, metaphysics began with the Greeks. The Greeks were keen students of the natural world and wanted to understand why the world was the way it was. In the first instance, their investigations were motivated by what we might call scientific curiosity rather than religiosity and they used the processes of observation and reasoning as their tools. They understood the universe to be rational and if it was rational, then it was knowable through human reasoning and rationality. By the end of the sixth century, however, metaphysics had shifted its attention away from the physical world to a concern with the questions of what we can know, what is real, what it is to be, the origin of the universe and the place of the divine in relation to us and the universe.

What Is Being?

In broad terms, there are three views of 'what is':

- **All that exists is the sense world: only what we experience through the senses is real.** There is nothing beyond that. Some holders of this view have gone so far as to argue that an object may only exist as long as I am looking at it, touching it, smelling it or experiencing it in some way. I have no way of knowing whether it is still there when I have gone away. In other words, all I can really know to exist is what I experience through my senses. But this view has

difficulties. We know, for instance, that two people observing an object or situation will experience it differently. So this means that your world of knowledge might not coincide with mine at all, so if we are to have any common understanding there needs to be some agreement that certain things do in fact exist.

- The opposite extreme to this view is that **the sense world is an illusion** – ‘Maya’, the Indian culture calls it. Reality is beyond the world we experience through the senses. We are deluded into seeing the multiplicity of the sense world when there is really only the One. Therefore the experience of the One is the only true knowledge and only the One exists.
- A third view is that **we need not settle for only one world at a time** – that is, we need not say that only the sense world is real, or that only the world of spirit, or the super-sensible world, is real. We can have two worlds at a time, and indeed must live in two worlds at a time.

Let us go back a little and see how these ideas have developed through history.

The Development of Metaphysics Among the Greeks

The early Greek philosophers had a sense of the wholeness of the universe and our place in it. They understood the cosmos (a Greek word meaning ‘world’ but having a much more spiritual connotation than our use of ‘world’) to be rational, built upon the principles of divine reason and therefore knowable. In applying their minds to questions about the nature of reality, they grappled with the same questions we still grapple with today as to:

- Who we are.
- The purpose of our existence.
- How we can fulfil our potential.

We can trace something of the development of thinking about these questions through studying some major figures of metaphysical philosophy.

The Eleatics

The view that the world of the senses is an illusion was held by the Eleatics, a school of philosophy dating back to the sixth century BCE and they might well be called the first true metaphysicians.

Parmenides was one of the leading exponents of this school and he argued that:

- Non-existence does not exist.
- So there is no such thing as nothing.
- What is, is therefore eternal.
- If it is not, it must have arisen from nothing.
- Or it must end in nothing.
- But nothing does not exist.
- Therefore what is, is eternal.

From this he concluded that reality must be uncreated and imperishable. It must also be whole, indivisible and unchangeable because nothing else but it exists or can come into existence. It is evenly extended in every direction and therefore is a sphere which has always existed and will always exist. So what we see as change and motion and diversity belongs to 'what is not', and is therefore illusion. Everything that is temporary or transient does not partake of reality. Reality must therefore be quite different to anything our senses reveal to us, but it is identical with the thought that recognises it.

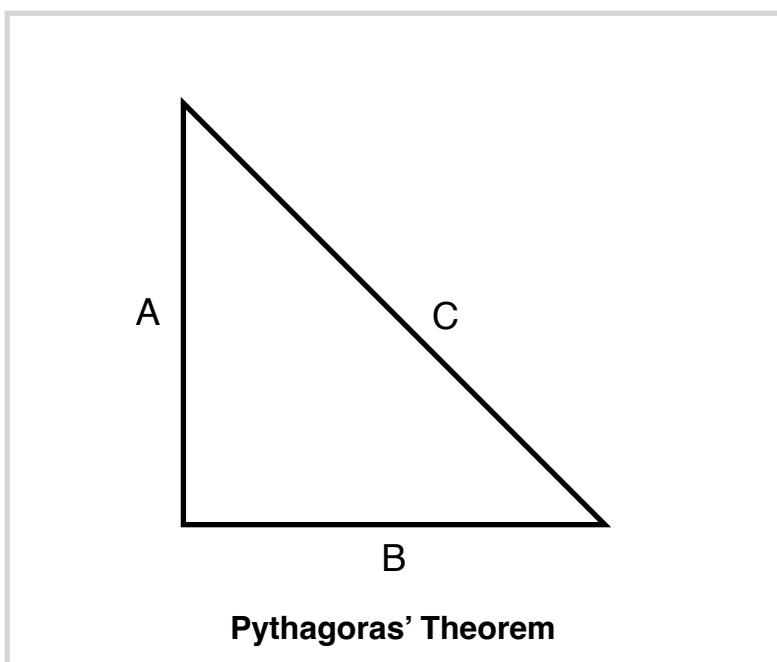
Pythagoras

The next figure we come to is Pythagoras who was born on the island of Samos in the 6th century BCE. Intellectually, he was one of the most important men who ever lived. Mathematics, in the sense of a logical

argument from a known principle to an unknown, began with him. His name is probably most familiar to us from schooldays when we learnt the theorem of Pythagoras: that in a right-angled triangle, the square on the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides.

The system of Pythagoras was a dualistic one, both metaphysically and morally. The universe contained ten opposing elements:

- odd and even



- limited and unlimited
- one and many
- right and left
- male and female
- rest and motion
- straight and curved
- light and darkness
- good and evil
- square and oblong.

This was a different concept from that of the One as reality and the many as illusion. Pythagoras came to see the universe as a harmony of opposites.

The discovery of the pattern in numbers led Pythagoras and his followers to the idea that all things are numbers, or have a numerical equivalent. The whole of heaven formed a musical scale, and number and the universe itself was a harmony of opposites, as seen in odd and even numbers and in the limited and unlimited.

In the Pythagorean system, according to Aristotle's account, numbers were the elements of everything, in the same way as fire and earth, water and air were for Heraclitus. If you take the number one, for instance, the whole number series is generated from this. The many is actually a plurality of units. A specialist in teaching mathematics to young children insists that a counting chart should not have different objects on it, such as one fish, two hats, three balls and so on. It should have one fish, two fish, three fish, four fish, so that it is clear to the child how the whole number series develops by the addition of another unit.

Pythagoras developed a mystical doctrine of numbers in which, for example, God or the Good was 1, signifying the unity which gave birth to the whole number system, the many, in which limitation imposed itself on the unlimited. 4 – the next square number – was justice, and things like reason and marriage were also identified with numbers.

Pythagoras also discovered the mathematical basis of musical harmony. For example, when you halve the length of a string on an instrument, you produce a note one octave higher. This is the simplest of a whole series of ratios which we call musical intervals. The terms 'harmonic mean' and 'harmonic progression' which survive in mathematical language today are outcomes of the connection Pythagoras discovered between mathematics and music.

Why get excited about these discoveries? In these relationships which were unchanging, Pythagoras and his followers considered that they were dealing with the eternal, with the changeless and timeless, with the real and with a universe which was founded on harmony, pattern and order. Hence theology, mathematics and music were seen to be inextricably linked.

Pythagoras taught that we are strangers to this world and that the body is the tomb of the soul, composed out of fire or air – the warmth or breath of life. He believed in the transmigration of souls from one body to another and even to a different species. In order to gain release from the process of rebirth once again into the body prison and to attain a life in the starry heavens, the home of the soul, it was necessary to lead a good and pure life.

Pythagoras became the centre of a religious order which sought to attain purity and release from the tomb of the body. Men and women were admitted on equal terms to this mystical order and its members led a collective lifestyle and held property in common.

To attain this purity of life, Pythagoras taught his followers to examine themselves each night using three questions:

- In what have I failed?
- What good have I done?
- What have I not done that I ought to have done?

Among the ways in which a person could strive to purify themselves, one of the most important was music.

Heraclitus (540-480BCE)

Whilst the Eleatics denied change, other philosophers accepted the reality of change. Heraclitus was at the opposite end of the philosophical spectrum from the Eleatics. For him change was the fundamental reality of the universe and it is therefore not surprising to find that he saw the fundamental element of the universe as fire, for fire is ever-changing. He saw the universe as an ever-living fire which was constantly being kindled and extinguished. From this fundamental element, the other three elements of air, water and earth are derived, and through the cycles of change they continually return to fire and are derived again. The human soul, too, is part of the cycle of change and is extinguished at death. Some very fiery souls might continue on for a time after death, but eventually they too would return to the ethereal fire.

Heraclitus is famous for the statement that you cannot step into the same river twice, because in the meantime the river has changed. Much later someone else made the statement that you cannot step

into the same river once, because in the time taken by the act of stepping the river has changed.

Heraclitus' fire was a manifestation of the Logos or Reason, which lies behind all natural events and the world of change. This Logos was also to be seen in the underlying connection between apparent opposites. Heraclitus understood that there was a unity in the world of experience and there was also a continual balancing as change in one direction was countered by change in another. God persisted through all the changes, perfectly understanding their unity.

Socrates (470-399BCE)

The next major figure on the scene is Socrates. Cicero said of him that he brought philosophy down from heaven to earth, for his prime concern was not so much with the universe as with humanity and with right conduct in the public and personal sphere. Socrates lived in Athens where, in 399 BCE, at the age of 70, he was condemned to death by the city and given hemlock to drink. He wrote nothing and we are dependent for much of our information on the writings of his two most famous pupils, Plato and Xenophon. Unfortunately they do not always agree in the pictures they present.

Our happiness, according to Socrates, depends on the goodness or badness of the soul. So first of all we must know what is good. If you know the good, then he considered it would follow necessarily that you would do the good. It would be impossible for the soul, knowing the good, to choose misery instead of happiness. For Socrates, the soul was not something distinct from the self, the breath of life which continued on after death. It was the person. This soul partakes of the divine and he believed strongly in immortality.

In his search for knowledge, Socrates' method of inquiry was to start with a statement or a proposition about something, then to follow through the consequences of that proposition. If these consequences proved to be true and consistent, then you could consider that the hypothesis was provisionally confirmed; if not, it was discredited. This is basically the scientific method as we know it today.

From Plato's writings, we learn that Socrates took as his hypothesis that every term which has a single meaning – such as truth, beauty, good – names something which can only be apprehended or grasped by thought and not by the senses. This he calls an idea or form. The things of the sense world cannot be said to 'be' this or that, but only to 'become' it because they participate in the form.

Socrates held that God's existence was shown not only in the natural order, and the prevalence of belief in a Divine Being, but also in warnings and revelations given in signs and dreams and oracles. Plato

tells us that from childhood, Socrates was aware of an inner voice that at times forbade him to do certain things.

Socrates saw the pursuit of knowledge through logical enquiry as the mission of the philosopher, and this was almost a religious office. He is reported to have said:

God orders me to fulfil the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men.

He stated that he was ready to face death rather than to neglect that commission. When he was charged by the city of Athens with impiety, he refused to do anything that involved the least hint of compromise. He accepted the verdict of death as that of a legitimate court and therefore saw it as something to be obeyed.

Plato (427-347BCE)

Plato was a pupil of Socrates, and he took his teacher's notions into the realm of metaphysics, in particular drawing the distinction between reality and appearance.

He said that there were three realms of existence:

- **The real world of ideas or forms.** The idea of the Good, the nearest Plato came to talking about God, is the highest of all. The Good rules the world and is the source of all other lesser goods. It desires that people should imitate it in their actions. In this realm of ideas is the perfect form of everything that is in the phenomenal world, the world we experience through our senses.
- **Our inner psychological world.** Our thoughts and concepts are reflections of the ideal world. In this realm the world of ideas is therefore active.
- **The phenomenal world.** This is the world of the senses. Plato saw this world as a shadow of the ideal. The objects of the sense world are a faint reflection of the ideal. Thus, each table is a faint reflection of the idea or form of a Table.

For example, for Plato, the word cat means the ideal Cat, created by the Good. All cats partake of the nature of the Cat, but to a greater or lesser degree imperfectly.

The Cat, the ideal, is real. Particular cats, such as your cat and my cat, are only shadows of the real. The ideal is good and true, but matter disfigures and limits this ideal.

In line with this distinction between the idea or spirit and matter, Plato like Pythagoras considered that the soul was imprisoned in the body. The soul existed before the body and was independent of it. The soul, not the body, was immortal. The soul knew the world of

ideas from its pre-existence and when it came into contact with the phenomena of the physical world these ideas were brought into memory and this became the basis for true knowledge. Knowledge therefore for Plato was recollection.

Plato drew a sharp distinction between opinion and knowledge. Knowledge is not what we have been told, but what we have found out for ourselves by searching. Only the permanent can become the material for knowledge, not the objects of the phenomenal or sense world which are always in the process of becoming.

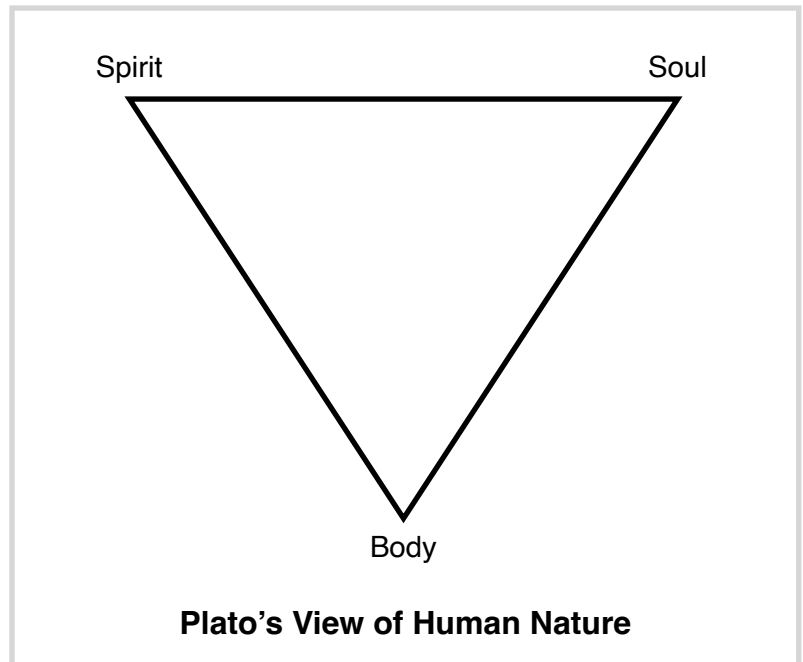
Plato dealt with the problem of change by explaining that things change because they are imperfect manifestations of ideas.

His distinction between spirit and matter strongly influenced the development of Christian theology, particularly those strands of theology which have seen the material world as evil and the spiritual world as good. His philosophy provided a basis for Christian asceticism in the early centuries and even for the Puritans' objection to music, painting and the splendid ritual of the Roman Catholic Church.

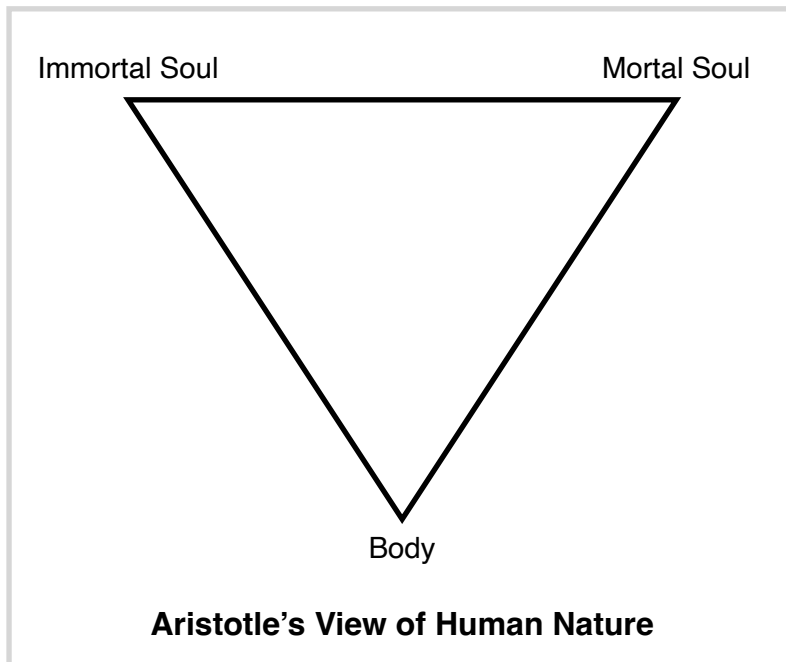
Aristotle (384-322BCE)

Aristotle was a prodigious writer and thinker. According to Bertrand Russell, no philosopher matched him for 2,000 years after his death. At eighteen he came to Athens and became a pupil of Plato's at the Academy for twenty years. He was also for a time tutor to the young Alexander the Great. Aristotle is generally considered to be the father of metaphysics.

- For Aristotle the interests of metaphysics are universal. He said that *metaphysics is the science of being as being*. Everything that exists has being, therefore metaphysics is concerned with the whole world, both finite and infinite, both subject and object, both material and immaterial.
- He also said that *metaphysics is the science of first principles*, that is, metaphysics deals with cause and effect.



Aristotle agreed with Socrates' teaching that the only true knowledge is the knowledge of concepts. Like Plato he said that the concept must represent the reality of the thing. But Aristotle said that the reality which the concept represents resides in the thing, not in the idea. Where Plato taught that the essence was in the idea, Aristotle taught that the essence was in the thing – in your cat and my cat, not in *the* Cat.



Aristotle considered that Plato's world of ideas was an unnecessary duplication of things. The world of essence is in the phenomenal world, not above it, and neither exists without the other. For Aristotle, knowledge of things is gained by observation; for Plato, by intuition brought with us from a previous existence.

To go back to the example of the cat; Aristotle would determine the nature of the true Cat by observing all the cats he encountered and from his observations abstracting the concept of the cat. Each cat is

the result of the impress of this concept as a formative force on matter. All material things have both form and matter. The form is the source of all beauty, perfection, goodness, while matter is the source of imperfection, limitation, negativity. Matter, however, is part of the essence, not the shadow as it was for Plato.

Plato, on the other hand, would not seek the essence of the Cat through investigating particular cats. He would use his intuition, a spiritual faculty, to form the concept of the Cat, and then see to what extent individual cats represented that essence.

When we apply this to human existence we see that for Plato the world as we experience it was not real. It was a world of shadows, an imperfect representation of the real world above it. For Aristotle, on the other hand, beingness or essence resided in this world and it therefore had a reality.

In Plato's philosophy, we can call the realm of ideas the realm of spirit, the inner psychological world the realm of soul, and the phenomenal world the world of the body.

In Aristotle's philosophy we move away from an emphasis on the spirit as being external to us. What Plato saw as the spirit in the cosmos, Aristotle saw as our immortal human soul.

Stoics and Epicureans

After the time of Aristotle, metaphysics became centred on the problems of human destiny and conduct. Metaphysics was now subservient to the achievement of human happiness. The Epicureans taught that mental bliss is the highest human aim, and that this is achieved through the absence of everything that annoys. Everything is material, even the human soul.

Stoicism, one of the noblest expressions of ethical thought in the pagan world, taught that all that is real is physical. There were differences however in the fineness of bodies, and their idea of fine and coarse could be said to roughly correspond to spirit and matter. The soul of all is the vital warmth, which is the intelligent, self-conscious World Soul, an indwelling Reason or Logos, of which our reason is a part – the God within. Therefore reason is to be obeyed.

The Neo-Platonists

The Neo-Platonists were influenced by Oriental teachings and later by the Christian world. They tried to explain how the manifold, imperfect world originated from the One unchangeable and perfect Being. They exaggerated the Platonic doctrine of matter to the point of maintaining that all evil, both moral and physical, originates from a material source.

St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and Medieval Philosophy

The theology of the thirteenth century was Aristotelian in its conception, method and scope. The metaphysics of this golden age of Scholasticism only departed from Aristotle when it was necessary to supply what was missing and to correct the faults. It went beyond Aristotle in showing that evil can be reconciled with the goodness of God.

Since a pronouncement by Leo XIII in 1879, St Thomas Aquinas' philosophical system is recognised as the only right one within the Roman Catholic Church.

Therefore he is not only of historical interest, but is a living influence today. He was taught by Albertus Magnus, a great scholar whose writings were extensive. In most respects Aquinas follows Aristotle

very closely. In the *Summa Theologiae* he gives five proofs of the existence of God:

- The argument of the unmoved mover. There are things which are only moved, and other things which both move and are moved. Whatever is moved is moved by something, and, since an endless regress is impossible, we eventually reach something which moves other things without being moved itself. Thomas took this argument from Aristotle, whom he referred to as 'The Philosopher'. It assumes the eternity of movement.
- The argument of the First Cause which also rests on the impossibility of an unending chain of causes.
- What exists either has the cause of its existence in itself or in another. Therefore there must be an ultimate source, or necessary Being or God.
- We find various perfections in the world, and these must have their source in something completely perfect.
- Even lifeless things serve a purpose, which belongs to some being outside of them. Only living beings have an internal purpose.

Fundamental to Thomas' teaching is the sharp distinction between reason and faith. In many areas reason is of greater importance, but the truths of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the creation of the world, purgatory and many other aspects of Christianity lie beyond its scope. Although such doctrines cannot be established by reason, they are not against reason.

In his theory of knowledge he accepts the Aristotelian maxim that all knowledge presupposes an essential likeness between knower and known. Human nature is corporeal as well as intellectual, therefore knowledge and cognition begins with sense perception. For an argument to be valid, then, it must start with the facts of the natural world.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Metaphysics Since the Eighteenth Century

The question of existence and the scope of metaphysics entered a new phase with Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher. He identified the permanent problems of metaphysics as God, freedom and immortality. Kant taught that:

- The empiricist who says that one cannot go beyond one's experience is wrong.
- The dogmatist who asserts that we can go beyond experience on the basis of theoretical reasoning is also wrong.

- The faculty of moral consciousness, practical reason, alone can take us beyond experience to a knowledge of things in themselves. This practical reason equals moral law, of which we are immediately conscious. This is the only foundation of metaphysical science as far as Kant is concerned. The moral law within us is the noblest of our possessions. It shows us to be a personality and not a machine.

Metaphysics since the time of Kant has been characterised by a general mistrust of knowledge and devaluing of human thinking. The question, 'How do I know that I know?', has been uppermost in the minds of many philosophers, and the recognition that thought connects us with the reality of the spiritual worlds has been lost. Kant therefore inaugurated a metaphysics of scepticism. For example, Kant says that you can know nothing of a particular table but only of the change which occurs in you whilst you are observing the table.

Bertrand Russell has the following to say:

According to Kant, the outer world causes only the matter of sensation, but our own mental apparatus orders this matter in space and time, and supplies the concepts by means of which we understand experience. Things in themselves, which are the causes of our sensations, are unknowable; they are not in space or time, they are not substances, nor can they be described by any of those other general concepts which Kant calls 'categories': Space and time are subjective, they are part of our apparatus of perception. But just because of this, we can be sure that whatever we experience will exhibit the characteristics dealt with by geometry and the science of time. If you always wore blue spectacles, you could be sure of seeing everything blue (this is not Kant's illustration). Similarly, since you are always wearing spatial spectacles in your mind, you are sure of always seeing everything in space. Thus geometry is a priori in the sense that it must be true of everything experienced, but we have no reason to suppose that anything analogous is true of things in themselves, which we do not experience.

(Russell, History of Western Philosophy, p.680)

The Kantian position, then, is that our perceptions are modifications of our own being, they are not of things-in-themselves. According to this view we can only have direct knowledge of our mental pictures. This edifice of thought has been built up, with great ingenuity, by Kant and his many influential followers who have built on his shaky foundation.

The successors of Kant, regardless of the terminology they use, hold that the purpose of metaphysics is to attain the absolute reality, whether they call this the self (Fichte), the absolute of indifference (Schelling), the dynamic absolute, spirit or idea (Hegel), the will (Schopenhauer), or the unconscious (Von Hartmann).

The philosophy of Rosa Veritas refutes the Kantian position, for one of the cornerstones of our teachings is that there is a spiritual content in human thought which enables us to perceive things as they are. Through intuitive thought the perception of an object is united with the concept and we can come to know its reality. Metaphysics, seen in this light, is neither skeptical nor pessimistic.

We can know things-in-themselves through the mind which is sensitive to spirit. In other words, thoughts have universal significance; they go beyond the consciousness of the individual and lead to the reality of spirit in the world. Metaphysical philosophy aims to find the right form of ideas to express the spiritual world.

The Split Between Metaphysics and Science

The contrast between philosophy and science, or between philosophers and scientists, is itself of late origin. The word 'scientist' was first coined in 1840. Before then the term 'philosopher' was used to describe both a Plato and an Archimedes; and in more modern times both Newton and Butler. To distinguish them today we say:

- Sir Isaac Newton was a *natural philosopher*, or physicist.
- Samuel Butler was a *moral philosopher*.
- Plato was a *metaphysical philosopher*.

Immanuel Kant was the first one to draw a clear distinction between philosophers and scientists.

Further Reading

This article is a brief introduction to some of the great thinkers who have influenced the western world in the area of metaphysics. If you would like to read further on this subject, the following books are recommended:

'Hellenic Thought and Culture', pages 193-206, from *World Civilisations: Their History and their Culture Volume 1*, Edward McNall Burns and Philip Lee Ralph, W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., New York, 1974.

'Pythagoras', pages 49-56,

'Heraclitus', pages 57-65,

'Aristotle's Metaphysics', pages 173-184,

'St Thomas Aquinas', pages 444-454,

'Kant', pages 675-690, from *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell, Unwin University Books, London, 1975.

ADDITIONAL READING

Who Am I?

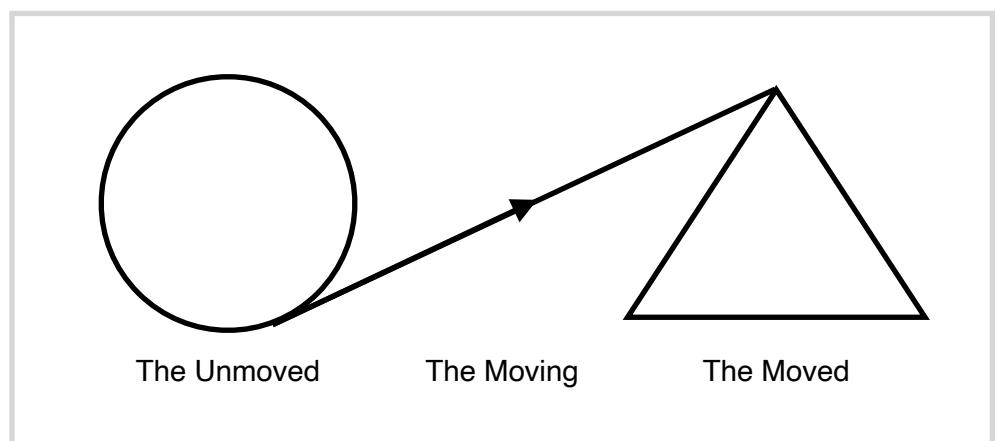
by Mario Schoenmaker

There are three questions which continually arise within the minds of men and women and which continually beg for answers: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going to?

These are questions of a metaphysical nature, for they recognise that there is more to us than the physical. The word metaphysics literally means 'beyond the physical'. In the study of metaphysics we seek to come to grips with the meaning of our existence and with our nature and the nature of the universe. The person who thinks metaphysically always looks for the inner reality beyond the outer, and searches behind the effect for its cause, reaching back ultimately to the First Cause, which we call God.

The outcome of studying metaphysics is a greater understanding of one's inner being, and when this understanding is applied in everyday living it leads to a free and powerful expression of the self.

You are reading this because within you is a longing that says, 'I want to know who the I is.' You want to understand yourself. You can never do that fully unless you go back to the beginning, and ask: 'Where did I come from?' Nor can you ever fully understand yourself until you know where you are going to. What will you be tomorrow, or in a hundred years, or in a thousand years? These are the questions with which you must occupy yourself. I give you the questions. You must work out the answers.

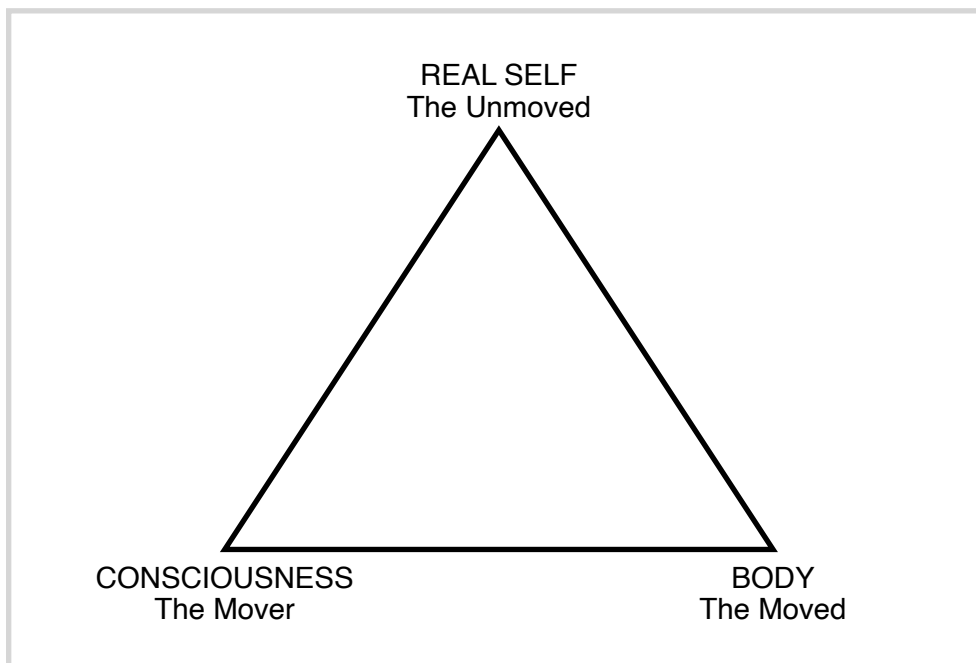


Fundamental to metaphysics is the concept of God. When metaphysics speaks of God, it is not in terms of any religious system,

but in terms of the unmoved principle from which everything else manifests. The circle is a symbol of God, the unmoved, eternal, self-sufficient One, contained within self.

In metaphysics, however, we are not so much occupied with the concept of God as with humanity: what we are, where we come from and where we are going to.

Everything has its origin in the unmoved God. From this unmoved principle extends something which we call 'the mover', and this is cosmic intelligence through which the world, including us, comes into being. So we are the offspring of God, or the unmoved, eternal, beautiful, virtuous, truthful principle, and therefore our human existence is a manifestation of that essence. The principle of the unmoved is within us.



The real self or spirit is the upholder of our being, soul or consciousness is the builder, and the body is the screen on which consciousness projects itself. In us, the macrocosm is mirrored, so we can say that the real self is that within us which is unmoved and which is of the same essence as God. We may also

call this the human spirit. Consciousness is 'the mover'; it is that which brings about change in 'he moved', the physical manifestation of the body.

This can be illustrated with a triangle. The triangle is a shape used in engineering because of its great strength, and therefore it is a good way of expressing the unity of being.

Our Threefold Nature

The human being has a threefold nature. We are made up of:

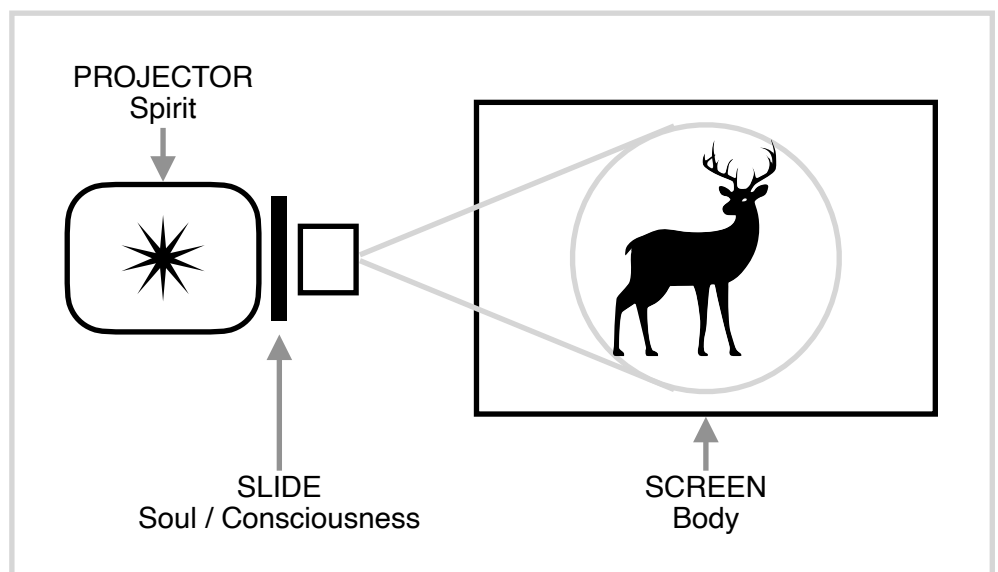
The **body** which is associated with life and death in accordance with the laws of the physical world.

The **soul** or psyche is what lives and experiences in us. This is the aspect of us that evolves and changes. The word psyche means, among other things, 'butterfly'. The soul was like a butterfly to the Greeks. This is a vivid image suggestive of the many changes through which the caterpillar and butterfly pass. Our soul receives the impress of all the experiences we go through and is shaped by them. So our consciousness is a developing, rather than a static part of our being, and it mediates between the body and spirit.

The **spirit** is the eternal aspect of us, the real self. Spirit is not tied to the body. It belongs to another realm, hence the need for the soul to be the mediator between it and the body.

To clarify this a little further, let us make an analogy.

- The spirit is like the projector, the source of light and power.
- The soul is like the slide.
- The body is the screen onto which the image of the slide is projected. So the body is the outcome of the activity of the spirit and soul or consciousness.



If you have taken slides, you will know that sometimes your slide can be out of focus or not properly exposed. It looks alright when you hold it up to the light, but when it is projected on the screen the flaws become quite obvious. So when there is something within our consciousness that is not right, which does not allow the spirit to express itself freely, this will show up in the body.

Psychosomatic illness demonstrates this:

- The spirit seeks to imprint itself on the physical.
- The soul or psyche has a faulty understanding which prevents the spirit from freely expressing through it.
- This acts upon the body (soma) and illness is the result. So illness is the imperfection of the slide showing up on the screen of the body.

We often avoid confronting situations until we are forced to do so and sometimes illness has the purpose of making us confront what is within us. When you are helpless, or in pain, you may come to certain realisations about yourself, and then sickness becomes a cleansing, transforming experience for you.

'What I think, I am,' is therefore a true saying. Your appearance is the result of your consciousness, of how your thinking has been expressed in the past. As the soul projects itself onto the body through the mind, an identification comes about. Consciousness, the soul, identifies itself with the physical and as a result the mind is automatically limited. Your thinking is sometimes larger than yourself, but your body limits you.

Metaphysics teaches us to change our faulty thinking and attitudes so that the light of the spirit can more clearly shine through us. It also teaches us to understand that the outer (the body) is an expression of the inner (the soul and the spirit).

ADDITIONAL READING

Dare To Be Human

by Mario Schoenmaker

If you want to be more human, if you want to experience your real self, start practising these principles.

Take Your Time

Learn to walk a bit more slowly. You will get to your destination more easily if you do not rush and hurry. Take it easy. Your nervous system is used to being fully activated, so that often you work on your nervous energies. Train your nervous system to slow down, then the surplus of energies can be used in concentration and thinking.

Meditate

Start each day by quietly sitting down in a chair and making yourself comfortable for a few minutes. Tell your body to relax. Breathe in deeply and let the breath flow out of you without any pushing. Do this for five minutes. Then, when you are relaxed take a mantra or an affirmation and repeat it according to the need of the day or the moment. Here are a few examples of affirmations:

- I am able to meet the demands of today.
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
- I will stay calm, when pressured to make hasty decisions.
- I shall flow like a river in calmness, peace and love.

Meet People and Accept Them as Good

Essentially people are not out to get you. They have the same problems, fears and hang-ups as you do. They have feelings and intelligence just as you have, although in some these may not be very developed. Meet people as good and flow out to them graciously. Graciousness is an art that has been forgotten in the latter part of this century, but gracious people are beautiful people. Do not expect people to be different from what they are. Learn to see their goodness and beauty, their graciousness and their need to help you.

Walk Straight

Many people bear burdens that are not theirs and it shows in the way they walk. A good metaphysician does not carry the burdens of others, and therefore can walk straight. Hold your shoulders high. Don't walk as if the weight of the world is on them. Let your body be graceful in movement, and take an easy posture when you sit.

Be Interested in Other People

Show your interest in others. Many people cannot listen. Their minds are already arguing the point while the other person is still talking. If the world needs anything it is people who can really listen. Other people are not interested in what you say. But if you dare to listen intently to them, you will have a great influence. Learn to be silent when others are addressing you and not to interrupt. Let your speech be creative and upbuilding.

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