
UNIT 3 BRIEF HISTORY OF WESTERN METAPHYSICS

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Survey of Major Metaphysicians
- 3.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.4 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit is designed to:

- Survey the major developments in Western metaphysics
- Highlight the relevant metaphysical reflections
- Enable the students to think for themselves by reflecting on these insights

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Western metaphysics has the most diverse and complicated development among the three traditions (Indian, Chinese, and Western). In the West, one system grew out of another, as development, or as criticism, or as both. Because of the Greek legacy of free thought rooted in the purely rational and human approach to various problems, every metaphysician in the West developed a somewhat distinct standpoint and system, thereby contributing to the total understanding of reality. Like every other metaphysical tradition in the world, Greek metaphysics grew out of religion. This development is generally divided into two periods: the pre-Socratic and the post-Socratic. There are some scholars who consider the former period as more important; for it was more scientific in that the philosophers adopted a kind of naturalistic or even mechanistic view of reality, treating the source of reality as water, air, fire, atoms, etc., and thus laid the foundation of science and metaphysics, while the latter period introduced much confusion into thought by mixing the ethical and religious problems with the scientific and metaphysical. We can undoubtedly trace the early travails of a sound metaphysics in Heraclitus, a prominent pre-Socratic.

3.2 SURVEY OF MAJOR METAPHYSICIANS

Heraclitus (C. 500 B.C.E.E)

For Heraclitus, the fundamental thought is that the universe is in a state of ceaseless change. “One cannot step twice into the same river,” for other waters are ever flowing on. To signalize the notion of incessant activity, Heraclitus chooses the ever-living fire which is the vital principle in the organism and the essence of the soul, as his first principle. The fire of Heraclitus is not the abiding substratum of his predecessors, but that which is constantly being transformed into other things. It changes into water and then into earth, and the earth changes back again into

water and fire. Things seem to be permanent because we do not perceive the incessant movements in them. Everything is changed into its opposite and everything, therefore, is a union of opposites. Nothing remains permanent by virtue of its qualities. Everything both is and is not. This view is opposed by Parmenides who interprets reality to be permanent without any change.

Parmenides (C. 550 B.C.E.)

Parmenides, the metaphysician of the Eleatic school, challenges Heraclitus' teaching that everything changes, that fire becomes water, and water earth, and earth fire, that things first are and then are not. How can a thing both be and not be? How can anyone think such a contradiction? To say that it can, is to say that something is and something is not. Or if Being has *become*, it must either have come from non-Being or from Being. If from non-Being, it has come from nothing, which is impossible; if from Being, then it has come from itself and is identical with itself, and thus has always been. Then, it is evident that from Being only being can come; that whatever is, always has been and always will be; that everything remains what it is. Hence, there can be only one eternal, unchangeable Being. All change is inconceivable and the world of sense is an illusion. These diametrically opposed views of Heraclitus and Parmenides find a sort of reconciliation in Plato for whom particulars may come and go, but the Idea or Form goes on forever. Humans may come and go, but the human-type is eternal.

Plato (428-348)

The idea or form comprehends or holds together the essential qualities common to many particulars. The essence of things consists in their universal forms. The ideas or forms are not mere thoughts in the minds of humans or even in the mind of God (the divine thought is itself directed toward them). Plato conceives them as existing in and for themselves, possessing substantiality, i.e., they are substances, real or substantial forms, the original, eternal transcendent archetypes of things, existing prior to things and apart from them, and thus uninfluenced by the changes to which they are subject. The particular objects of perception are imperfect copies or reflections of the eternal patterns. Particulars may come and go, but the idea or form goes on forever. Humans may come and go, but the human-type is eternal. The human mind is meant for the world of Ideas, and it transcends sense reality towards the supersensible. For Aristotle, metaphysics is not only the science of the supersensible but of the sensible too, insofar as the sensible *is*.

Aristotle (384-322)

Aristotle himself never called 'metaphysics' by that name, which was conferred by later thinkers. Aristotle called metaphysics by at least three different names: *sophia*, *protei philosophia*, and *theologikei* (*wisdom*, *first philosophy*, and *theology*). Nonetheless, the subsequent use of the title *Metaphysics* makes it reasonable to suppose that what we call metaphysics is substantially the sort of thing done in that treatise. *Sophia* is explained as the knowledge concerning most noble things. It is a kind of theoretical knowledge of necessary and eternal being, both intuitive and inferential. At the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, there is a discussion about the kinds and stages of knowledge: Human knowledge originates from sensation and develops gradually into memory, experience, and art. In this development *sophia* is the highest scientific knowledge and deals with the principles or causes of things. A person who is called *sophos* possesses

the following characteristics: *sophos* knows everything (though not in detail); the most difficult things, what is most exact, what best explains how things happen, things for their own sake, and for what end everything is done. Also, the objects of *sophia* are principles and causes. The good and the end are its special form. It is knowledge for its own sake without any utilitarian interest. It is knowledge suitable for those who live free and independent lives. Such knowledge is more suitable for the gods than for humankind. It is divine on account of two reasons: first, God is the cause of everything and is the first principle with which this science is concerned; second, either God alone or God above all can have such knowledge, i.e., God is both object and subject of *sophia*. *Sophia*, just mentioned above, means philosophy proper rather than science in general. The already enumerated characteristics seem to be common to all philosophical sciences. However, from the last mentioned divine character of its object and subject, *sophia* is limited to the first philosophy. For him, metaphysics is the First Philosophy that deals with the Unmoved Mover. The Unmoved Mover is the first being or first substance. As the Unmoved Mover is the first, the philosophy which deals with this kind of being is the First Philosophy. Since the first being is God, who is studied in the first philosophy, it is also called theology. In other words, according to Aristotle, metaphysics is the first philosophy and the science of being as being. It is the science of substance, especially of the first substance, of the First Cause, which is immovable, eternal, independent, and without matter, i.e., God. Thus, first philosophy or ontology is at the same time theology. The object of metaphysics is all beings visible and invisible. It investigates all beings in so far as they are beings the totality of beings, and all particular domains of beings. The Aristotelian numbering of God among the items it characterizes is overcome by Augustine, who gives God the first place in his metaphysics.

Augustine (353-430)

Dominant in Augustine's thinking is the Neoplatonic conception of the absoluteness and majesty of God, and the insignificance of His creatures. God is an eternal and transcendent being, all-powerful, all-good, all-wise, absolute unity, absolute intelligence, absolute will, and thus absolute spirit. He is absolutely free and holy, and cannot will evil. In Him, willing and doing are one: what He wills is done without any intermediary. His intelligence includes all ideas or forms of things. God created the world out of nothing. His creation is a continuous creation (*creatio continua*) as it is absolutely and continuously dependent on him. The God-centred metaphysics of Augustine, turning metaphysics into theology, becomes a God-oriented metaphysics in St Thomas Aquinas for whom every being *is* analogous.

Aquinas (1225-1274)

In the introduction to his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, he sums up three aspects of metaphysics: Metaphysics is *the science of God* or theology, insofar as it considers God and other supersensible beings, or the pure spirits. It is metaphysics insofar as it investigates beings alone, and all that belongs to being as being. It is *first philosophy* insofar as it looks for the first causes of all things. Aquinas insisted that the immediate object of metaphysics is *being as being*, unlike Francis Bacon for whom metaphysics is neither the study of being as being nor a contemplation of unmoving final causes, but a study of the most general principles or laws or forms of the material world undertaken in view of a practical end.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

According to Bacon, the divisions of philosophy are like the branches of a tree which are united in a common trunk. This common trunk of philosophy is 'one universal science', known as 'first philosophy', which comprises fundamental axioms and notions like 'possible' and 'impossible', 'being' and 'non-being', etc. Metaphysics, as part of natural philosophy, must be distinguished from both first philosophy and natural theology. Physics treats of efficient and material causes, metaphysics of formal and final causes. As a result, metaphysics turned into a formal discipline of laws or principles. Such a metaphysics becomes a system of pure conceptual knowledge without any trace of empirical influence in Christian Wolff.

Christian Wolff (1679-1754)

He equated metaphysics with *theoretical philosophy*. He distinguished between *general metaphysics* and *special metaphysics*. The former, also called *ontology*, is the basic philosophical discipline which investigates being as being. In Wolff, being is no longer a universal principle, but only an abstract general concept. Some of Wolff's followers held that the object of metaphysics is being in general or immaterial beings. Others considered metaphysics as the science of the first principles of our knowledge, from which we derive the principles of all other sciences. To this latter group belonged Immanuel Kant's teacher Martin Knutzen, and also Alexander Baumgarten whose textbook Kant used for many years in his teaching of metaphysics. If we take into account the fact that Kant's criticism of metaphysics is directed against Baumgarten's rationalistic metaphysics, we can avoid the error of taking Kant's critique to be the absolute denial of metaphysics.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

Metaphysics, for him, is the enquiry into God's existence and nature, human freedom and immortality. *Method of enquiry* is rationalistic or critical enquiry into the faculty of reason. Metaphysics expresses a rational need a natural disposition of the human mind. It also aims at extending our knowledge of reality to the questions such as, existence of God, freedom of human, and immortality of soul. But if a science of metaphysics is ever to exist it must consist of synthetic a priori propositions. So Kant's first question about metaphysics is, 'how is metaphysics as natural disposition possible?' Kant's second question and the more important one is 'how is metaphysics as science possible?' It does not yet exist as science, hence the question also implies *whether* it is possible as science. The answer to both questions is given by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's question: 'How is metaphysics as science possible?' leads to the question of the possibility of universal and necessary knowledge. In struggling with this question Kant went beyond both rationalism and empiricism. According to Kant, knowledge is to be understood from the previous conditions of its possibility. Thus we must turn our attention away from the object to the *a priori* conditions of our knowledge of it. This is the turn to the *transcendental method*. For Kant it meant the passage from the conditioned to the unconditioned, from the object of experience to the subject of pure reason which determines this object. Thus metaphysics turns into transcendental philosophy. Kant, without being explicitly conscious of it, demonstrated that metaphysics is impossible without a return to Being. Secondly, he brought about the *transcendental turn* of philosophical thinking. This transcendental thinking began to take shape in Fichte for whom

knowledge is no more a passive state of reason affected by the thing in itself, but the self-determination of the ego which sets up the non-ego only for its performance of practical conduct.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814)

German idealism, after Kant, ridiculed metaphysics. Metaphysics was equated with dogmatic metaphysics which was considered to be an uncritical reflection of the thing in itself and in this way it was contrasted with the transcendental philosophy of critical idealism. As an example for the transcendental philosophy of critical idealism, Fichte introduced the *Wissenschaftslehre* (the doctrine of science) as a basic science whose content is the pure knowledge of the reason serving as the foundation of all the sciences providing them with their basic principles. Although Fichte's early philosophy was subjective idealism in its purest form, his thought soon proceeded beyond it, when he realised that thinking presupposes Being: an Absolute Being as condition of finite reason. Thus once again he was close to the idea of metaphysics in the traditional sense further established by Schelling in his view of the self-identity of spirit and nature in place of the supremacy of practical reason and ego of Fichte.

Friedrich Von Schelling (1775-1854)

Schelling advanced beyond Fichte. For Schelling, the Ego transcends itself and becomes aware of the Absolute which lies before any duality of objective and subjective, of real and ideal, and thus moved towards objective idealism. He distinguished between negative and positive philosophy, which are the aspects of the transcendental philosophy (in this sense transcendental philosophy is metaphysics for Schelling). *Negative philosophy* stood for pure *apriori* science of reason whose validity is only relative. *Positive philosophy* advances towards a doctrine of Being, which comprises also a doctrine of God in which it has its foundation. Schelling has thus restored its former unity to metaphysics. However, the metaphysics of Schelling was devoid of systematic coherence, which was left to Hegel to achieve.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)

For Hegel, Being is indeterminate. That which is indeterminate is that which is not determinate. That which is not determinate is that which is not. That which is not is non-being. Hence non-being is at the 'heart' of Being. Hence there is a dialectic (thesis and antithesis) at the 'heart' or core of Being itself. Being itself or Pure Being is of all notions the most abstract, the most universal, hence the most empty of contents. It does not mean any particular being. It is without any feature. It is absolutely indeterminate. It is not this, nor that, nor anything. It is that which is in some way. Nothing or non-Being is the opposite of Being while being in the latter. Non-Being is contained in Being. It is deduced from Being. Being and non-Being are opposed, yet identical. Being and non-Being are apparently contradictory terms and so are instances of the extreme form of opposition. Yet they are identical; for non-Being is deduced from Being and it could not have been deduced from Being if non-Being was not there in it at least implicitly. Again, Being and non-Being are empty and vacant, and in this sense too they are identical. Since Being and non-Being are identical, Being passes into non-Being, and non-Being passes into Being. For the thought of non-Being is the thought of emptiness, and emptiness is what pure Being is. This passing, from Being into non-Being or from non-Being into Being, is Becoming. Becoming

is the passing or passage from Being to nothing or non-Being, and from nothing to Being. Being is not the focal point of Husserl, but consciousness. Husserl's basic idea is that the consciousness is directed towards objects. Almost all mental content is directed, and thus directedness is a feature unique to consciousness. This directedness of the consciousness towards its object is called 'intentionality'.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)

Husserl's fundamental position is something like this. For each of us there is one indubitable fact: *our own conscious awareness*. This is the starting point to build our knowledge of reality on rock-solid foundations. Up to this point he is in agreement with Descartes. However unlike Descartes, he holds that as soon as we analyze our conscious awareness we discover that it is always aware of *something*. Consciousness has to be consciousness of something. It cannot just exist by itself as an object-less state of mind. Direct experience of appearance includes not only material objects but a number of abstract entities, such as our own thoughts, pains, emotions, memories, music, mathematics, and a host of other things. They are investigated exclusively as *contents of consciousness* independent of their existential status which is bracketed. All the same, on account of his phenomenological reduction which brackets existence, Husserl locked himself in transcendental idealism. He was unable to clear Kant's hurdles and reach reality. Consequently he could not discover the way to metaphysics or metaphysical ontology, as done by other metaphysicians like Whitehead.

Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)

Whitehead made a fundamental distinction in his metaphysics between actual entities (actual occasions) and eternal objects. *The eternal objects* are the possibilities of all those events which actually occur. They are the forms of things. A form is a society of actual entities. For instance, a piece of chalk is a society of actual entities. It retains its form as a chalk so long as it is not broken up into its pieces. The eternal objects have the possibilities of getting fused with different forms of objects. They are neither things nor causes, but pure potentialities for the specific determination of actual entities. They are the same for all actual entities. They 'ingress' into actual entities as their determinants. They have universality, as the same form belongs to different actual entities. The eternal forms are the ingredients of the actual forms. For instance, all types of tables have the same common essence of tableness. This common essence constitutes the eternal objects of all types of tables. According to Bergson, Being is not only independent of being known, but becoming too. 'Being is becoming.'

Henri Bergson (1859-1941)

Henri Bergson (1859-1941) is the most important exponent of 'perpetual becoming' in modern times. Like Heraclitus, he is an anti-intellectualist. According to Bergson, everything is a continuous flux of becoming and change, *without any underlying subject* which becomes and changes. *Change is the whole of reality*. Everything changes, but there is no thing which changes; everything is in movement, but there no thing which moves; everything is in a state of continuous progress, but there is no thing that progresses; everything is in a process of evolution, but there is no thing that evolves. As Bergson says, "movement is reality itself, and immobility is always only apparent or relative ... there are no *things*, there are only *actions*." Movement is creative evolution. This ceaseless evolutionary movement is the result of a double factor – *matter*

and the *vital impulse* (*élan vital*). They have existed from the beginning. Every theory, no matter how ingenious, collapses once the fundamental principles of logical thinking are discarded. Heidegger is aware of the possibility of such a collapse.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

Phenomenon does not show itself but remains hidden as the meaning and ground of what shows itself. It calls for a method which makes us see what is normally hidden and forgotten. Now 'logos', the second component of the word 'phenomenology', is a method of making us see what is otherwise concealed, of taking the hidden out of its hiding, and of directing it as 'unhidden', i.e., as truth (*a-letheia*). Thus phenomenology is the method of uncovering the hiding, or 'interpretation' (*Auslegung*). The primary phenomenon which needs uncovering is being, the victim of our usual forgetfulness of the 'ontological difference' between being and beings. For Heidegger, the science of being of beings or ontology is possible only as phenomenology. Phenomenology is ontology and vice versa. Philosophy itself is nothing but 'universal phenomenological ontology based on the hermeneutics of human being' (*Dasein*) which by implication makes phenomenology the one and only ontological method. This view of Heidegger stands in contrast to that of the scholastics and the neo-scholastics like Maritain.

Jacques Maritain (1882-1973)

For Maritain, the object of metaphysics is *being as such* (*ens in quantum ens*). It is not being clothed or embodied in the sensible quiddity, the essence or nature of sensible things, but being disengaged and isolated insofar as Being can be taken in abstraction from more particularized objects. It is being disengaged from the sensible quiddity, viewed as such, and set apart in its pure intelligible values. Being as such is distinct from particularized being. *Particularized being* is being which is studied by the diverse sciences of nature. It is the sensible and mobile beings which are either the object of the philosophy of nature or of the other empirical sciences. Particularized being marks and envelops the metaphysical notion of Being. The metaphysical notion of Being is not disengaged from the particularized being, but is present in it in a disguised and invisible manner. All our notions and concepts are resolved in the metaphysical notion of Being. It is the first of all our notions, of which all the rest are determinations. Gilson approached the same notion of Being from Aquinas' primacy of the act of Being.

Etienne Gilson (1884-1978)

Being (*Esse*) is the very act which turns a possible into a being. Essence is not the highest perfection in the order of being, but *esse* (act of Being). However, essence is an element of finite being, of absolute necessity and very high nobility, as each essence is the possibility of an actual being endowed with its own finite degree of perfection. Finite being is also act and perfection. The world of finite beings is made possible by the very essences of the things which their own *esse* makes to be true beings. In this way, everything is called a being because of its *esse*, while everything is also called a thing on account of essence or quiddity. However, according to Marechal, in every knowledge of the finite the human intellect moves from the finite to the infinite on account of its dynamism known as 'intellectual dynamism'.

Joseph Marechal (1878-1944)

According to Marechal, the intellect is dynamic and active. It is a faculty in quest of its intuition, i.e., of assimilation with Being which is pure and simple, supremely one, without limitation, without distinction of essence and existence, and of possibility and reality. Tending towards the infinite, it is not fully satisfied by any finite object. However, to the extent that a finite object participates in the infinite, the intellect finds in the object a partial goal for its appetite, affirms it categorically, and makes a judgment of reality. Hence truth is found in judgment. Judgment is a *synthesis* through concretion. It unites a subject of inherence and a form. Judgment is not only a synthesis, but an *act of affirmation* too. The affirmation is the essential element of the judgment; for it makes the synthesis which has been effected into an 'object'. It endows it with truth by relating it to the absolute Being. The application of dynamism to the refutation of Kant had already been made by Blondel. It was the aim of *L'action* of Blondel to overcome the phenomenalism of Kant by departing from the presuppositions of immanentism. Hence, the 'intellectual dynamism' of Marechal owes much to the influence of Blondel.

Maurice Blondel (1861-1949)

For Blondel action is a complex term that stands for the entire human experience conceived within the framework of human's basic needs and tendencies. It is the activity of the whole human, the synthesis of thought, will, and being itself. The greater and the nobler human's activity, the greater and the nobler is one's action. Action is the most universal and unavoidable fact in human life. It is also a personal obligation that may demand a hard choice, a sacrifice, and even death. Suicide itself is an act. Act is essentially an act of the will. This is Blondel's message to his contemporaries: *human has a fundamental tendency towards the infinite*. For Lonergan the most fundamental tendency is the pure desire to know.

Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984)

"Being, then, is the objective of the pure desire to know." The desire to know means the dynamic orientation manifested in question for intelligence and reflection. It is neither the verbal utterance nor the conceptual formulation of questions, nor any insight, nor thought, nor judgment. It moves human to seek understanding, and then it prevents one from being merely content with one's own imperfect, subjective, personal experience. It moves Human to reflect, to seek the unconditioned, and to grant unqualified assent only to the unconditioned; and thus one is prevented from being content with hearsay and legend that are unverified and untested. This desire is pure as it differs radically from other desires; as it compels assent to the unconditioned; and as it is a cool, disinterested, and detached desire. It is a desire to know. The objective of the pure desire is the content of knowing rather than the act of knowing. However, the desire is itself not a knowing; hence its range is not the same as the range of knowing. At first, in each individual, the pure desire is a dynamic orientation to a totally unknown. But when the knowledge grows, the objective becomes more and more known. In this way, the objective includes all that is known and all that remains to be known, namely, Being. Being is *what is known* by true judgement insofar as knowing is determinate. Being is also what is to be known by the totality of true judgements insofar as the desire to know goes beyond actual knowledge. Thus, Being is all-inclusive: it is concrete and universal. Hence, it is the totality of

correct judgement that equates with the concrete universe that is Being, which, according to Rahner, is the Being of beings (entity).

Karl Rahner (1904-1984)

Being is grasped only as the act of existing of being. Being is at once separate and united to a receptive subject that is distinct from it. In other words, in the pre-apprehension we grasp Being only through the concept of a specific, sensibly presented, and particular being. In the same say, every being is apprehended in the pre-apprehension of the unlimited scope of all the possible objects of thought. This means that being is apprehended at the moment when it finds itself with the totality of its possible objects. This totality is the one original ground of all determinations of the possible objects or beings. Rahner recognizes the objectivity of Being as distinct from human. That is, Being in general is distinct from human being. The objectivity of Being is conditioned by the pre-apprehension. Human knows about Being in general in one’s active dealings with this world. One knows about it insofar as such knowledge is the condition or horizon of objective conceptual knowledge of material beings. In this knowledge of the world, human pre-apprehends Being in its totality through question. For Coreth too, question is the starting point of metaphysics.

Emeric Coreth (1919 - 2006)

The horizon of our questioning is the Unconditioned. The unconditioned is expressed in the word *IS* (Being). Here Being is the unconditioned condition of all questioning. It is the absolutely necessary. It is always and necessarily presupposed as the condition of every question. It is co-affirmed in the very act of questioning. Otherwise, we cannot even ask a question. If the horizon of our questioning or knowing is limited, then our knowledge cannot be absolute. In a limited horizon, we cannot ask about the ultimate, absolute, or unconditioned point of view. Hence, the horizon must be unlimited. To penetrate into the *intensively* deepest core of Being, we must reach the *extensively* widest range of Being. That which constitutes the ultimate, unconditioned reality of things is *Being*, and that which affects absolutely everything, without any limitation, is also Being. Therefore, Being is the ultimate reality both intensively and extensively. The horizon of Being within which we ask the question as question is unlimited.

Check Your Progress

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

1) What are the metaphysical teachings of the ancient and medieval metaphysicians?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Identify the most prominent metaphysicians of the twentieth century. Briefly explain their thought.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3.3 LET US SUM UP

Western metaphysics has the most diverse and complicated development among the three traditions (Indian, Chinese, and Western). In the West, one system grew out of another, as development, or as criticism, or as both. We can undoubtedly trace the early travails of a sound metaphysics in Heraclitus, a prominent pre-Socratic. This view is opposed by Parmenides who interprets reality to be permanent without any change. These diametrically opposed views of Heraclitus and Parmenides find a sort of reconciliation in Plato for whom particulars may come and go, but the Idea or Form goes on forever. Humans may come and go, but the human-type is eternal. For Aristotle, metaphysics is not only the science of the supersensible, but of the sensible too, insofar as the sensible *is*. The Aristotelian numbering of God among the items it characterizes is overcome by Augustine who gives God the first place in his metaphysics. The God-centred metaphysics of Augustine, turning metaphysics into theology, becomes a God-oriented metaphysics in St. Thomas for whom every being *is* analogous. Thomas insisted that the immediate object of metaphysics is *being as being*, unlike Francis Bacon for whom metaphysics is neither the study of being as being, nor a contemplation of unmoving final causes, but a study of the most general principles or laws or forms of the material world undertaken in view of a practical end. As a result, metaphysics turned into a formal discipline of laws or principles. Such a metaphysics becomes a system of pure conceptual knowledge without any trace of empirical influence in Christian Wolff and Alexander Baumgarten (whose text book Kant followed in teaching metaphysics). Baumgarten's metaphysical theory is a development of Wolff's conceptualism. Metaphysics leaves behind its original meaning as the science of being, and becomes a science of knowledge.

Kant's idea of identifying transcendental philosophy with ontology or general metaphysics, and of making his *Critique of Pure Reason* the preliminary to metaphysics, is a consequence of Baumgarten's theory. If we take into account the fact that Kant's criticism of metaphysics is directed against Baumgarten's rationalistic metaphysics, we can avoid the error of taking Kant's critique to be the absolute denial of metaphysics. This transcendental thinking began to take shape in Fichte for whom knowledge is no more a passive state of reason affected by the thing in itself, but the self-determination of the ego, which sets up the non-ego only for its performance of practical conduct. Although Fichte's early philosophy was subjective idealism in its purest form, his thought soon proceeded beyond it when he realised that thinking presupposes Being: an Absolute Being as the condition of finite reason. Thus once again he was close to the idea of metaphysics in the traditional sense, further established by Schelling in his view

of the self-identity of spirit and nature in place of the supremacy of practical reason and ego of Fichte. Schelling has thus restored to metaphysics its former unity. However, the metaphysics of Schelling was devoid of systematic coherence which was left to Hegel to fill in. Hegel's solution was to replace metaphysics by an objective logic, the science of the world to be constructed through thoughts. This objective logic includes, in addition to ontology or the science of being in general, the other branches of metaphysics on mind, world, and God. Mind (of course, not the absolute mind of Hegel) is also the focal point of Husserl. Husserl's basic idea is that the mind is directed towards objects. Almost all mental content is directed, and thus directedness is a feature unique to the mind. This directedness of the mind towards its object is called 'intentionality'. All the same, on account of his phenomenological reduction which brackets existence, Husserl locked himself in transcendental idealism. He was unable to clear Kant's hurdles and reach reality. Consequently he could not discover the way to metaphysics or metaphysical ontology as done by other metaphysicians like Whitehead. Hartmann's ontology, like Whitehead's metaphysics, continues to hover between the empirical and the apriori, between science and ordinary experience. For Hartmann, 'Being is independent of being-known.' According to Bergson, Being is not only independent of being known but becoming too. 'Being is becoming.' Every theory, no matter how ingenious, collapses, once the fundamental principles of logical thinking are discarded.

Heidegger is aware of the possibility of such a collapse. Not that we can't sometimes think and say things which correspond to an independent reality, but our mental content can only correspond to what is out there on a background of skills and practices which is not itself mental content, and for which all talk of whether it corresponds or fails to correspond to something else is inappropriate. This view of Heidegger stands in contrast to that of the scholastics and the neo-scholastics like Maritain. For Maritain, the intuition of Being includes also the intuition of its transcendental character and ontological value. Gilson approached the same notion of Being from Aquinas' primacy of the act of Being. The difficulty proper to metaphysical meditation is not due to any obscurity on the part of the subject, but arises from more light than the human 'eye' can see without suffering from it. However, according to Marechal, in every knowledge of the finite the human intellect moves from the finite to the infinite on account of its dynamism known as 'intellectual dynamism'. The application of dynamism to the refutation of Kant had already been made by Blondel. It was the aim of *L'action* of Blondel to overcome the phenomenalism of Kant by departing from the presuppositions of immanentism. Hence the 'intellectual dynamism' of Marechal owes much to the influence of Blondel. This is Blondel's message to his contemporaries: *human has a fundamental tendency towards the infinite*. For Lonergan the most fundamental tendency is the pure desire to know. In other words, the notion of Being is the notion of the concrete in the same way as it is of the universe. *The notion is of the universe* because questions end only when there is nothing more to be asked. *The notion is of the concrete*, for until the concrete is reached there remain further questions. "Hence, it is not the single judgement but the totality of correct judgement that equates with the concrete universe that is Being" which, according to Rahner, is the Being of beings (entity). In this knowledge of the world, Human pre-apprehends Being in its totality through question, the starting point of metaphysics. For Coreth too question is the starting point of metaphysics. Question is the expression of mystery as question reveals and hides at the same

time. It implies both knowledge and ignorance. Every question implies at least some knowledge; for no one questions about something of which one does not know anything at all. In the same way, a question also implies at least some ignorance; for no one genuinely questions about something of which one knows everything which one is expected to know.

3.4 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Ando, Takatura. *Metaphysics: A Critical Survey of its Meaning*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947.

Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. (In: *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle by Thomas Aquinas*.) Translated by John P Rowan. Vol. I. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961.

Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.

Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988. Lonergan, Bernard. *Insight*. New York: Longmans, 1965.

Loux, Michael J. *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Maritain, Jacques. *A Preface to Metaphysics*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1943.

Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.

Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.