

the Word of God, in which Christ's Life and Passion is recorded, and Christ and the Church are both prefigured and mystically identified.

Outside the Church, modern research methods applied to Holy Scripture have tended to disrupt belief in the Word of God altogether. It is the glory of the Church that the spirit of enquiry can be safely cultivated only under Her protection. For within the Church thought is ever both old and new; She alone possesses the Eternal Spirit of all Truth.

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METAPHYSICS WITHOUT ONTOLOGY¹

THE above title outlines Professor Collingwood's project for the reinstatement of metaphysics in answer to Kant's question, 'How can metaphysics become scientific?' Since metaphysics has hitherto been a mistake about metaphysics, it was time something should be done about it.

In the books called *Metaphysical* (τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά = the next after the physics = much the same kind of title as 'Collected Works,' vol. viii), says Professor Collingwood, Aristotle undertakes two tasks. The first is the study (First Science) of the presuppositions of the ordinary non-metaphysical sciences; the second is the construction of a science (ontology) of pure being, and therefore (natural theology) of God. As *first science* metaphysics is logically presupposed by all the other sciences, although from the learner's point of view it is approached only when the other sciences have been to some degree mastered. As *last science* (wis-

¹ *An Essay on Metaphysics*. By R. J. Collingwood. (Oxford; 18s.)

dom) it will be the ultimate goal of the scientist's pilgrimage, and the most explicit name for it will be theology.

The first chapter of Professor Collingwood's book is a condensed paraphrase of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The second separates the two tasks mentioned above and argues, in continuity with Berkeley, Kant, and Hegel, that a science of 'pure being' is a contradiction in terms.

The grounds of this conclusion are already visible in the paraphrase of Aristotle in his first chapter (p. 9). Speaking of the system of the subordination of the sciences, he says: 'At the base of the system of universals there are universals which are *infimae species*, not giving rise to any further sub-species. At its top there are universals which are *summa genera*, not species of any higher genus. Or rather, strictly speaking, there is only one *summum genus*. The ten 'categories' recognized by logic are the ten species of the genus being; they are the *γένη τῶν ὄντων*, the forms into which being is specified. Thus there is only one pyramid of universals, and at its peak the universal of being.' The effect of these words from the phrase 'Or rather, strictly speaking' to the end is to sweep aside all the delicate and vitally important discussion which has centred on this point in St. Thomas, Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, Suarez, Garrigou-Lagrange, Penido, and indeed almost every scholastic writer of rank from the thirteenth to the twentieth century. Apparently Professor Collingwood has not even seen that a problem exists, or that his interpretation of Aristotle on this point could be questioned.

The result of regarding being as the *summum genus* logically and *univoce* presupposed in all subordinate universals is (a) to reduce being to a spurious logical concept, and (b) to empty it of meaning. In scholastic terminology 'being' is not a universal but a transcendental, and there is a world of difference between these two terms. Aristotle does not himself draw the conclusion that the pinnacle of the pyramid of the sciences includes the ultimate genera in the same way that a universal includes its subordinate

species. At least five loci may be cited³ in which St. Thomas, as an Aristotelian, makes clear the impossibility of such a conception. Neither is it enough to say, as Professor Collingwood does, that Aristotle was aware of difficulties and so left the question open as an inclusion with a difference. For this difference cannot be that 'being' (the limiting case of the abstractive process) has abstracted to the degree of taking everything out and so left nothing for science to investigate. 'Pure being' in that sense is a fiction without foundation in reality, and it is small wonder that Professor Collingwood cannot distinguish it 'from anything at all or from nothing.'

Neither can 'being' in the sense of the logical nexus in a proposition be treated as the *summum genus*, for being, in this sense, merely answers the question whether a thing is so or not, as a tick or a cross marks a child's exercise book. Its function is purely logical, though its truth or falsehood is measured by reality.

It remains that being, as meaning the actual existence of things, is one concept not as a universal concept is one, but with an analogical unity; a unity of proportion holding together, under one concept and in the participation of one reality, what is diversified not by superadded differences (which can be transcended by abstraction), but by intrinsic diversity of existence.

In saying that 'being,' in the sense he gives to the single *summum genus*, means nothing at all, it is well to insist, then, that Professor Collingwood is speaking of nothing at all, and that such a statement leaves Aristotle and scholastic ontology untouched. We are reminded of the manservant in Surtees' novel, who, opening the cupboard in mistake for the window shutters, pronounced the morning was dark and smelt of cheese.

³ St. Thomas *Comm. in Metaph.* Lib. I, lect. 9, 139; Lib. 3, lect. 8, 433; Lib. 5, lect. 9, 889; Lib. 10, lect. 3, 1966; Lib. 11, lect. 1, 2169.

It should be noted that 'being' in the sense in which we answer yes or no to whether a thing is (the logical copula) has its validity in the mind joining together by means of it the elements into which it has analysed its experience. 'Being' in this sense is not the being by which things exist, and precisely as a concept of being it is not convertible with reality—for the obvious reason that it is not, properly speaking, a concept of being at all, but a link by which concepts are joined in judgment. Nevertheless, it is derived from reality in this sense that by means of it we join in judgment elements which in reality are found united, and we must appeal to reality to verify the propositions we form by means of it. Its function is to join together parts of a logical whole. It is a mental instrument and that is its mental work. Insofar as the world of our experience is a unity which can be analysed by the mind into component and inter-related parts, 'being' in this sense, as the logical copula, has work to do in composing what the mind has divided and in affirming relations which, though founded in reality, may, in fact, be only logical relations. Such logical relations are those of genus to its subordinate species, of a higher universal to the subordinate universals logically included in it, in the way, *e.g.*, in which the universal 'animal' is included in the higher universal 'bodily substance.'

But again insofar as the world of our experience is a logical unity it rests upon presuppositions which are themselves incapable of being further analysed; and the relative presuppositions of any particular science again presuppose certain absolute presuppositions without which science as governed by laws of thought is impossible. When Professor Collingwood, as the result of rejecting the second of Aristotle's great tasks in the *Metaphysics*, *i.e.*, the science of being or ontology, defines metaphysics according to the first as the science of absolute presuppositions, it is evident not only that metaphysics has been flatly equated with logic, but also that the first task has been misconceived.

For it must either be a spurious logic or find its support elsewhere.

For Aristotle, at any rate, since laws of thought are founded in laws of being, both the logical work which comprises a certain proportion of the *Metaphysics* and even that which is done in the logical books themselves are unintelligible save by at least ultimate reference to being and the laws of being. And 'being' as presupposed in the sciences subordinate to wisdom is the being by which things exist. It is not the being of the logical nexus. So the logical subordination of sciences by virtue of the degrees of abstraction has its validity from the depth to which the mind, by the degree of abstraction proper to each science, penetrates the real existence of things.

By refusing to consider ontologically the absolute presuppositions of science, Professor Collingwood therefore rules out the question of their truth. It is, he says, a nonsense question. But if the question of their truth cannot arise, neither (and this amounts to the same thing) can the question of their foundation in reality and in existence arise. That also is a nonsense question.

For the conception of their truth he substitutes that of their logical efficacy (the fact that, not being answers to any possible question that is not a nonsense question, they cause questions to arise), and for their ultimate foundation in being or reality he substitutes the fact of their being presupposed. ('The logical efficacy of a supposition does not depend on the truth of what is supposed, or even on its being thought true, but only on its being supposed.') Hence the conclusion, 'Metaphysics is about a certain class of historical facts, namely absolute presuppositions.' The needed reform of metaphysics is that it should be aware of itself as an historical science. So aware of itself it 'will be systematic in the sense in which all historical thought is systematic and no other.'

There is a certain inevitability in this. If in fact we have mistaken the cupboard for the window we are at least

behaving consistently in presenting a slice of Stilton as a summer morning. In this way, metaphysics becomes a specialised department of the science of history.

It is gracefully and neatly done. The logical positivists against whom this passage of arms is undertaken may well concede that a chair in metaphysical philosophy may even yet be to the good of science. Those, however, who have been brought up in a tradition which sees the point in what Aristotle did *not* say about being may simply point to the way in which Professor Collingwood bridges Aristotle's silence with a sentence commencing 'Or rather, strictly speaking, . . . ' as the key to what happens in the rest of the book's three hundred and fifty pages.

Cajetan remarks, with what may well look like arrogance, but is in fact a simple insistence on truth, that without knowledge of analogy no one may begin to learn metaphysics. Some awareness of this principle would have modified a rather naïve attack on the principle of causality on grounds of its anthropomorphic origins which occupies a later section of the book. The conclusiveness of the chapters in question is comparable to that of Freudian psychology against the existence of God.

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