

1. Metaphysics is understanding of the necessary aspects of being, and of nothing else. All contingent being lies outside its domain. Thus it seeks to understand only two things: (1) the necessary aspect of the one and only necessary being, including the requirement that this being have some contingent aspects or other; and (2) what all contingent beings have in common (these common features being necessary) and thus what distinguishes them as such from the necessary being, even in its contingent aspects.

2. The method of metaphysics is not a general method for understanding things, competitive with the empirical method of science. But, in its proper sphere, metaphysical method is as democratic and scientific as the empirical method is in its. Both methods use the common human reason and rely on common human experience, so both are, in the broadest sense, "empirical" (better: "experiential") and "rational." But whereas science relies on experience of the contingent details of the world as disclosed, especially, through visual and tactual sensations, metaphysics relies on experience of the generic and essential factors of the world, as disclosed by the sense of value and of existence with others, the sense of belonging with others to the whole, inclusive of the value of self as well as of others, and so on. In this sense, metaphysics is "the logical interpretation of those depths of experience which are our awareness of being so far as necessary" (Hartshorne).

3. Significantly, the metaphysical method, no less than the empirical, involves reliance on experience as well as the use of reason. But whereas empirical statements are provisional or hypothetical in that they must be tested observationally against empirical facts, metaphysical statements are provisional or hypothetical in that they are attempted formulations of "ultimate but obscure intuitions" (Hartshorne). Thus the means of testing or judging in the one case is empirical observation, while in the other it is the attempt to become conscious of a priori necessity, of what is necessarily presupposed by, and is therefore to be analyzed out of, any experience or any thought whatsoever.