

For a long time now, I have thought about our experience of and thought about (nonmetaphysical) *facts*, on the one hand, and (metaphysical) *principles*, on the other, in connection not merely with one, but with *two*, other fundamental distinctions.

One distinction is that between *the contingent* and *the necessary*, what simply happens to be or to be possible, on the one hand, and what could not possibly not be, on the other. Thus, in my understanding, the necessary is the least common denominator of the contingent—that which has always been bound, always is bound, and always will be bound to happen, no matter what else may or may not happen to be. Accordingly, I hold that facts are to principles as the contingent is to the necessary.

The other distinction is that between two aspects of our immediate experience: our derived, external *sense perception* of ourselves and the world around us, on the one hand, and our original, internal *nonsensuous perception* of ourselves, others, and the whole, on the other. In the course of time, I have come to express this distinction by speaking of the first aspect of experience, together with the thought based on it and the reality disclosed by it as "empirical," and of the second, along with the thought about it and the reality it discloses, as "existential." I also make this distinction sometimes more metaphorically by distinguishing between the "horizontal" and the "vertical" dimensions of our experience, and thus of our thought and reality respectively.

The important point, however, is that these two distinctions should not be understood as simply paralleling one another, as they would if the first had to do with the two main types of reality that we experience and think about, while the second had to do with corresponding ways in which we experience and think about realities of the respective types. The only truth in such an understanding of the distinction is that all of the realities experienced and thought about in the properly "empirical" aspect or "horizontal" dimension are facts or the contingent, whereas it is only in the other properly "existential" aspect or "vertical" dimension that any of the the realities that we experience and think about are principles or the necessary. But it <sup>is</sup> not only principles and the necessary that we experience and think about in this other

aspect or dimension; for in it, too, we experience and think about facts or the contingent as well as principles or the necessary.

So, as I use terms, properly "empirical" experience and thought are strictly factual and nonmetaphysical as well as nonexistential, in that they have to do entirely with facts or the contingent. On the other hand, properly "existential" experience and thought are more than merely factual and are metaphysical as well as nonempirical, in that they have to do with principles or the necessary as well as facts or the contingent.

2 February 1998; rev. 11 December 2001