

The formulations of metaphysics are tentative, hypothetical descriptions of the immediately given, which claim to make explicit what we all already believe and know, even without ever clearly and consistently thinking and saying so. But how is the claim made or implied by such descriptions to be critically validated?

The only answer, I believe, is by following the method of “transcendental deduction” or “analysis of presuppositions” (Nygren). By this I understand the general philosophical method of analyzing meaning and all the various kinds thereof carried to the point of demonstrating that what the descriptions in question describe are, in truth, the most fundamental presuppositions of all that we think, say, or do. This is to say that, regardless of where we begin at the periphery of our experience and life-praxis, we are perforce led by critical reflection and this distinctive kind of “objective argumentation” back to the center, to the hub where all spokes meet; which is to say, to our own self-understanding—our understanding of our own existence, and thus of ourselves and all others as parts of the encompassing whole.

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