

On Metaphysical Argument

The presupposed condition of the possibility of any meaningful assertion-denial *in actu* or as a performance (= *der Vollzug*) is the at least “tacit,” or “subjectively implicit,” assertion of oneself, others, and the whole. Thus any explicit denial of any part of this threefold necessary condition or a priori is self-incoherent, in the sense that, precisely as a putatively meaningful denial, it of necessity asserts the very thing it denies, at least tacitly or by subjective implication. Therefore, to demonstrate such self-incoherence between any denial of oneself, others, or the whole and the at least tacit assertion of them as the a priori even of denying them is to effect what Corseth means by the “methodical-systematic laying of the foundations” of *metaphysica specialis*, as comprising (metaphysical) anthropology as well as cosmology and theology.

Metaphysica specialis, however, presupposes as the necessary condition of its possibility *metaphysica generalis*, or onto-cosmo-theology. Here demonstration likewise takes the form of reducing the counterposition to self-contradiction or absurdity, although in this case the self-incoherence exhibited is not between an assertion-denial as act or performance, on the one hand, and tacit assertion of the necessary conditions of its possibility, on the other, but rather between the meanings involved in the assertion-denial itself and as such. So, for example, “I do not exist” is self-incoherent because it explicitly denies what it itself at least implicitly asserts as act or performance and therefore is—in terms of Passmore’s helpful distinction—“pragmatically” self-refuting. On the other hand, “Nothing exists” is also *semantically* self-incoherent and therefore not merely pragmatically, but “absolutely” self-refuting, because what is meant by “nothing” and what is meant by “exists” simply cannot be coherently combined in “Nothing exists,” any more than what is meant by “round” and by “square” can be consistently combined in “round-square.”

It seems clear that the distinction drawn here between *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis* is functionally equivalent with, and thus anticipates, my later distinction between metaphysics in a strict sense and metaphysics in a

broad sense. Of course, whether this was a happy a way of making the distinction may well be questioned.

1969; rev. 19 February 1996; 24 July 2002