

On the Abstract

If by “the abstract” generally one properly means either an (abstract) aspect or a (concrete) constituent of the concrete, then, taking the second sense of the phrase, one may say that whatever is by definition constituent of a larger, more inclusive concrete whole is—relative to this whole, at least—abstract. Thus all ordinary events and individuals, being by definition not all-inclusive, would be, in *that* sense, abstract relative to God (or to God’s events of concrescence) as the extraordinary and hence all-inclusive individual (or events).

For this reason, science, as the study of all ordinary events and individuals, is *doubly* abstract: first, because, as just explained, all ordinary events and individuals are themselves in a sense abstract, namely, relative to God (or to God’s events); and second, because science considers only a certain aspect even of ordinary events and individuals, namely, the aspect of structure that can be experienced somehow by sense perception and therefore permits understanding control and use of the things thereby disclosed.

Actually, science may be said to be *triply* abstract insofar as it also abstracts from the meaning of things for us—whence Heidegger’s distinction between *das Zuhandene* and *das Vorhandene* (“*Das Erkennen dringt erst über das im Besorgen Zuhandene zur Freilegung des nur noch Vorhandenen vor.*” “*Im wissenschaftlichen Verhalten sehen wir das begegnende Zuhandene ‘neu’ an, als Vorhandenes.*”).

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