

Presupposed by any meaning and any kind of meaning are certain necessary conditions of possibility: of the possibility of human existence as the being that is capable both of understanding and expressing all kinds of meaning and of critically appropriating all such understandings and expressions; and of the possibility of anything whatsoever as the being that any meaning and any kind of meaning must be about—indirectly if not directly.

If the necessary, relatively speaking, is what is common to *some set of* possibilities, or what is bound to happen no matter which possibility in the set is actualized, the necessary, absolutely speaking, is what is common to *all* possibilities whatever, or what is bound to happen no matter which possibility is actualized. Therefore, the necessary, speaking relatively to human existence as existence that understands, is what is common to all the possibilities belonging to such understanding existence, or what is bound to happen, no matter which of its possibilities is actualized. If a name for the necessary, absolutely speaking, is "the transcendental," or "transcendentality," a name for the necessary, speaking relatively to human existence *qua* existence that understands, is "the existential," or "existentiality" (Heidegger).

Corresponding to—indeed, implied, and, in that sense, determined, by—the metaphysics critically explicating these necessary conditions of possibility is a purely formal existentialist-transcendental ethics, in the sense of completely general ("first") principles concerning both how any existent, in the emphatic sense of any individual endowed with understanding and moral freedom, is to act and what she, he, or it is to do at both the transcendental level of self-understanding and the categorial level of life-praxis. Of course, such "first principles" aren't the only ethical principles. But all other, less general ethical principles, including all so-called middle axioms, are also dependent upon the possibilities and necessities of some particular situation(s) and true judgments thereabout.

As a corollary to this, we may say that philosophy's objective in its first, analytic phase includes attaining a critically reflective understanding of all that

we necessarily presuppose and are to do not only in thinking, saying, and doing the many different kinds of things that we ordinarily think, say, and do in understanding ourselves and leading our lives, but also in simply existing and acting as human beings at all.

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