I remain convinced that the proper use of the term "theoretical" is governed by the distinction between "theory" and "praxis," and so by the contrast with "practical." Thus it is properly used to refer to inquiries on the secondary level of living understandingly, i.e., critical reflection and proper theory, as comprising critical interpretation as well as critical validation.

This means, however, that "theoretical" is *not* the right word to use to refer to inquiries concerning the structure of things in themselves as distinct from inquiries concerning the meaning of things for us. But what the right word is for this purpose is not all that obvious.

I once thought that "contemplative" might be a good choice, understanding that its use for this purpose would be governed by the distinction between "action" and "contemplation," and so by the contrast with "active." Thus, while religious and technical inquiries, both being concerned, in their different ways, with the meaning of things for us, could be said to be "active," metaphysical and scientific inquiries could be distinguished as "contemplative," because they are both concerned, in different ways, with the structure of things in themselves.

But I have become less certain about this the more I have thought about it. Aside from the fact that I have myself sometimes used "contemplative" in the sense of "reflective," and so as quasi-synonymous with "theoretical," "active" is obviously close to "praxis" (not to mention "self-understanding"!), and so is quasi-synonymous with "practical."

So I have more and more wondered whether "intellectual" might not be a better choice, understanding that its use for this purpose would be governed by the distinction between "existence" and "intellect," and so by the contrast with "existential." Thus, while inquiries about the meaning of things for us would be properly said to be, in a broad sense, "existential," inquiries about the structure of things in themselves would be properly distinguished as "intellectual."

5 June 1999; rev. 23 March 2001