

Self-understanding, Metaphysics, and Morals

If an actual self-understanding is authentic only if certain metaphysical beliefs are true, the truth of these metaphysical beliefs in no way implies any actual self-understanding. Their truth implies only that a certain self-understanding is possible and that it alone is an authentic self-understanding.

It is one thing to believe certain true metaphysical beliefs, and thereby to attest implicitly that a certain self-understanding is both possible and alone authentic; but it is something else again to actualize this possibility by actually understanding oneself accordingly. To do the first is to believe what faith implicitly believes, with or without having such faith; to do the second is to have the faith that implicitly believes such true metaphysical beliefs.

Similarly, if an actual self-understanding is authentic only if certain moral actions are just, the justice of these moral actions in no way implies any actual self-understanding. Their justice implies only that a certain self-understanding is possible and that it alone is an authentic self-understanding.

But, again, it is one thing to perform certain just moral actions, and thereby to attest implicitly that a certain self-understanding is both possible and alone authentic; but it is something else again to actualize the possibility of such self-understanding by actually understanding oneself accordingly. To do the first is to do what faith implicitly does, with or without having such faith; to do the second is to have the faith that implicitly performs such just moral actions.

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