

HARP 51. #1
opening lect to Phil 9.; 1897

Box 71, #1

Opening lecture of a
course in Metaphysics

Philosophy IX. 1897-8.

Gentlemen:-

I begin herewith a
course of lectures on Metaphysics. In our
preliminary meeting we outlined for our-
selves the purely practical aspect of the
undertaking, - the text-books to be used,
the sort of work expected of the individual
student. Upon this occasion we begin
the proper task of our course.

Metaphysics forms a branch
of Philosophy. I may presuppose a certain
general acquaintance, on the part of

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tell of you, with the nature of philosophy
study. But a brief summary of what is meant by philosophy is
the first part of the course of your task.
~~Philosophy~~ Philosophy is an effort to get a

reasoned solution of the ultimate problem
of human life. ^{We all know human} ~~life~~ ^{our life} is full of problems.

Some of these ^{problems} are relatively superficial.

They arise one day, to be forgotten by
the next day. How shall I find my way

home? asks the wanderer, ^{during} ~~on~~ a walk, ~~on~~
a bicycle trip, or ~~on~~ any other excursion.

The ^{question is usually a little} ~~question~~ ^{of} ~~returns~~, but need not be
very lasting. A ^{certain amount of} ~~little~~ ^{care} solves it,

then the affair is over. Such problems
belong to the passing hour. They are ^{therefore}
fundamental. What is the mean

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of this bit of news, ^{again} ~~also~~ the reader
of the daily paper. The exciting story
of the ^{daily} ~~latest~~ mystery, - the dark tale of a
murder, the report of some political intrigue
- such a matter ~~merges~~ ^{merges} ~~as~~ ^{as a problem}
attracts attention for a time, becomes the
topic of a nine days wonder; and then,
whether solved or unsolved, the problem
thus presented ^{from notice} ~~passes~~, and is forgotten.

Who inquires any longer into many
newspaper mysteries ^{which may have} ~~passed~~ ^{seemed}
important during the ^{early part of the} ~~last~~ Presidential
year, or in the midst of the last dull
season, when the news-gatherers, in defiance

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Other matters, confused their readers
with difficulty and created ^{manifest} ~~detours~~ ^{with disapproves, partials, and the like}
~~but~~ domestic griefs. Such problems, then,
may seem at the moment trivial or tragic,
^{unimportant or intensely engaging} ~~unimportant or intensely engaging~~; they may be solved,
or may remain uncompromised. But
they show that they are in truth superficial
problems by the very fact that they are
soon forgotten. We turn from them to other problems.
As soon as they have had their day, they are ^{as we say} ~~as we say~~
^{each actually} ~~each actually~~ much ^{curiously the next place} ~~curiously the next place~~ ^{for more} ~~for more~~ the permanent common problems that con-
cern the destiny of nations, the social
welfare of masses of men, the course
of history. What is to be the future of

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the British Empire, or of popular government in our own country, or of ^{principal} ~~the~~ ^{the} Asiatic nations? Is Russia the ^{great} ~~great~~ power of the future? Is the ~~future~~ coming form of government destined to be Socialistic?

These are problems not of today or of tomorrow but of centuries. They are problems whose human and practical importance, during certain very long periods of ~~the future~~ ^{the future} times that are now before us, cannot easily be overestimated. But a ^{glance} ~~glance~~

~~they~~ ^{in any sense} are not ultimate problems. ^{For a} ~~A~~ glance at history shows us how all things human pass away, and how the most tre-

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menchons^{of} political and social issues
viewed merely in their external and historical aspect,
belong to some one time and region, and
are of small moment after a long
enough series of ~~centuries~~ ^{centuries} has passed.
Humanity lives through them, and on through them.
Beneath the ruins of Assyrian cities

the modern archaeologists dig out for us
the remains of still earlier cities. There
was a king, they tell us, one Sargon, who
ruled in the valley of the Euphrates and
of the Tigris about 3800 B.C. In his day,
and in those regions, there was, as
the ~~present~~ ^{present} discoveries/remnants already prove, a
high civilization existent. ~~But~~ ^{Not} ~~any~~ ^{any} ~~less~~ ^{less} then
must have had
its social, its religious, its national problems.

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life and fortunes of any nation or group
of nations. Some natural sciences, such
for instance as geology, are largely con-
cerned with past events, ^{namely with the events} ~~and the~~
~~that~~ constitute the history of the earth's crust.

But in every natural science, precisely
in so far as it is a science, the central
interest lies in ^{discovering} ~~discovering~~ laws, ^{and laws that are} ~~as~~ permanent
as possible. ^{and the} ~~the~~ problem: What ^{are} the
permanent laws, ^{which} ~~that~~ get expressed
in nature's processes? ^{therefore} ~~is~~ not a problem
^{which that} ~~that~~ appears to belong to any one

moment, or day, or age. In so far
as, with any plausibility, we solve

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Such a problem, we seem to ourselves
to be approaching very fundamental
truth. For there could be no time when
any interest in the permanent laws of
nature could be said to become out of date,
or when the problem as to what such
laws are could be properly said to lapse,
unless precisely in so far as it had been
solved. ~~Even~~ ^{And even} when solved, such a problem
would ^{still} retain its permanent interest as
something which had to be taught afresh
to each new generation of men. ^{And even} ~~the~~ ^{the definition}
of the problem itself secure, then, its lasting significance.
Yet these problems of physical
science, fundamental as, relatively

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speaking, they appear to be, are not yet the most fundamental of human problems. And they are not the most fundamental ~~because~~ for ~~the~~ reasons ~~the~~ ^{we can only write introductions to the criteria of the fundamental character of} ~~for the first time~~ ^{anyone of these problems always} ~~presupposes and implies~~ ^{still deeper questions} ~~which~~ ^{when taken together, these problems must lead, as science grows, to constantly new problems of generalization, and of a coordination of the results of science, and these} ~~resulting problems of generalization~~ ^{at once go beyond the more special problems} ~~and concern~~ ^{still more significant and central issues.}

I repeat ~~that~~ (1) That the problems of natural science presuppose and imply certain still deeper questions. This is

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true because every scientific induction rests upon certain presupposed principles of Logic, of the theory of Knowledge, and of the ~~ontology~~ ^{metaphysical theory} of Reality. These presuppositions no ^{special} science, in its own researches, makes a topic of inquiry. Yet every such presupposition involves problems that lie deeper than any special problem of natural science. We shall soon have occasion to consider this matter more in detail, and I need not here further develop the thought. Our whole metaphysical inquiry will show how profound are the problems that underlie every

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special problem of natural science, without themselves receiving direct treatment within the limits of any such science. A single illustration may serve to remind us of the matters to which reference is here made. When a man learns about the law of gravitation, every study of the law presupposes a certain knowledge of what is meant by space, by matter, by motion, by time, ^{and} by quantity in general. For the law of gravitation ~~concerns~~ ^{involves} a certain assertion about ~~the nature of~~ ^{that} measurable movements, ^{that} occur ~~in~~ ^{at} time, or that tend to occur. These

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movements involve masses of matter, and take place in space. In order to understand fully all that the law implies, one would have to answer all these deeper problems: What is time? What is space? What is matter, motion, &c., &c.? And these questions have no special science answers. These problems then are implied by the assertion of the individual law, and ^{they} lie deeper than the problem which the law ^{itself} answers.

But I have said (2), that the problems of special science not only imply, when they are taken singly, problems ~~which~~ ^{which} lie deeper than themselves, ~~but also~~

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lead, when taken together, to wider problems of generalization, and to a circulation of the results of science. I have said that the resulting problems of generalized or unified science at once go beyond the more special problems, and concern still more significant and central issues. It is easy to illustrate this aspect of the study of science, and to show that it involves problems deeper than those of any special science.

There is a series of modern discussions familiar to all readers of general theories regarding life and the universe. I refer to the discussions that centre about the ^{term} ~~word~~ Evolution. A great number of

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more special
scientific generalizations have gradually
grouped themselves into ~~that~~ ^{very far reaching} the doctrine
that the ^{whole} natural world, as we at present
know it, is the outcome of a ^{continuous} ~~very extended~~
evolutionary process, whereby purely ~~material~~
^{physical agencies}
~~have~~ ^{have} wrought that, as a result,
the varied and significant features of our
present world of life, humanity, and
worth have been produced, without a
break, from a world where once none of
this present life and worth existed, but where
its place was occupied by what we call in-
organic matter. Now the problem, how all

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this evolutionary unity of nature, how all
this growing of the higher from the lower,
how all this derivation of life, of humanity,
and of worth, from the apparently lifeless,
the apparently inhuman, the apparently
insignificant, - ~~the whole of it~~ how
all this ^{I say} can have taken place, and how
it is to be understood, ^{this} is a problem at once
far more extensive and far deeper than
any ~~particular~~ ^{question which} special sciences
to answer.

So far, I have tried to illustrate
in what way ^(for our present purpose) some problems ^{may} be regarded as deeper
than others, and in doing so I have tried

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to lead your attention from the problems of the passing moment, viewed merely as transient problems, to problems that are out and out problems of philosophy proper.

To sum up: A problem that editorially has only a transient interest, is not so deep as is a problem that has ^{a decidedly more permanent} ~~transient~~ interest. If problems can be found whose rational interest is not a matter of one moment or of another, of today or of yesterday, but of all time, such bid fair, by virtue of their very timelessness of the matters concerned to be deeper than others. Yet this is not the only criterion in terms of which

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the relatively fundamental character of a problem is to be estimated. Another, and still more valuable criterion is this: When the solution of a ^{given} problem logically presupposes conceptions and doctrines whose validity is assumed in this solution, then the ~~real~~ question as to the meaning and truth of these presupposed conceptions and doctrines lies deeper than the first problem itself, and constitutes a still more fundamental issue. Thus the physical

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problem which is solved by the theory of gravitation is not so fundamental as ^{are} the problems about the nature of space, of time, of matter. ~~After~~ For the theory of gravitation logically presupposes the conceptions of precisely these objects of thought. Finally, it ~~disappears~~ that more universal problems, such as those about Evolution, are more fundamental than the special problems of this or that branch of science. So return now to the general definition of Philosophy. Philosophy is an effort to get a reasoned solution of the most fundamental, that is, of the ultimate problems of human life. And Metaphysics is a branch of Philosophy.

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We have next to define what branch of Philosophy has been thus named. The problems of human life, whatever their grade of depth, are of two familiar classes: they are either theoretical problems or practical problems. They are questions about what can be known, or they are questions about what ought to be done. Accordingly, Philosophy is usually divided into Theoretical and Practical Philosophy. Practical Philosophy, or Ethics, is concerned with the ultimate problems as to conduct, or in other words with the ultimate question as to what ought to be done, and as to the nature

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(of Good and Evil, of Right and Wrong,
of the concepts of ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~Right~~ ^{Right} and ~~Duty~~ ^{Duty}..

Theoretical Philosophy is concerned with
the ultimate problems as to ~~the~~ ^{what can}
be known. Now Metaphysics is a
branch, and in fact the principal branch,
of theoretical philosophy. And the ^{business} ~~business~~
of Metaphysics is the discussion of the
ultimate questions as to what the
Real World is.

To state the matter more technically,
Metaphysics is that doctrine which
undertakes to answer, as well as
may be, two ~~central~~ ^{central} questions:—
(1) What is meant by the term

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Reality, or by the adjective Real, as applied to the whole world, or to any being in the world? (2) What ~~can~~ be known about the true nature of the world, ~~and~~ of the beings in the world - in other words what can be known about the objects to which we apply the term Reality, ~~and~~ the adjective Real?

Introductions to a doctrine are tedious, and I dislike to spend any ^{very} long time in explaining to you, in ~~any~~ ^a merely preliminary fashion, the reasons why a ~~general~~ doctrine ^{dealing with} ~~about~~ reality ^{in general} is a desirable undertaking. But

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some preparations for our later work are still necessary. Let me then next try to show you a little more clearly the ~~scope of the enquiry~~ ^{the foregoing definition} ~~assigned to it~~. What is Reality? With this question, according to our definition, the work of metaphysical discussion begins. And the question, in its first form, concerns, not ~~the problems~~ ^{yet directly the} problems as to the nature of the universe, but the meaning of a very familiar term, of use in daily life. When ~~we~~ ^{can we} call the things met with in our dreams unreal. When our hopes are defeated, we say that there was something unreal about the objects or the bases of these hopes. On the other hand, we call the solid earth beneath our feet real. And we say that our friends, in whom we thoroughly trust, are

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real friends. In a similar way, when one, recalling or narrating his former experience, remembers past events, or seems to himself to remember them, the question may arise as to whether what he reports really was as he reports it, or whether his apparent memories stand for real past events. Men have believed, in the course of ages, in all manner of supernatural beings, - ghosts, witches, angels, ~~gods~~ ^{demons}, fairies, gods. Were such beings, all or any of them, real beings, or were they delusions, unrealities? Geometers define certain ideal figures, such as circles, ellipses, parabolas. As defined, these ideal figures have certain absolutely exact characters.

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But, technically regarded, the manufacture of physical objects that precisely conform to these mathematical ideals proves to be impossible. The question arises: Are the circles, or other curves of the geometer, realities ^(anywhere in the universe) at all, or are they mere mathematical ideals?

These illustrations begin to make clear that the adjective real, the noun reality, and the ~~adj~~ corresponding negative words unreal, and unreality, have meanings ^{which} ~~are~~ ^{are} ^{indeed pretty} ^{of} ^{fundamental} importance, and ~~which~~ ^{which} are also ^{complex and} somewhat obscure. Just what have past

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events, and present perceptions, permanent physical things, and passing states of our own minds, just what, I say, have all these in common that makes us call them real? What again is the sort of reproach, as it were, obviously conveyed in speaking of dreams, and false shows of friendship, as unreal?

What is it to be unreal? How can we men recognize the unreality of things? Or, to pass to another case, how is

the ~~other~~ ^{used} real related to that other used ideal which we just used in referring to the mathematical figures.

If one says that the false friendship show of friendship were unreal, one

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seems to convey ~~an~~ a sense, as I just
said, of reproach, or of contempt. The unreal
is, as such, vain, unimportant, to be
neglected. ~~These~~ ^{The unreal} terrors of our dreams
are to be despised when we are awake.
The unreal ^{displays of friendship} ~~shows~~ of the false friends, ^{once detected}, are
to be ^{henceforth} ~~completely~~ ^{ignored}. On the other hand,
however, the objects called ideal, whether in
the realm of mathematics, of morals, or of
art, have a different and curious relation
to the objects called real and unreal.
The term ideal is in fact a very puzzling
and important one, in all its various
meanings; and its relation to the

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greedy needthrobbers, disappointments,
partings, funerals, ~~and~~ crimes. In real
life nobody does in mankind what he
wishes to do ^{when he is young.} ~~and~~ hunger and ^(appears to) ~~thirst~~
rule the ^{real human} world. The struggle for existence
is everywhere. That is one view. But
over against all this realm of passion
and of distress one sees, in mind, another
realm, - a realm of ideals. Love can be
ideal; it need not be mere brute passion.
There might be devotion, charity, loyalty,
brotherhood. These are ideals of what is
possible. ~~But is a life of~~ But is a life of
~~devotion~~ such virtues ever real?

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Yes, ^{in a measure; for} there are good people. The dark world of so-called real life, in all its squabbling and business, is lit up with some glimpses of what conforms to ideals. But then is this partial realization of the ideal call? No, there are moments which lead us to look upon the world of human life otherwise. In such moments we say that it is the ordinary everyday life which is more or less the illusion, and it is the ideal side of life which is the only real aspect. I need hardly dwell upon the motives that lead to such a transformation. I am not yet

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teaching doctrine, but am only illustrating views and problems. Every man in youth, if not later, knows some happy moments when he says: "The ideal is the only true reality; the rest is but froth and fragment." A moment of enthusiasm comes, as it came to the young men of the days of the civil war. At such times one says: "What is our so-called real life, that we should think so much of its problems, of its pangs, and of its hopes? ~~Oh~~ There is another life, - the life of devotion to a great cause. That life alone forces the deepest realities. Duty is such a reality.

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~~the sermons~~ country, loyalty to ^{one's} trust, father and
mother and the love of one's woman, - these
are the ~~early~~ realities in the light of which
one can try to live. And if one so lives,
what matters ~~that which~~ ^{it just what} happens. From
day to day, or who lives or dies." Such
a mood, I say, is possible, whatever its
justification. It is a mood which once for
all identifies the real with that which has
been called the ideal. It seeks a city out
of sight, cares little for the fortunes of
the ~~day~~ moment, and calls that most
real which ~~the every day~~ ^{the every day} ~~concerns~~
~~concerns~~ ^{concerns} last verifies.

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Whatever one may think of such views, nobody can doubt that they have played a great part in human history. Believing in ideals as being somewhat more real than the visible facts are, has been a prime factor in human civilization. The Roman Empire was once a visible reality. The barbarians overthrew what had been its outward show of power; but the Roman Empire still lives on, in various changed forms, because it was an ideal, so fixed in the minds even of the very barbarians themselves, that they could not let it die. This is only one instance where a faith in ideals has proved

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more potent than the most elemental
passions of man in determining the
course of history. Other instances there
are in great numbers.

yet it is not fair to this
tendency to treat the ^{so-called} ideal as real

if we thus ~~omit~~ ^{mention only} the cases
where romantic or moral devotion

treats the ideal as real. In a wholly
different ~~world~~ ^{realm} a similar problem

meets us. Every student of mathematics

will have felt the force of the problem

of which I spoke a few moments ago,
namely the problem whether the

constructions of geometrical science
are themselves realities, or are

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what one usually means by the phrase ~~words~~ mere ideals. Is there such a thing as a real circle? In the ~~everyday~~ ^{physical} sense of the word real, we can be, for well known reasons, fairly certain that we are unacquainted with any ^{real} material bodies whose sections or surfaces present ~~to~~ us perfectly circular forms. If there were any such physical bodies, we can well say that it would be impossible for us, with any instruments at our disposal, to assure ourselves of their perfectly circular character. So far does the mathematical ideal transcend our physical experience. On the other

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And, we certainly very well know
what a circle is. That remarkable
quantity π , the ratio of circumference
and diameter, has a value that
has been computed to many hundreds
of decimal places, far far beyond the
reach of the most careful possible physical
verification, even were a perfect physical
circle ^{of very great dimensions} preserved to us ^{for study} and even were
^{the present} powers of physical measurement
increased ~~inordinately~~ ^{accurate} a billion fold.
And now does that quantity π stand
for any fact that is real outside of
the minds of geometers. If it does, then
there is some peculiar sense in.

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which certain ideal constructions of the geometer possess a reality which no physical experience can verify. ~~But if this is not so,~~ But if this is not so, if the geometer's ideals are merely ideals, then just what is their relation to reality. For there can be no doubt that our success and assurance in applying geometry to physics indicates some deep relation between the constructions of mathematical science, and the realities called physical.

I have thus endeavored to illustrate ~~something~~ something of the nature of those problems which can occur concerning the meaning of

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such familiar words as real, unreal,
and ideal. Well, ^(problems like these are elementary) ~~these are~~ problems
of the doctrine called Metaphysics. You
see, I ~~suppose~~ ^{presume}, that the problems are some-
what familiar. I may venture to hope
that you already also see that these problems
are not only familiar, but fundamental,
and important.

Now the purpose of Metaphysics
is, first, to undertake to deal with
the problem as to the meanings of
the ~~words~~ ^{words} real, reality, ideal, unreal,
and related words. Such related
words are the terms being, existence,
actuality, and other synonyms

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of the term reality, synonyms
to which, in certain cases, ~~some~~ ^{contrasting special} ~~meanings~~ ^{meanings} have been
given. The relation of these words to
such terms as truth and falsehood will
also belong to our task. In another
direction such adjectives as possible,
necessary, and the like, will give us
much ground for inquiry. What do we
mean by calling a given ~~thing~~ object
not real, but possible, or as we sometimes
say, actually possible? What is a
possibility? Is a possibility a reality, or not?
Such, and numerous other problems of
the meaning of familiar terms, ^{of this sort} will

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come to our notice. It will be our purpose to treat these problems in a thorough going fashion, not as merely verbal problems, but as inquiries ~~about~~^{into} fundamental matters. For all such terms are mere efforts to fix ideas of the profoundest moment for our whole view of our relations to the world.