

What is the difference, if any, between the metaphysical *presuppositions* of Christian faith in God and its metaphysical *implications*?

One way of explaining this difference is to recall the distinction between philosophy as formal analysis, on the one hand, and as critically reflective self-understanding (= integral secular wisdom), on the other.

Christian faith in God necessarily *presupposes* the existential question about the meaning of ultimate reality for us, and therewith the threefold reality of self, others, and the whole. Being a certain answer to the existential question, however, Christian faith in God necessarily *implies* a particular understanding of this threefold reality.

The difficulty with this explanation, however, is that Christian faith in God does not simply *imply* a particular understanding of the threefold reality of self, others, and the whole, but already *presupposes* such an understanding, insofar as it presupposes not only the existential question and the threefold reality therewith, but also the particular understanding of this threefold reality already expressed or implied by Judaism.

To meet this difficulty, it would seem necessary to distinguish not only between presuppositions and implications, but also between purely formal presuppositions and material ones—both of these being distinguishable from what are properly called "assumptions," even as implications can and should be distinguished from "consequences."

10 March 1997