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????????? ??????? ? ?????? (095) 466-3872 (?????  
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ackerman@glasnet.ru (? ????????? "??? ?-?? ???????").

## Platonic Ontology and Pragmatic Method

William S. Hatcher

Classical philosophy generally began with metaphysics (the question of what exists) and then proceeded to construct an epistemology appropriate to the particular ontology (how can we gain knowledge of what exists).

Beginning with Descartes, modern scientific philosophy has suggested a reverse procedure: we can first define a method and then examine ontological questions in the light of that method (eg. such principles as Occam's Razor). But this approach was applied dogmatically by positivist philosophers in an attempt to eliminate metaphysics altogether.

The very failure of positivism, however, has in itself shed light on the relevance of metaphysics for modern science and philosophy: we now know for certain that there can be no coherent description of reality without reference to unobservable, abstract, objectively-existing entities.

We propose a systematic program of metaphysics in which all metaphysical entities are theory-completing generalizations of observables. So, we assume that such non-physical entities as the soul or the spirit of individual humans exist, or that species essences exist in biology. But what can be reasonably deduced about such entities?

We propose a logical-axiomatic approach, using the modern logic of relations, which concentrates more on such questions as "how do these entities relate to each other", rather than the classical "what is the intrinsic nature of these entities?" We have already obtained some encouraging results with this approach, but would like to go further in developing a complete metaphysical

system.

To this end, I am seeking a collaborator interested in such questions and familiar with such methods (i.e. relational logic).

William S. Hatcher

May 2, 1999

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Contact telephone: 466-3876 (Moscow, N. Ackerman)

E-mail: William Hatcher [hatcher@mat.ulaval.ca](mailto:hatcher@mat.ulaval.ca) or

[ackerman@glasnet.ru](mailto:ackerman@glasnet.ru) (for forwarding to Dr. Hatcher)

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