Preface

The thesis undertakes to critically examine the question of the 'possibility of metaphysics' and its legitimacy in philosophical enquiry as a fundamental issue of philosophy. The possibility of metaphysics is essentially an enquiry into, whether or not metaphysics is possible as a science or a body of knowledge. Metaphysics is in essence a reflective enquiry into the 'being-as-such' as it deals with the nature of reality-as-such or the world as a whole or the fundamental structure of reality in its most comprehensive and pervasive features, or the basic conceptual structure and conditions of human thinking, i.e., of knowledge and language and their 'limits'. In such pursuit, metaphysics enjoys a status as the 'queen of all sciences' reigning over the special sciences or co-existing with the sciences as dealing with the selfsame world-order in its most general and pervasive features as in Aristotle's conception of 'first philosophy'. In this regard, it involves speculation and (universal) explanation as it attempts to arrive at a rational and universal explanation of the nature of reality or being-as-such, or it involves description of the fundamental, invariable and inevitable basic presuppositions and categories that make up the central core of our conceptual structure, or the necessary conditions and limits of language or scientific knowledge. But the efficacy of such branch of philosophical enquiry has been subject to question and trial since the days of Hume and Kant; even some strains of such discomfort in doing speculative metaphysics can be traced back to Socrates dialectic and asking for meaning which grew into full explosion with the movement of the logical positivists, Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophers of Oxford and Cambridge in the twentieth century 'age of analysis'.
The thesis makes an effort to bring out a critical survey of the standpoints of both the proponents and opponents of metaphysics in a neutral and dispassionate manner with a view to unravelling the truth and, thereby, bringing into the open, whether or not the principal criticisms of metaphysics have successfully discarded metaphysics altogether in its root and branch?, i.e., to say, in all the forms and senses of the expression 'metaphysics' as it came to philosophical use by the different thinkers. The enquiry discloses that there is no one unique sense or form of metaphysics as there is no one thing or form which is called 'metaphysical argument' or 'system' or pursuit. Metaphysics is more hydra-headed and much more various than its critics have recognised. The advocates as well as the critics have used the expression 'metaphysics' in different senses and that there is no unanimity among members of either camps as to a single sense of metaphysics. This has opened, primarily, an arena of confusion and disputes in the field of philosophy centring round 'metaphysics' and its use. In Part-I, an exclusive survey has been undertaken in chapters I, II and III as regards the different senses and forms of metaphysics, before we consider the criticisms of metaphysics in Part-II in three chapters.

Metaphysics is understood to mean to deal with 'trans-empirical, transcendental reality and, as such, it is that which transcends our means of theoretic representation or possible experience. The ground of rejecting metaphysics is purely on empirical or analytic and linguistic conditions of knowledge or meaningful language. Kant and early Wittgenstein seem to delineate a logical distinction between 'metaphysical' and 'metaphysics' rejecting the latter as violating the logic of language or conditions of scientific judgement. The logical positivists taking their line of argument on considerations similar to that of David Hume, rejected metaphysics being
speculative, 'noncognitive' and pseudo letting a space to it as exhibiting a mere "poetic or emotional value" but devoid of cognitive meaning.

The later Wittgenstein by his therapeutic method viewed metaphysics as an instance of intellectual illness, and full of profound confusions and paradoxes which, to him, was a product of misuse and misunderstanding of ordinary language. Insisting on his conception of language-games together with family resemblance and by resorting to the detailed descriptions of facts and conditions of everyday language, Wittgenstein showed that metaphysical use of expressions involves a transcendental use of all expressions of ordinary language outside their legitimate spheres which is the result of 'our craving for unity', 'looking for essence' and paradigmatic use of words which turned out to be a myth. So a detailed description of facts of language in the network of language-games - how does language actually works, can successfully dissolve all metaphysical puzzlement and show "the fly the way out of the fly bottle".

A review of all these boils down to mean that metaphysics as a speculative branch of knowledge is rejected and is substituted by description of the actual structure of thinking. This Strawsonian position, inherent in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, makes up the conclusion that the critical rejection of speculative metaphysics, although has rejected metaphysical speculation about transcendent reality, paves the way for a form of metaphysics called 'descriptive metaphysics' which underlies the basic core of language and human thinking. In Strawson's own words, such an alternative metaphysics aims at "laying bare" the basic presuppositions - the fundamental structure of human thinking.
The outcome of our critical enquiry into the possibility of metaphysics thus reveals that the major criticisms of metaphysics so far advanced are all relevant to the speculative metaphysics only, not to all forms of metaphysics. The very act of critical rejection of speculative metaphysics leaves us with the possibility of metaphysic of experience or language, a metaphysics of limiting concepts or presuppositional metaphysics and, finally, descriptive metaphysics. Later Wittgenstein having implicitly recognised this possibility contended that philosophy cannot modify or revise anything, it can only limit itself to describing the familiar facts of language and to necessary conditions of its meaningful usage. It leaves everything as it is. P.F. Strawson worked upon this pregnant hint of Wittgenstein and went ahead to erect the edifice of what is known as descriptive metaphysics in contemporary parlance. In the thesis I have tried to understand the history both of metaphysics and its critique and, against the backdrop of the Wittgensteinian analysis, follow it up to "its inevitable form" - or that what I think of it.

The thesis claims no absolute novelty or originality, but only contents itself with bringing into the open the facts as they are, and to unfold the truth that no critical rejection of metaphysics can eliminate metaphysics without resuscitating some form of metaphysics. The old form of speculation and explanation involved in metaphysics may be stone-dead, but the spirit of the metaphysical continues to be there.

I express my sincere gratitude to my teacher and supervisor, Professor Prafulla Kumar Mohapatra, Seniormost Professor in the P.G. Department of Philosophy, Utkal University, for guidance and encouragement which has shaped and illuminated my understanding of the subject dealt with. But
above all, I am deeply indebted to my illustrious father, Late Professor Shyama Kumar Chattopadhyaya who inspired me to study philosophy and encouraged me to take up the present topic as my doctoral work.

In the preparation of this thesis, I thank Dr S.C. Panigrahi, Reader in the P.G. Department of Philosophy of Utkal University for his very friendly and personal encouragement. My wife, Mrs Mukuta Chattopadhyaya deserves my gratitude for her help and encouragement.

Lastly, I am grateful to Mr Niranjan Jena for bringing the manuscript to its present form.

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Siva Prokash Chattopadhyaya 21/7/2001