

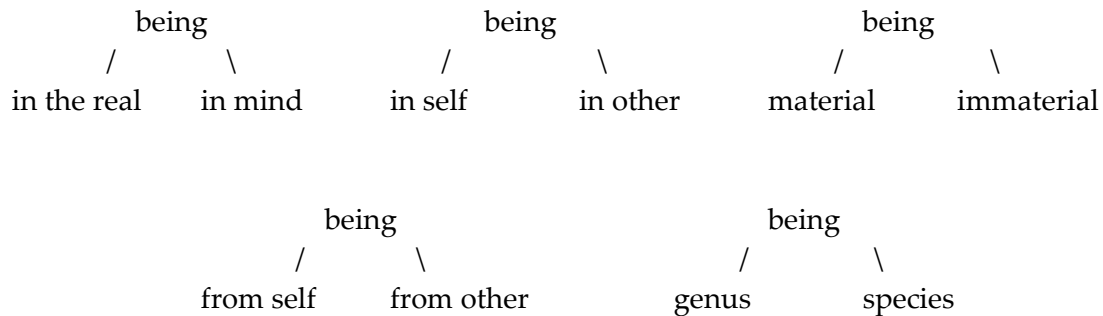
BEING IS TRANSCENDENT

The habit of our minds is to categorise, to divide things into genus and species. For instance, *animal* is a genus and is properly to be divided into 'brute' and 'rational'. But we may divide it, too, into the huge number of types in which the reality 'animal' appears : dog, cat, cow, horse, rabbit, mouse and chicken—to name but the familiar ones. Similarly, plants in their various categories may be divided into innumerable species.

The same goes with mental beings. We divide into genera and species. In geometry we may take 'plane figure' as a genus in which there are many species, triangle, rectangle, all the polygons with different numbers of equal sides, circle etc. We can sub-categorise the humble triangle according as it is equilateral, isosceles or right-angled.

When we come to address the reality that befalls all such things, whether in the real or in our minds, namely, existence (or be), genus and species do not apply. Why ? Because being transcends all genera and all species. Think about it. Every genus is a certain sort of being. So is every species. Existence, or be, is the highest reality that can befall any thing. So being transcends genus. We say it is transcendent. It does not have species. It has *modes*, manners in which it finds exercise.

Being may be divided in various ways : for instance—



The word 'being' (be ; existence) is analogical. It signifies (in what Logic calls its *inferiors*, those about which it is said) a character which is somewise same and somewise unsame, and more unsame than same. Take, for instance, the fourth of the categories listed above. All created beings whatsoever fall under the head *being from other*. Only one, Almighty God, is *being from self*, since He alone exists by His very essence. In all things created we must distinguish—

[WHAT it is	its essence (<i>essentia</i>)
[&	
[
[THAT it is	its existence (<i>ens</i>).

But in God, the uncreated, WHAT He is, is THAT He is. There is no distinction.

Before we proceed further, it is important to recall St Thomas's teaching *res naturalis inter duos*

intellectus constituta—the natural thing is established between two intellects. What are the two intellects to which he refers ? The one intellect is that of the Divine Artificer, God. The other is the *created* intellect, our intellect, which regards the things God has made and finds in each of them fixed realities which accord with reason, or the angelic intellect.

The Transcendental Perfections

We discover that everything that exists (exercises the act of existence, or be) has four identifiable characteristics, identifiable that is by our intellect, which reflect aspects of the Divine Artificer. Every existing thing is—

One
Something
True, &
Good

One

Ambrose, for instance, is one. If you divide him in two you will no longer have Ambrose. This is not to deny that he may suffer some injury which will leave him less than entire, but so long as it does not destroy his being, he remains *one*. This one-ness which is to be found in all the things turns on the relation of *denial of division* in our intellects.

The first distinction in any corporeal thing is, as we have discovered, into its substantial form (*substance*) and the chief of the accidents that inhere in the substance, *quantity* and *quality*. Observe that the one-ness of the thing manifests itself in each of these first three. So, one-ness in—

substance	is	same
quantity	is	equal
quality	is	similar.

Some of you may be familiar with Walt Disney's *Fantasia* in which the story of the Sorcerer's Apprentice is set to the music of Paul Dukas. The apprentice invests (by magic!) a broom with the ability to carry water in buckets. Problems begin when he cannot reverse the spell and sets about destroying the broom with an axe. To his horror, the broom divides into two water carrying brooms. The more he attacks these with the axe, the more they divide and sub-divide. The humour lies in the incongruity of depicting material beings, incapable of division, as dividing and multiplying !



Something

Similarly, Ambrose is *not nothing*. He is something. In this assertion our intellects affirm in respect of Ambrose his negation of non-being. He is not to be ignored : he is something !

True

Just by being an existing substance Ambrose is *truly* a being, identical with himself. With our intellect we acknowledge he is truly existing. His reality informs our knowledge. If it did not, we could not affirm, in speech, his existence (Logical truth is the identity of what is asserted with what is). All truth telling depends on the truth of the thing, for it involves conformity (of speech) with the thing.

When I was a little boy at school in a suburb of Adelaide, Tranmere, we children would find in the dust of the playground tiny specks of what seemed to us to be gold. It was *felspar*, 'fool's gold' ; not true gold at all. A *true* friend is one who does for you what you would want done for yourself, who considers you another self. A false friend, on the other hand, only appears to serve you with friendship. Stage settings are nothing but representations, for art's sake, of reality. They are not true. To deceive an enemy, an army will often set up copies of real armaments to preserve from destruction its real, i.e., *true* armaments.

Truth in the thing derives from its nature which derives from the mind of God. All truth telling depends on the truth in the thing and, ultimately, therefore, upon He who created it, Who is Truth Itself

Art imitates nature. In artificial things, those made by human ingenuity, the thing made is true in so far as it conforms to the idea of the maker manifested in its plan and specifications.

Good

And Ambrose is *good*—we are not speaking here about his *moral* worth (good *simpliciter*) or whether he is good under some respect (*secundum quid*), as e.g., that he is a good soccer player, or a good reader. We are affirming that just because he exists he is good. All God's creatures manifest this aspect of God Who, since He is Goodness itself, cannot but leave some reflection of Himself in each of the things He creates.

In the goodness of a thing we affirm something in both our intellect and our will, being as appetible or desirable, for goodness is that which all things appetise, or desire.

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A final note : *Art Imitates Nature*. All fiction should imitate fact—the word *fiction* comes from the Latin verb 'to make'—so any fictitious character, though he, or she, may become evil in the course of the story, should begin by being good, since nothing created by the Divine Artificer or even by any human artificer begins as something evil.
