

2. The Analogy of Being.

a) The Thesis

The thesis is the intelligibility of being.

One may conceive being simply as what is, the opposite and contradictory to what is not.

Again, one may conceive being as that which of its nature excludes not being.

In the first case one takes the opposition between being and not being simply as a matter of fact.

In the second case one makes the opposition between being and not being a matter of principle: being of its nature is what excludes not being.

Now both the conceptions are legitimate, each in its way. But the fundamental importance of the second conception is this: if we are to use our intellects with regard to being, that is, with regard to anything at all, then we are bound to presuppose that being is intelligible, that it is not a matter of chance, of what simply happens, but, no less than intellect itself, subject to the laws of intelligibility. To subject being, then, to the laws of intelligibility, we must conceive being not as what merely happens not to be, but as what of its nature excludes not being.

The thesis, therefore, from which we begin our speculation is the intelligibility of being. And we express it thus:

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Being is what of its nature excludes not being.

b) The Antithesis.

The antithesis to the conception of being, given above in the thesis, is the whole of experience. There is no being we know by experience which satisfies the definition of intelligible being.

There is the being of the star, of the rose, of a kitten, of a boy. All of them are. All of them, so far from excluding not being, of their nature include it.

To be a star is not to be alive. But rose, kitten, and boy are alive. To be a star is not to be rose, kitten, or boy.

Again, to be any star is not to be any other.

Similarly, to be a rose is not to be sentient. Kitten and boy are sentient. To be a rose is to be neither kitten nor boy. Nor is it to be any other rose. And in the same way the kitten is not a boy, nor the boy a pure spirit, nor this kitten any other kitten, nor this boy any other boy.

Yet star, rose, kitten, boy, all are. But in each case of being we have considered, as in the case of the being of any other object of experience, being involves not being. To be this star is not to be any other star, and it could be another only if it ceased to be the one it is. Similarly for every other object we know immediately.

More generally, whenever being is a "being something," then of its nature it involves not being. It is the something, but it is not anything else. The something is a limit: it is up to that limit; beyond it it is not.

Thus so far from finding being to be what of its nature excludes not being, we find that any instance of "being something" involves not being.

c) The Synthesis.

We have now from the thesis that "being is what of its nature excludes not being."

We have from the antithesis that "being something of its nature includes or involves not being."

But if we work out the implications of the thesis, we will find it involves a set of properties which no one would think of verifying in the ~~the~~ world of experience. This will not merely explain why our definition of intelligible being failed when applied to objects we know immediately; it will lead to the determination of the kind of intelligibility that belongs to the being of these objects.

Let us now name the "being" of the thesis, Pure Being, and define: Pure Being is what of its nature excludes not being.

First it is to be noted that the definition is a double negation, telling us not what the nature of pure being is, but telling what that nature is opposed to, where what it is opposed to is not positive, but the negation, ~~of~~ "not being".

Second, it is plain that pure being is not being something. For pure being excludes not being, while being something includes it. Still this gives rise to a difficulty.

If we say that pure being "is not" beings something, then we negate being (the being of being something) to the subject, pure being. But the subject, pure being, is what excludes not being, admits no negative predication. Therefore, it should seem that our conception of pure being, of being as intelligible, is an utter impossibility. For pure being is found "to be not" just as being something "is not."

The answer is contained in our first remark. Pure being is defined by a double negation. It admits the ~~defin~~ negation of a negation. But to deny "being something" to pure being is to deny a negation: if pure being were a being something, then it would include not being as does any "being something." Pure being is not a "being something," not because pure being is not, but because the

the being something is not.

Third, pure being is not nothing. It is.

By this, we do not mean to shew that pure being exists. We simply mean that the conception of pure being is not identical with the conception of nothing. *[quod se in argumentum dicitur pure being existit quoniam non est]*

Fourth, since pure being is neither nothing nor a being something, it remains that it is simpliciter. It is not being this or being that, but the pure and unqualified plenitude of being.

Fifth, pure being is infinite. It excludes all not being, that is, it excludes all limitation of being. But what excludes all limitation is necessarily infinite.

Sixth, pure being is super-eminent.

By this we mean the pure being includes all the being of whatever is in so far as it is. To explain, we have said that "being something" involved not being; but it also involves some sort of being. Here we assert that the being of "being something" apart from its implication of not being is to be found in pure being.

The proof of the super-eminent of pure being is simply that it is infinite. Were it not super-eminent, it would not be infinite.

There is a further characteristic of super-eminent. It is that the super-eminent includes the being of the less, not as it is in the less, that is, with the implication of not being, but it a different way and, since it excludes the implication of not being, in a higher way.

Seventh, pure being is unique. Were there a second, it would either be the same as the first or different from it. Were it the same, it would not be a second. Were it different, it would have to have some determination differentiating it from the first, and then either the one or the other would not be pure being but some determination of being.

The necessity of differentiating determination is that difference has to have an intelligible ground. If two things are exactly the

same in absolutely every way, then they cannot be two; they are one.

Eighth, pure being is immutable. For if there was change in it, then ~~immediately~~ after the change it would be not pure being but a "being something." For change presupposes difference. But pure being cannot be a being something: for being something includes not being, while pure being excludes it.

Ninth, pure being is uncaused. For the infinite could be caused only by another infinite. We have shown there can be only one infinite being.

Tenth, pure being necessarily is. It is what excludes not being, and that of its nature. What of its nature excludes not being, is what of its nature cannot not be. What cannot not be, is what must be. What must be is necessarily.

Eleventh, pure being exists.

Beings exist. But their existence is unintelligible if there is no necessary being; for then they would all simply happen to be.

But the only necessary being is pure being. For necessary being is what must be. What must be, is what cannot not be. What cannot not be, is what of its nature excludes not being; that is, it is pure being.

Twelfth, pure being is unchanged whether it acts or does not act outside itself.

Pure being must be the cause of all "being something." For being something as we shall show cannot be the cause of its own being, yet there must be some cause.

On the other hand, pure being is immutable.

It remains that pure being is unchanged by activity outside itself. This recalls our second point above. There the ground of negative predication about pure being was the negation of being in the being something. Here the ground of positive predication about pure being is not a formal change in the pure being but a formal change in what terminates its activity. The pure being is a creator, not because it changes, but because something else changes in virtue

of its creative activity.

But that creative activity involves no change in the creator may still seem a stumbling-block. Consider then that change in the agent affects his activity, not positively but negatively. Activity does not follow from capacity to change, for that capacity is essentially passive. On the contrary, capacity to change is the limit to activity. For a man to move something, he has *inso facto* to move himself. But the more his action is guided by intelligence, the less the motion he produces in himself: the significance of all mechanical invention is that with less self-change man secures an equal or greater change in other things, not that man becomes less the agent, but that he becomes less limited in his activity.

Now if self-change is limitation to activity, it follows that the infinite can be active with no self-change at all. For the infinite is the unlimited.

of its creative activity.

How its creative activity involves no change in itself finds something of an analogy in its super-eminence. Creatures act in so far as they change, and the limit to their action is their capacity to change. Pure being is being without limit, super-eminently containing all being. As its being is without limit, so is its action