

# Being

## INTRODUCTION

THE words "is" and "(is) not" are probably the words most frequently used by anyone. They are unavoidable, by implication at least, in every statement. They have, in addition, a greater range of meaning than any other words.

Their manifold significance seems to be of a very special kind, for whatever is said *not to be* in one sense of being can always be said *to be* in another of its senses. Children and practiced liars know this. Playing on the meanings of being, or with "is" and "not," they move smoothly from fact to fiction, imagination to reality, or truth to falsehood.

Despite the obviousness and commonplaceness of the questions which arise with any consideration of the meanings of "is," the study of being is a highly technical inquiry which only philosophers have pursued at length. Berkeley gives one reason why they cannot avoid this task. "Nothing seems of more importance," he says, "towards erecting a firm system of sound and real knowledge . . . than to lay the beginning in a distinct explication of what is meant by *thing, reality, existence*; for in vain shall we dispute concerning the real existence of things, or pretend to any knowledge thereof, so long as we have not fixed the meaning of those words."

In the whole field of learning, philosophy is distinguished from other disciplines—from history, the sciences, and mathematics—by its concern with the problem of being. It alone asks about the nature of existence, the modes and properties of being, the difference between being and becoming, appearance and reality, the possible and the actual, being and nonbeing. Not all philosophers ask these questions; nor do all who ask such questions

approach or formulate them in the same way. Nevertheless, the attempt to answer them is a task peculiar to philosophy. Though it often leads to subtleties, it also keeps the philosopher in deepest touch with common sense and the speculative wonder of all men.

AS A TECHNICAL concept in philosophy, *being* has been called both the richest and the emptiest of all terms in the vocabulary of thought. Both remarks testify to the same fact, namely, that it is the highest abstraction, the most universal of predicates, and the most pervasive subject of discussion.

William James is in that long line of philosophers which began with the early Greeks when he points out that "in the strict and ultimate sense of the word 'existence,' everything which can be thought of at all exists as some *sort* of object, whether mythical object, individual thinker's object, or object in outer space and for intelligence at large." Even things which do not really exist have being insofar as they are objects of thought—things remembered which once existed, things conceivable which have the possibility of being, things imaginary which have being at least in the mind that thinks them. This leads to a paradox which the ancients delighted in pondering, that even nothing is something, even nonbeing has being, for before we can say "nonbeing is not" we must be able to say "nonbeing is." *Nothing* is at least an object of thought.

Central to 20th-century existentialism is the concern with nothing. "Nothing," writes Heidegger, "is neither an object nor anything that 'is' at all. Nothing occurs neither by itself nor 'apart from' what-is, as a sort of adjunct. Nothing is that which makes the revelation of

what-is as such possible for our human existence." Existential angst or dread, according to Heidegger, "reveals Nothing . . . but not as something that 'is'"; yet it "is only made manifest originally in dread." Heidegger goes on to quote Hegel's saying that "pure Being and pure Nothing are . . . one and the same," adding that if concern with being is all-embracing in metaphysics, then "the question of Nothing" also spans "the whole metaphysical field." In the century of existentialist thought, it is not surprising to find T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* moving in the realm of nothingness.

Any other word than "being" will tend to classify things. The application of any other name will divide the world into things of the sort denominated as distinct from everything else. "Chair," for example, divides the world into things which are chairs and all other objects; but "being" divides something or anything from nothing and, as we have seen, even applies to nothing.

"All other names," Aquinas writes, "are either less universal, or, if convertible with it, add something above it at least in idea; hence in a certain way they inform and determine it." The concepts which such words express have, therefore, a restricted universality. They apply to *all things of a certain kind*, but not to *all things*, things of every kind or type. With the exception of a few terms inseparably associated with 'being' (or, as Aquinas says, convertible with it), only being is common to all kinds of things. When every other trait peculiar to a thing is removed, its being remains—the fact that it *is* in some sense.

If we start with a particular of any sort, classifying it progressively according to the characteristics which it shares with more and more things, we come at last to being. According to this method of abstraction, which Hegel follows in his *Science of Logic*, 'being' is the emptiest of terms precisely because it is the most common. It signifies the very least that can be thought of anything. On this view, if all we are told of something is that it is—that it has being—we learn as little as possible about the thing. We have to be told that a thing is a material or a spiritual being, a real or an imaginary being, a living or a human being, in

order to apprehend a determinate nature. Abstracted from everything else, 'being' has only the positive meaning of excluding 'nonbeing.'

There is an opposite procedure by which the term *being* has the maximal rather than the minimal significance. Since whatever else a thing is, it is a being, its being lies at the very heart of its nature and underlies all its other properties. Being is indeterminate only in the sense that it takes on every sort of determination. Wherever being is found by thought, it is understood as a determined mode of being. To conceive being in this way, we do not remove every difference or determination, but on the contrary, embrace all, since all are differences or determinations of being.

Aquinas, for example, conceives "being taken simply as including all perfections of being"; and in the Judeo-Christian tradition, 'being' without qualification is taken as the most proper name for God. When Moses asked God His name, he received as answer: "I AM THAT I AM . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Used in this sense, 'being' becomes the richest of terms—the one which has the greatest amplitude of meaning.

BOTH WAYS OF thinking about being are relevant to the problem of the relations among the various meanings of 'being.' Both are also related to the problem of whether being is one or many—the problem first raised by the Eleatics, exhaustively explored in Plato's *Parmenides*, and recurrent in the thought of Plotinus, Spinoza, and Hegel.

The two problems are connected. If everything that exists only as a part of being as a whole, or if the unity of being requires everything to be the same in being, then whatever diversities there are do not multiply the meanings of *being*. Although he speaks of substance rather than of being, Spinoza argues that "there cannot be any substance excepting God, and consequently none other can be conceived." From this it follows that "whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God."

Since "there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute," and

since God is defined as a "substance consisting of infinite attributes, each one of which expresses eternal and infinite essence," it is absurd, in Spinoza's opinion, to think of any other substance. "If there were any substance besides God, it would have to be explained," he says, "by some attribute of God, and thus two substances would exist possessing the same attribute," which is impossible.

Spinoza's definition of substance, attribute, and mode or affection, combined with his axiom that "everything which is, is either in itself or in another," enables him to embrace whatever multiplicity or diversity he finds in the world as aspects of one being. Everything which is not substance, existing in and of itself, exists in that one substance as an infinite attribute or a finite mode. "The thing extended (*rem extensam*) and the thinking thing (*rem cogitantem*)," he writes, "are either attributes of God or affections of the attributes of God."

If, on the contrary, there is no unitary whole of being, but only a plurality of beings which are alike in being and yet are diverse in being from one another, then our conception of being must involve a system of meanings, a stem of many branches. Descartes, for example, distinguishes between an infinite being, whose essence involves its existence, and finite beings, which do not necessarily exist of themselves but must be caused to exist. The infinite being which is God causes, but does not contain within itself, other finite substances; and among finite things, Descartes holds, "two substances are said to be really distinct, when each of them can exist apart from the other."

In addition to God—"that substance which we understand to be supremely perfect"—Descartes defines two kinds of finite substance. "That substance in which thought immediately resides, I call Mind," he writes; and "that substance, which is the immediate subject of extension in space, and of the accidents that presuppose extension, e.g., figure, situation, movement in space, etc., is called Body." All these substances, and even their accidents, have being, but not being of the same kind or to the same degree. "There are," according to Descartes, "diverse degrees of reality, or (the quality of being an) entity. For sub-

stance has more reality than accident or mode; and infinite substance has more than finite substance." Its being is independent, theirs dependent.

The issue between Spinoza and Descartes—a single substance or many—is only one of the ways in which the problem of the unity or diversity of being presents itself. Both Plato and Aristotle, for example, affirm a multiplicity of separate existences, but though both are, in this sense, pluralists, being seems to have one meaning for Plato, many for Aristotle.

According to Plato's distinction between being and becoming, only the immutable essences, the eternal ideas, are beings, and though they are many in number, they all belong to one realm and possess the same type of being. But for Aristotle, not only do perishable as well as imperishable substances exist; not only is there sensible and mutable as well as immaterial and eternal being; but the being which substances possess is not the same as that of accidents; essential is not the same as accidental being; potential being is not the same as being actual; and to be is not the same as to be conceived, that is, to exist in reality is not the same as to exist in mind.

Again and again Aristotle insists that "there are many senses in which a thing is said to be . . . Some things are said to be because they are substances, others because they are affections of substance, others because they are in process towards substance, or destructions or privations or qualities of substance, or productive or generative of substance, or of things which are relative to substance, or negations of one of these things or of substance itself. It is for this reason," he continues, "that we say even of non-being that it *is* non-being"; and, in another place, he adds that "besides all these there is that which 'is' potentially or actually."

All these senses of being, according to Aristotle, "refer to one starting point," namely, substance, or that which has being in and of itself. "That which is primarily, *i.e.*, not in a qualified sense," he writes, "must be a substance." But when he also says that "that which 'is' primarily is the 'what' which indicates the substance of a thing," he seems to be using the words "substance" and "essence"

interchangeably. This, in turn, seems to be related to the fact that, although Aristotle distinguishes between actual and potential being, and between necessary or incorruptible and contingent or corruptible beings, he, like Plato and unlike Aquinas, Descartes, or Spinoza, does not consider whether the essence and existence of a being are identical or separate.

It may be held that this distinction is implied, since a contingent being is one which is able not to exist, whereas a necessary being cannot *not* exist. A contingent being is, therefore, one whose essence can be divorced from existence; a necessary being, one which *must be* precisely because its essence is identical with its existence. But the explicit recognition of a real distinction between essence and existence seems to be reserved for the later theologians and philosophers who conceive of an infinite being, as Aristotle does not.

The infinity of a being lies not only in its possession of all perfections, but even more fundamentally in its requiring no cause outside itself for its own existence. "That thing," says Aquinas, "whose being differs from its essence, must have its being caused by another . . . That which has being, but is not being, is a being by participation." Where Aristotle makes substance the primary type of being, and the "starting-point" of all its other meanings, Aquinas makes the infinite being of God, whose very essence it is to be, the source of all finite and participated beings, in which there is a composition of existence and essence, or "of that *whereby they are* and that *which they are*."

Since "being itself is that whereby a thing is," being belongs to God primarily and to all other things according to modes of derivation or participation. God and his creatures can be called "beings" but, Aquinas points out, not in the *identically same* sense, nor yet with *utter diversity* of meaning. A similarity—a sameness-in-diversity or analogy—obtains between the unqualified being of God and the being of all other things, which have being subject to various qualifications or limitations.

All other questions about being are affected by the solution of these basic problems concerning the unity of being, the kinds of being,

and the order of the various kinds. If they are solved in one way—in favor of unity—certain questions are not even raised, for they are genuine only on the basis of the other solution which finds being diverse. The discussion, in the chapters on SAME AND OTHER, and on SIGN AND SYMBOL, of sameness, diversity, and analogy is, therefore, relevant to the problem of how things are at once alike and unlike in being.

THE GREEKS, NOTABLY Plato and Aristotle, began the inquiry about being. They realized that after all other questions are answered, there still remains the question, What does it mean to say of anything that it *is* or *is not*? After we understand what it means for a thing to be a man, or to be alive, or to be a body, we must still consider what it means for that thing simply to be in any way at all; or to be in one sense, and not to be in another.

The discussion of being, in itself and in relation to unity and truth, rest and motion, runs through many dialogues of Plato. It is central in the *Sophist* and *Parmenides*. The same terms and problems appear in Aristotle's scientific treatise which makes *being* its distinctive subject matter, and which he sometimes calls "first philosophy" and sometimes "theology." It belongs to this science, he declares, "to consider being *qua* being—both what it is and the properties which belong to it *qua* being."

As pointed out in the chapter on METAPHYSICS, it is a historical accident that this inquiry concerning being came to be called "metaphysics." That is the name which, according to legend, the ancient editors gave to a collection of writings in which Aristotle pursued this inquiry. Since they came after the books on physics, they were called "metaphysics" on the supposition that Aristotle intended the discussion of being to follow his treatise on change and motion.

If one were to invent a word to describe the science of being, it would be "ontology," not "metaphysics" or even "theology." Yet "metaphysics" has remained the traditionally accepted name for the inquiry or science which goes beyond physics—or all of natural science—in that it asks about the very ex-

istence of things, and their modes of being. Planck acknowledges this when he concedes that "there is a metaphysical reality behind everything that human experience shows to be real," going on to explain that "metaphysical reality does not stand spatially *behind* what is given in experience, but lies fully *within* it."

The traditional connection of metaphysics with theology, discussed in the chapters on METAPHYSICS and THEOLOGY, seems to have its origin in the fact that Aristotle's treatise on being passes from a consideration of sensible and mutable substances to the problem of the existence of immaterial beings, and to the conception of a divine being, purely actual, absolutely immutable.

In a science intended to treat "of that which is primarily, and to which all the other categories of being are referred, namely, substance," Aristotle says, "we must first sketch the nature of substance." Hence he begins with what he calls "the generally recognized substances. These are the sensible substances." He postpones until later his critical discussion of "the Ideas and the objects of mathematics, for some say these are substances in addition to the sensible substances"; yet he directs his whole inquiry to the ultimate question "whether there are or are not any besides sensible substances." His attempt to answer this question in the twelfth book makes it the theological part of his *Metaphysics*.

THOUGH THEIR ORDER of discussion is different, the metaphysicians of the 17th century, like Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, deal with many, if not all, major points in the analysis of being which the Greek philosophers initiated and the medieval theologians developed. Later philosophers, whose main concern is with the origin and validity of human knowledge, come to the traditional metaphysical questions through an analysis, not of substance or essence, existence or power, but of our *ideas* of substance and power.

This transformation of the ancient problem of being is stated by Berkeley in almost epigrammatic form. Considering "what is meant by the term *exist*," he argues from the experience of sensible things that "their *esse* is

*percipi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them." Locke, too, although he does not identify being with perception, makes the same shift on the ground that "the first step towards satisfying several inquiries the mind of man was apt to run into, was to make a survey of our own understandings, examine our own powers, and see to what things they were adapted."

Once the problems of being are viewed first in terms of the mind, the questions for the philosopher become primarily those of the relation of our definitions to real and nominal essences, the conditions of our knowledge or existence, and the identification of the real and ideal with perceptible matters of fact and intelligible relations between ideas.

For Kant the basic distinction is between the sensible and supra-sensible, or the phenomenal and noumenal, realms of being. From another point of view, Kant considers the being of things in themselves apart from human experience and the being of natural things or, what is the same for him, the things of experience. The former are unconditioned, the latter conditioned, by the knowing mind which is formative or constitutive of experience.

"The sole aim of pure reason," Kant writes, "is the absolute totality of the synthesis on the side of the conditions . . . in order to preposit the whole series of conditions, and thus present them to the understanding *a priori*." Having obtained these "conditions," we can ascend through them "until we reach the unconditioned, that is, the principles." It is with these ideas of pure reason that metaphysics, according to Kant, properly deals. Instead of *being*, its object consists in "three grand ideas: God, Freedom, and Immortality, and it aims at showing that the second conception, conjoined with the first, must lead to the third as a necessary conclusion."

Hegel, on the other hand, does not approach the problem of being or reality through a critique of knowledge. For Hegel, as for Plotinus before him, the heart of metaphysics lies in understanding that "nothing is actual except the Idea" or the Absolute, "and the great thing is to apprehend in the show of

the temporal and the transient, the substance which is immanent, and the eternal which is present." Plotinus calls the absolute, not the Idea, but the All-one, yet he tries to show that the One is the principle, the light, and the life of all things, just as Hegel reduces everything to a manifestation of the underlying reality of the Absolute Idea.

Despite all such changes in terminology, despite radical differences in philosophical principle or conclusion, and regardless of the attitude taken toward the possibility of metaphysics as a science, the central question which is faced by anyone who goes beyond physics, or natural philosophy, is a question about being or existence. It may or may not be asked explicitly, but it is always present by implication.

The question about God, for example, or free will or immortality, is first of all a question about whether such things *exist*, and *how* they exist. Do they have reality or are they only fictions of the mind? Similarly, questions about the infinite, the absolute, or the unconditioned are questions about that primary reality apart from whose existence nothing else could be or be conceived, and which therefore has an existence different from the things dependent on it for their being. Here again the first question is whether such a reality exists.

Enough has been said to indicate why this discussion cannot consider all topics which have some connection with the theory of being. To try to make this Introduction adequate even for the topics outlined here, under which the references to the great books are assembled, would be to make it almost coextensive in scope with the sum of many other Introductions—all, in fact, which open chapters dealing with metaphysical concepts or problems.

It is to be expected, of course, that the special problems of the existence of God, of an immortal soul, and of a free will should be treated in the chapters on GOD, IMMORTALITY, and WILL. But it may not be realized that such chapters as CAUSE, ETERNITY, FORM, IDEA, INFINITY, MATTER, ONE AND MANY, RELATION, SAME AND OTHER, UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR—all these and still others cited in

the Cross-References below—include topics which would have to be discussed here if we were to try to cover all relevant considerations.

Reasons of economy and intelligibility dictate the opposite course. Limiting the scope of this Introduction to a few principal points in the theory of being, we can also exhibit, through the relation of this chapter to others, the interconnection of the great ideas. The various modes of being (such as essence and existence, substance and accident, potentiality and actuality, the real and the ideal) and the basic correlatives of being (such as unity, goodness, truth) are, therefore, left for fuller treatment in other contexts. But two topics deserve further attention here. One is the distinction between being and becoming, the other the relation of being to knowledge.

THE FACT OF CHANGE OF MOTION—of coming to be and passing away—is so evident to the senses that it has never been denied, at least not as an experienced phenomenon. But it has been regarded as irrational and unreal, an illusion perpetrated by the senses. Galen, for instance, charges the Sophists with "allowing that bread in turning into blood becomes changed as regards sight, taste, and touch," but denying that "this change occurs in reality." They explain it away, he says, as "tricks and illusions of our senses . . . which are affected now in one way, now in another, whereas the underlying substance does not admit of any of these changes."

The familiar paradoxes of Zeno are *reductio ad absurdum* arguments to show that motion is unthinkable, full of self-contradiction. The way of truth, according to Parmenides, Zeno's master in the Eleatic school, lies in the insight that whatever is always was and will be, that nothing comes into being out of nonbeing, or passes out of being into nothingness.

The doctrine of Parmenides provoked many criticisms. Yet his opponents tried to preserve the reality of change, without having to accord it the fullness of being. The Greek atomists, for example, think that change cannot be explained except in terms of permanent beings—in fact eternal ones. Lucretius, who expounds their views, remarks that in any change

Something must stand immovable, it must,  
Lest all things be reduced to absolute nothing.  
If anything is changed, leaving its limits,  
That is the death of what it was before.

The immovable "something" is thought to be the atom, the absolutely indivisible, and hence imperishable, unit of matter. Change does not touch the being of the atoms, but "only breaks their combinations, / Joins them again in other ways." Lucretius believes all things change—that is, all things composite, not the simple bodies of solid singleness.

In a conversation with Cratylus, who favors the Heraclitean theory of a universal flux, Socrates asks, "how can that be a real thing which is never in the same state?" How "can we reasonably say, Cratylus," he goes on, "that there is any knowledge at all, if everything is in a state of transition and there is nothing abiding"?

When he gets Glaucon to admit in *The Republic* that "being is the sphere or subject matter of knowledge, and knowing is to know the nature of being," Socrates leads him to see the correlation of being, not-being, and becoming with knowledge, ignorance, and opinion. "If opinion and knowledge are distinct faculties then the sphere of knowledge and opinion cannot be the same . . . If being is the subject matter of knowledge, something else must be the subject matter of opinion." It cannot be not-being, for "of not-being ignorance was assumed to be the necessary correlative."

Since "opinion is not concerned either with being or with not-being" because it is obviously intermediate between knowledge and ignorance, Socrates concludes that "if anything appeared to be of a sort which is and is not at the same time, that sort of thing would appear also to lie in the interval between pure being and absolute not-being," and "the corresponding faculty is neither knowledge nor ignorance, but will be found in the interval between them." This "intermediate flux" or sphere of becoming, this "region of the many and the variable," can yield only opinion. Being, the realm of the "absolute and eternal and immutable [Ideas]," is the only object that one "may be said to know."

Aristotle would seem to agree with Plato

that change "partakes equally of the nature of being and not-being, and cannot rightly be termed either, pure and simple." He points out that his predecessors, particularly the Eleatics, held change to be impossible, because they believed that "what comes to be must do so either from what is or from what is not, both of which are impossible." It is impossible, so they argued, since "what is cannot come to be (because it *is* already), and from what is not nothing could have come to be." Aristotle concedes the cogency of this argument on one condition, namely, that the terms 'being' and 'not-being' are taken "without qualification." But his whole point is that they need not be taken without qualification and should not be, if we wish to explain change rather than make a mystery of it.

The qualification Aristotle introduces rests on the distinction between two modes of being—the potentiality and actuality correlative with matter and form. In the 20th century, Heisenberg resorts to this distinction and employs the concept of *potentia* in quantum mechanics. He tells us that "physicists have gradually become accustomed to considering the electronic orbits, etc., not as reality but rather as a kind of 'potentia.'"

For Aristotle, this distinction makes it possible for him to maintain that "a thing may come to be from what is not . . . in a qualified sense." He illustrates his meaning by the example of the bronze, which from a mere lump of metal comes to be a statue under the hands of the artist. The bronze, he says, was "potentially a statue," and the change whereby it came to be actually a statue is the process between potentiality and actuality. While the change is going on, the bronze is neither completely potential nor fully actual in respect of *being a statue*.

Like Plato, Aristotle recognizes that there is "something indefinite" about change. "The reason," he explains, "is that it cannot be classed simply as a potentiality or as an actuality—a thing that is merely *capable* of having a certain size is not undergoing change, nor yet a thing that is *actually* of a certain size." Change is "a sort of actuality, but incomplete . . . hard to grasp, but not incapable of existing."

If to exist is to be completely actual, then changing things and change itself do not fully exist. They exist only to the extent that they have actuality. Yet potentiality, no less than actuality, is a mode of being. That potentiality—power or capacity—belongs to being seems also to be affirmed by the Eleatic Stranger in Plato's *Sophist*. "Anything which possesses any sort of power to affect another, or to be affected by another," he says, "if only for a single moment, however trifling the cause and however slight the effect, has real existence . . . I hold," he adds, "that the definition of being is simply power."

The basic issue concerning being and becoming, and the issue concerning eternal as opposed to mutable existence, recurs again and again in the tradition of western thought. They are involved in the distinction between corruptible and incorruptible substances (which is in turn connected with the division of substances into corporeal and spiritual), and with the nature of God as the only purely actual, or truly eternal, being. They are implicit in Spinoza's distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, and in his distinction between God's knowledge of things under the aspect of eternity and man's temporal view of the world in process. They are relevant to Hegel's Absolute Idea which, while remaining fixed, progressively reveals itself in the ever changing face of nature and history. In our own day these issues engage John Dewey, George Santayana, and Alfred North Whitehead in controversy, as yesterday they engaged F. H. Bradley, William James, and Henri Bergson.

AS ALREADY NOTED, Plato's division of reality into the realms of being and becoming has a bearing on his analysis of knowledge and opinion. The division relates to the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible, and between the opposed qualities of certainty and probability, or necessity and contingency, in our judgments about things. The distinctions between essence and existence and between substance and accident separate aspects or modes of being which function differently as objects for the knowing mind.

Aristotle, for example, holds that "there can be no scientific treatment of the *accidental* . . . for the accidental is practically a mere name. And," he adds, "Plato was in a sense not wrong in ranking sophistic as dealing with that which is not. For the arguments of the sophists deal, we may say, above all, with the accidental." That the accidental is "akin to non-being," Aristotle thinks may be seen in the fact that "things which are in another sense come into being and pass out of being by a process, but things which are accidentally do not." But though he rejects the accidental as an object of science, he does not, like Plato or Plotinus, exclude the whole realm of sensible, changing things from the sphere of scientific knowledge. For him, both metaphysics and physics treat of sensible substances, the one with regard to their mutable *being*, the other with regard to their being *mutable*—their becoming or changing.

For Plotinus, on the other hand, "the true sciences have an intelligible object and contain no notion of anything sensible." They are directed, not "to variable things, suffering from all sorts of changes, divided in space, to which the name of becoming and not being belongs," but to the "eternal being which is not divided, existing always in the same way, which is not born and does not perish, and has neither space, place, nor situation . . . but rests immovable in itself."

According to another view, represented by Locke, substance is as such unknowable, whether it be body or spirit. We use the word "substance" to name the "support of such qualities, which are capable of producing simple ideas in us; which qualities are commonly called accidents." The sensible accidents are all that we truly know and "we give the general name substance" to "the supposed, but unknown, support of those qualities we find existing." Some of these sensible accidents are what Locke calls "primary qualities"—the powers or potentialities by which things affect one another and also our senses.

But to the extent that our senses fail to discover "the bulk, texture, and figure of the minute parts of bodies, on which their constitutions and differences depend, we are fain to



make use of their secondary qualities, as the characteristic notes and marks whereby to frame ideas of them in our mind." Nevertheless, powers—which are qualities or accidents, not substances—seem to be, for Locke, the ultimate reality we can know. "The secondary sensible qualities," he writes, "are nothing but the powers" which corporeal substances have "to produce several ideas in us by our sense, which ideas"—unlike the primary qualities—"are not in the things themselves, otherwise than as anything is in its cause."

Hobbes exemplifies still another view. "A man can have no thought," he says, "representing anything not subject to sense." Hobbes does not object to calling bodies "substances," but thinks that when we speak of "an incorporeal body, or (which is all one) an incorporeal substance," we talk nonsense; "for none of these things ever have, or can be incident to sense; but are absurd speeches, taken upon credit (without any signification at all) from deceived Philosophers, and deceived, or deceiving, Schoolmen."

He enumerates other absurdities, such as "the giving of names of bodies to accidents, or of accidents to bodies," e.g., by those who say that "extension is body." Criticism of the fallacy of reification—the fallacy first pointed out by William of Ockham and criticized so repeatedly in contemporary semantics—also appears in Hobbes's warning against making substances out of abstractions or universals "by giving the names of bodies to names or speeches."

WHENEVER A THEORY of knowledge is concerned with how we know reality, as opposed to mere appearances, it considers the manner in which existing beings can be known—by perception, intuition, or demonstration; and with respect to demonstration, it attempts to formulate the conditions of valid reasoning about matters of fact or real existence. But it has seldom been supposed that reality exhausts the objects of our thought or knowledge. We can conceive possibilities not realized in this world. We can imagine things which do not exist in nature.

The meaning of reality—of real as opposed to purely conceptual or ideal being—is derived

from the notion of thinghood, of having being outside the mind, not merely in it. In traditional controversies about the existence of ideas—or of universals, the objects of mathematics, or relations—it is not the being of such things which is questioned, but their reality, their existence outside the mind. If, for example, ideas exist apart from minds, the minds of men and God, they have real, not ideal, existence. If the objects of mathematics, such as numbers and figures, have existence only as figments of the mind, they are ideal beings.

The judgment of the reality of a thing, James thinks, involves "a state of consciousness *sui generis*" about which not much can be said "in the way of internal analysis." The focus of this problem in modern times is indicated by James's phrasing of the question, "Under what circumstances do we think things real?" And James gives a typically modern answer to the question.

He begins by saying that "any object which remains uncontradicted is ipso facto believed and posited as absolute reality." He admits that "for most men . . . the 'things of sense' . . . are the absolutely real world's nucleus. Other things," James writes, "may be real for this man or that—things of science, abstract moral relations, things of the Christian theology, or what not. But even for the special man, these things are usually real with a less real reality than that of the things of sense." But his basic conviction is that "our own reality, that sense of our own life which we at every moment possess, is the ultimate of ultimates for our belief. 'As sure as I exist!'—this is our uttermost warrant for the being of all other things. As Descartes made the indubitable reality of the *cogito* go bail for the reality of all that the *cogito* involved, so all of us, feeling our own present reality with absolutely coercive force, ascribe an all but equal degree of reality, first to whatever things we lay hold on with a sense of personal need, and second, to whatever farther things continuously belong with these."

The self or ego is the ultimate criterion of being or reality. "The world of living realities as contrasted with unrealities," James writes, "is thus anchored in the Ego . . . That is the hook

from which the rest dangles, the absolute support. And as from a painted hook it has been said that one can only hang a painted chain, so conversely from a real hook only a real chain can properly be hung. *Whatever things have intimate and continuous connection with my life are things of whose reality I cannot doubt.* Whatever things fail to establish this connection are things which are practically no better for me than if they existed not at all." James would be the first to concede to any critic of his position, that its truth and good sense depend upon noting that word "practically," for it is "the world of 'practical realities'" with which he professes to be concerned.

WE CAN IN CONCLUSION observe one obvious measure of the importance of *being* in philosophical thought. The major *isms* by which the historians of philosophy have tried to classify its doctrines represent affirmations or denials with respect to being or the modes of being. They are such antitheses as realism and idealism; materialism and spiritualism; monism, dualism, and pluralism; even atheism and theism. Undoubtedly, no great philosopher can be so simply boxed. Yet the opposing *isms* do indicate the great speculative issues which no mind can avoid if it pursues the truth or seeks the ultimate principles of good and evil.