

Dec '21

Metaphysics II

*Transcendentals &
Causality*



Quick Recap

Metaphysics 1 was all about the **constituent principles** of being

IN ALL CREATURES

Esse = what makes a thing to be.

1. An ACT, a PERFECTION
2. Is a UNIVERSAL act, found in every reality
3. Is a TOTAL act. It is found in every single act or perfection of every single thing.
4. Is therefore PRIOR to any other act.
5. Is the MOST COMMON of all acts.
6. Is the MOST INTIMATE, INNERMOST act.
7. Is the MOST INTENSIVE act.
8. Is a CONSTITUENT act, the MOST RADICAL or BASIC of all perfections. Without it, nothing would be.

ESSE

IN ALL MATERIAL THINGS

Essence = what makes a thing to be that KIND of thing.

1. Because a thing is what it is, it ACTS in a certain way. As such, essence is also called NATURE. Nature is essence, seen as principle or source of operations.
2. Essence is signified by a DEFINITION. As such it is called QUIDDITY (*QUIDDITAS*) or "WHATNESS".
3. Insofar as it is KNOWN (i.e. in our mind), essence is known as UNIVERSAL.

ESSENCE

SUBSTANTIAL FORM

1. The determining principle of the essence
2. Is what strictly limits or restricts the act of being
3. Is what makes a thing to be that kind of thing.

PRIME MATTER

1. Pure passive potency in material beings (i.e. angels do not have prime matter).
2. Mere capacity to receive an act
3. Not yet determined by some form (i.e. it is indeterminate)
4. Never exists unless actualised by a substantial form



Knowing 'beings'

In Metaphysics 1, you studied how we grow in our knowledge of 'being'

i

All things are different from each other, but all things have 'being' in common. This is our first intellectual notion into which all other notions are 'resolved' (*according to STA*)

ii

By 'resolved,' we mean: any reality we come to know is something related to being: substances, constituent principles of being like essence, accidents....
Everything around us is either a being in itself, or an aspect or property of being

iii

We know 'Being' in a limited way: we have to **multiply notions** in order to express the full reality of things.
e.g. Not enough to say "that thing is" but that thing is a purple agapantha





Knowing 'beings'

So, in *Metaphysics 1*, you came to know about **B**eing (*esse*) by examining the various modes of being (*essentia, substantia, accidens*), by looking at the *constitutive principles* of being.

You also learnt that

1. Beings are obviously exclusive of each other. A cat is not a dog.
2. None of these modes of being is identical to Being itself.

However, we can *also* grow in our knowledge of Being (and beings**s**) by looking at the *transcendental properties* of all beings.

Why Transcendental?

These properties transcend all accidents or limited perfections, and all modes of being. You might say properties not of this or that being, or of a principle of being, but of Being as such. In total, there are six transcendental notions:

THING

res



SOMETHING

aliquid



GOODNESS

bonum



UNITY

unum



TRUTH

verum



BEAUTY

pulchrum

N.B. res and aliquid are transcendentals that apply only to creatures. The rest apply also to God.

Beings Considered in Itself

UNITY

- any being is a single thing, it is one
- to say something is one is to deny internal division, parts

RES/THING

- being is always found as “things” (res)
- our world is populated by individual subsistents
- res signifies the restriction of every being to a determinate mode of being

Beings Considered in Relation to Other Beings: *conformity to other beings & distinction to other beings*

ALIIQUID/SOMETHING

- each thing is a something distinct to other things

TRUE

- being, as it conforms to the intellect (being and only being can be the object of a genuine act of understanding)

GOOD

- being, as it conforms to the will
- Everything, in as much as it is, is capable of being loved and being the object of an appetite.

BEAUTIFUL

- being, as it conforms to the whole person when it produces pleasure/delight, through appetitive knowledge
- The beautiful is that which is pleasing to behold

Why are 'res' & 'aliquid' not applied to God?

You might ask: if God is pure being, and if these transcendentals apply to being as such, then shouldn't they apply to God as well? (No, God is not thingy) 🙄

1

Res makes reference to the fact that each act is received into a potency, to limitation of act. In effect, the 'res' is the essence actualized. **(What do we know about God's act?)**

2


Aliquid could perhaps be applied to God given that He is par excellence infinitely superior and transcendent to the world. He is truly 'the other'



BUT WHAT IF THERE WAS NO CREATION? If we push **aliquid** too far, then God is being called other in relation to the universe, but that would mean God has an accident, which is impossible.

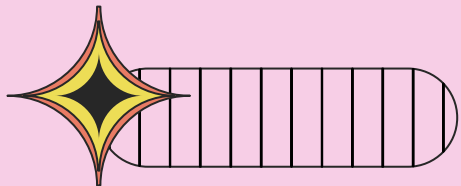
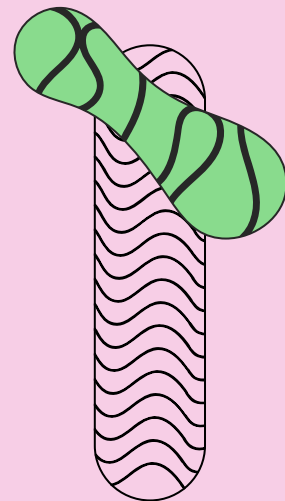


A question y'all might be asking....



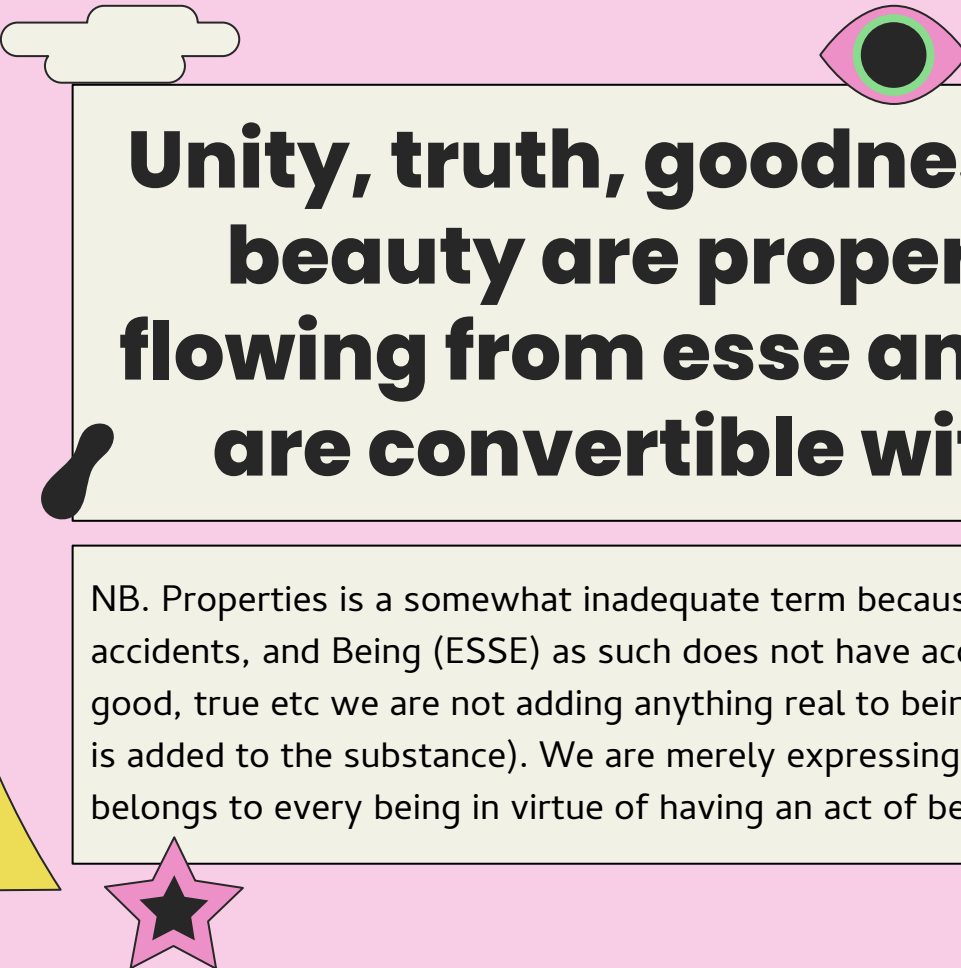
Are the transcendentals something **objective, real**, or simply **notional**, a consequence of the way we know being?

The answer is BOTH !





Unity, truth, goodness and beauty are properties flowing from esse and they are convertible with it.



NB. Properties is a somewhat inadequate term because properties are accidents, and Being (ESSE) as such does not have accidents. by saying good, true etc we are not adding anything real to being (like an accident is added to the substance). We are merely expressing an aspect which belongs to every being in virtue of having an act of being.

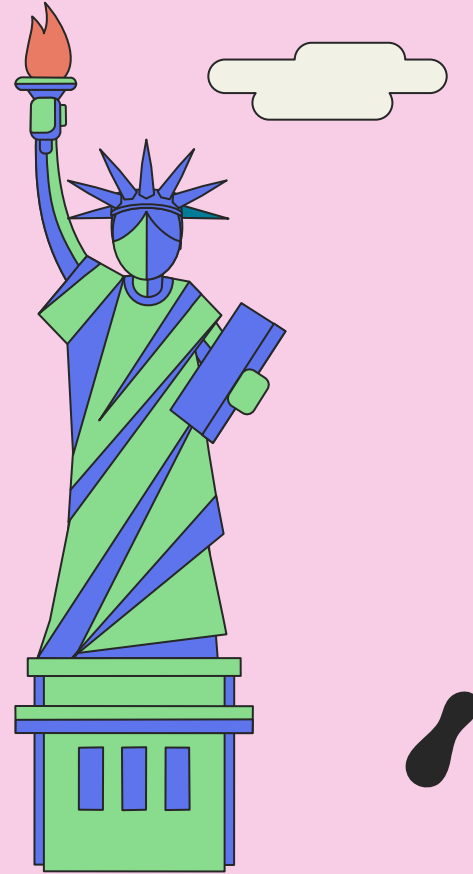
What do we mean by convertible?

IN REALITY: *“ens et unum et bonum et verum convertuntur”*

- “All beings are good.”, “Anything that is true is also good.”, “Anything good is also being.”
- We cannot say: all beings are plants

AS FAR AS OUR KNOWLEDGE IS CONCERNED:

- Unity or oneness, truth, beauty and goodness are **distinct** notions not expressly signified by the notion of being
- For instance, **true** is not exactly the same as **good**



Now, remember how 'being' is analogical?

Analogy: *same term is attributed to two realities in a way which is partially the same and partially different*

★ **Participation in the 'act of being' is the basis of analogical predication**

Participate = *to take part, to share in, receive a portion of.* Esse is what everything in some sense is "made up of", but only in finite degrees and to a limited extent. Nothing participates in esse fully!

Being is attributed analogically to all the different subsistent beings, to all the different essences, to all fundamental principles of being (eg potency/act), etc.



Creatures have in varying degrees of intensity and levels of composition; they have an act of being via participation, not essence

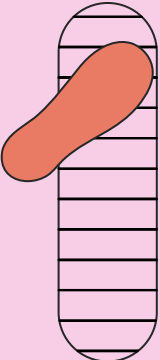


Like Being, the Transcendentals are ANALOGICAL

If transcendentals are convertible with being, then analogy must also apply to the transcendentals.



i



The transcendentals goodness, truth, even unity are perfections that admit of varying degrees among creatures. Hence they too can be attributed analogically to different aspects of being.



ii

Hence creatures participate in goodness, truth etc to varying degrees. Only God is infinitely Good, True and Beautiful, that is, to the highest degree.

