

## Chapter Three

### FROM CONTINGENT BEINGS TO THE MOST REAL AND ETERNAL ENS NECESSARIUM

#### 1. From Contingent Beings to the Necessary Being

Considering the beings in the world we call real, material things, living beings, and human persons, we distinguish their nature, what they are, from their existence, from the actuality of their being. Both of these principles or dimensions of the one being (ens) are of decisive moment. What each being is, its nature accounts for the intelligible content, meaning, value, rank, fundamental mode, and form of a being and distinguishes the whole abyss of the person's being from that of a stone or a frog. Existence, however, the *actus essendi* (the *act of being*), is that in a being which makes actual what that being is. In virtue of it alone I am and thus actualize my being a person. We spoke elsewhere at length of this difference and of the relationship between *essentia* and *existentia* in the one existing being. Without repeating these analyses <sup>111</sup> in the present context, we wish to draw attention only to the fact that real beings in this world are in the most remarkable state of their existence. Their existence, and with it the whole actuality of their being, that unique act which places them in being at all, is neither one with their essence nor necessarily connected with it nor in any other way necessary. We say they exist contingently but should say so only with a metaphysical shudder: they (we) could all not be - we could be nothing! In this lies a most fundamental distinction between us (and the whole world) and God, who alone exists necessarily. <sup>112</sup>

Nothing could be instead of us being there. How do we know this that our existence is contingent? (Kant, in the 4<sup>th</sup> antinomy, would speak here of intelligible contingency whose knowledge he denies, recognizing only empirical contingency as knowable. This view, which goes back to Kant's basic epistemology, was already

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<sup>111</sup> See Josef Seifert: "Essence and Existence. A New Foundation of Classical Metaphysics on the Basis of 'Phenomenological Realism,' and a Critical Investigation of 'Existentialist Thomism,'" *Aletheia* I (1977), pp. 17-157; I,2 (1977), pp. 371-459; *Sein und Wesen*, cit.

<sup>112</sup> See Josef Seifert: *Gott als Gottesbeweis. Eine phänomenologische Neubegründung des ontologischen Arguments*, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996), 2. Aufl. 2000; *Bye-bye Dawkins und Darwin. Göttliche Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen aus dem Nichts: Philosophische Beweise*. (Aachen-Mainz, Patrimonium Verlag 2021). 2nd, substantially enlarged and improved edition of *Göttliche Schöpfung der Welt und des Menschen aus dem Nichts*, ch. 2-4, soon in English; *Antworten auf Einwände. Warum die Welt von Gott aus dem Nichts geschaffen wurde*, (Aachen: Patrimonium Verlag, 2022).

criticized in my book *Back to Things in Themselves, cit.* and my books about Kant which deal with the foundation of philosophical realism.<sup>113</sup>

The contingency of existence is given when we consider in our imagination all kinds of merely possible beings of the human, animal, or material nature, etc. None of these beings exists really - or at least we do not know whether any of these beings which we can imagine in our fantasy do actually exist. When we reflect philosophically on this fact well-known to any child who listens to fairy tales or invents new ones, we see that co-given with this imaginability of beings of the same nature possessed by those essences that we experience as existing is the possibility of these imagined entities existing.<sup>114</sup> In fact, we cannot know absolutely that they do not exist just as imagined. We grasp that there is nothing intrinsic to them that would make their existence impossible. With this possibility, however, of other individual beings of the nature of which some do actually exist and others do not, we grasp the contingency and non-necessity of those beings that actually exist. We know that even biologically, billions of billions of other human beings are possible, not to speak of the infinite number of possible beings whose unlimitedness we can comprehend mentally. But if we can imagine and think of other beings that are possible but are not real, it follows that those beings that do possess the same nature as these possibles but do actually exist do not do so because of any necessity. It does not follow from their very essence and nature that they exist. Otherwise, all possible beings of the same nature would have to exist. Thus, their existence somehow falls outside of their nature and can be given or taken from any such being. Again “our nothingness” and yet the tremendous fact of being is given here. This gift character of contingent existence makes it also an object of gratitude, as expressed by Matthias Claudius:

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<sup>113</sup> Überwindung des Skandals der reinen Vernunft. Die Widerspruchsfreiheit der Wirklichkeit – trotz Kant, (Freiburg/München: Karl Alber, 2001) and Superación del escándalo de la razón pura. La ausencia de contradicción de la realidad, a pesar de Kant. Biblioteca filosófica “El Carro Alado.” Traducción Rogelio Rovira. (Madrid: Ediciones Cristianidad, 2007).

<sup>114</sup> Upon deeper analysis, we add that the character of Don Quijote could have actually existed, but not exactly as was described by Cervantes because the infinitely many indeterminacy spots of any intentional object that constitutes the stratum of represented objectivities in a literary work of art could never exist in reality. For example, the question of whether Hamlet ate dinner before meeting his father’s Ghost and billions of other facts remain totally indeterminate in Shakespeare’s play but could never be so in a really existing Hamlet. See Roman Ingarden’s masterwork, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Eine Untersuchung aus dem Grenzgebiet der Ontologie, Logik und Literaturwissenschaft* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1931), 3. Aufl., 1972; *The Literary Work of Art*, transl. by George G. Grabowicz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

Ich danke Gott und freue mich  
 Wie's Kind zur Weihnachtsgabe,  
 Daß ich bin, bin! Und daß ich dich,  
 Schön menschlich Antlitz! habe ...  
 I thank God and rejoice,  
 as does a child at gift-time on Christmas,  
 that I am, am! And that I have you,  
 beautiful human countenance.<sup>115</sup>

One could say that three things are grasped here simultaneously: the possibility of innumerable other beings of the same nature as those that exist in the world, the fact that, therefore, the essence (nature) of the beings in the world does not include existence and the contingency and non-necessity of their existence. These fundamental metaphysical facts are given to us when we only reflect on the essence of imagination and fantasy.

A second way by means of which we can understand contingency, is mentioned in Thomas' *De Ente et Essentia*.<sup>116</sup> It proceeds from the multiplicity of individuals within the same species and genus. Whenever we grasp that it is possible that the same nature be multiplied in different individuals, whenever we find in experience more than one individual member of a class of beings, we understand that no single member of that class of being, no single individual that possesses that nature must exist by necessity. This could be argued rather indirectly by making reference to the consequence that the multiplicity of individuals in the same kind, once it is given, is unlimited. Therefore, unlimited numbers (infinitely many) of individuals of the same kind would have to exist if their existence (as multipliable individually) were necessary. There is only a limited number of beings of each kind. Therefore...etc. Yet, this argument presupposes that one either has seen that there are not infinitely many individuals of a given kind or understands this as a priori impossible.

More immediate is the insight into the essential connection between a multiplicity of individual beings of the same nature and the non-necessity of existence. We understand that a nature or essence of a certain kind (for example, human nature) can exist in many individuals - without limit in principle - that does not exist. It follows precisely from this "multipliability" that the essence and nature of such a being does not include its existence. We can gain insight into the non-necessary connection between essence and existence in those beings that can be indefinitely multiplied. With all the great value of the *haecceitas*, of the unique

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<sup>115</sup> Matthias Claudius. *Täglich zu Singen* (1. 1-4).

<sup>116</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, in: Opera Omnia (ut sunt in indice thomistico additis 61 scriptis ex aliis medii aevi auctoribus), 7 Bde, ed. Roberto Busa S. J. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1980), Bd. 3, pp. 583-587. *On Being and Essence*, transl., introd. and notes by Armand Maurer, 2nd edition (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968).

flavor of each individual, of which G.M. Hopkins speaks, we grasp the mysteriousness of this unique individual existence as something which is not founded in the essence which permits more than one individual.

A more empirical way of grasping contingency is the experience of coming to be and passing away - especially of living beings and humans. Here we grasp this amazing fact: Raphaela was not here two years ago, and now she is and exists. Yet since we have no absolute empirical knowledge of coming to be and do not know with absolute certainty of a priori knowledge whether the body and soul of a new human being preexisted somewhere and somehow, we could say that we only understand here empirical contingency, not intelligible (a priori necessary) contingency. In order to delve into this metaphysical and absolute contingency of our being, we have to delve into the intelligible and essentially necessary fact of the connection between other beings of the same nature being possible and the contingency of their existence.

The contingency of existence can become also evident through a consideration of the temporality of all real beings in the universe. For their no longer being in the past and not yet being in the future shows that they could be destroyed and annihilated in principle and their temporal extension is that which is not always actual and is contingent altogether.

Of other possible sources of the knowledge of the contingency of the existence of all worldly entities we shall return in Chapter 12 to one crucial way: that from the contingency and imperfection of nature of all beings in the world. What is the contingency we discover here? Certainly, it is more than just the absence of knowing the necessity of the existence of ourselves and other entities in the world. It is not only so that we see that we exist; we do not understand that we must exist, but perhaps we do exist necessarily. No, we do not infer contingency of our existence from the mere absence of givenness of the necessity of our existence, which would be a logical mistake of inferring from "not knowing X": "not X." We also grasp more than just the non-necessity of our individual existence considered in isolation from the rest of all beings, as if we were perhaps absolutely necessary as members of the whole world-series of beings. We could distinguish between the intrinsic and extrinsic necessity of existence and say that the fact that our own being does not make it necessary that we exist, which is given with the (real) distinction between essence and existence, does not prove that our existence is absolutely non-necessary. Consider that Leibniz thought that God must create the best possible world, as whose members we, too, would exist by necessity. The question arises of whether and, if so, how we know that we are contingent in regard to our existence absolutely speaking. For the present purpose, we consider only the intrinsic contingency and non-necessity of our existence. For it alone suffices to understand that the sufficient reason for our being and for any being in the world cannot lie in the world itself.

Before proceeding from here, however, a few reflections on the principle of sufficient reason are necessary, a principle which guides all attempts to explain contingent finite beings through the infinite being. In its broadest sense as a metaphysical principle, one can formulate it as follows: every being must possess a sufficient reason both for that it is (exists) and for what it is, in one word, for all aspects of its being, essence, and existence. Formulated in this way, the *principium rationis sufficientis* excludes the question why? in reference to anything's being and nature could remain entirely unanswerable. It excludes that nothing accounts for a being or that no reason whatsoever exists for it. The necessity that the question why is it? And why is it as it is? possess an objective answer can be known as the rationality and intelligibility of being in the sense that nothing can be or happen in a way that is in no manner accounted for, explained, etc. This does not mean, of course, that the reason for a being must always be the cause of that being. While no being can be its own efficient cause, some beings must, as we shall see, possess the reason for their being within themselves. Hence, we must formulate the principle of sufficient reason by adding: "*Every being must possess for its existence as well as for every other aspect of its being, a sufficient reason which accounts for it and explains its why - whether this reason lies within a being or outside of it.*"

The principle of causality: "every change (contingent being) must have an efficient cause through whose power it comes about" is a much narrower principle that refers only to one type of being, contingent and real being, and here only to one part of its explanation, as already the other three Aristotelian causes and exemplary causality, participation, etc. show, which refer to important principles of explanation of beings outside of efficient causality.

If a being contains matter and form, its explanation must also include reference to these. If it has a purpose or end, this must be considered in the context of a sufficient explanation. The variety and extent of principles necessary to explain a being depends entirely on that being, on its type of intelligibility, structure, and meaningfulness. Causality (efficient causality) is only one among many explanations of beings, and it does not apply to all beings; in fact, it does not apply to the most important beings. The principle of sufficient reason, on the contrary, reveals itself as absolutely universal: every real and possible being and meaning requires a sufficient reason, an explanation that answers the why it is - whether this explanation lies in its own nature or in another thing. The question arises whether the principle of sufficient reason requires a good reason or even a necessary reason for everything as Leibniz suggests. That the explanation is one in harmony with principles of value, goodness, and justice is most true but not part of the first evidence of the principle that everything has an explanation. Only if one recognizes that goodness and wisdom

rule over everything can one infer (from God's existence and omnipotent sovereignty) that nothing happens or is permitted to happen without good reason.<sup>117</sup>

That everything has a necessary reason is maintained by Leibniz but contradicts the full datum of the contingency of the world, as we shall see, contradicting both the contingency of the world and the free will of men and of God. Thus, the sufficient reason we are interested in is not a necessary reason, and whether each being must possess a good reason will still have to be investigated.

Everything must have a reason in accordance with its own nature and with the nature of being altogether, that is, a proportionate explanation which can render intelligible the "that," "what," and "how" of things. The extent to which things are intelligible and thus have a why depends, of course, both on their own nature and structure (good or evil deeds, for example, quite differently), and it also depends on the nature of being as a whole. For if there is an infinite God, much more of a reason is necessary to look for that in a universe in which the Supreme Being could be deprived of reason, like matter.

The question arises whether the principle of sufficient reason in the broadest metaphysical sense described is the one principle that is the ground of all other principles of sufficient reason or is only one of four (Schopenhauer) or more independent irreducible forms of that principle. The epistemological principle of sufficient reason demands that each cognition have its sufficient reason in the object or subject of knowledge in order to be what it is: knowledge. The logical principle of sufficient reason demands that each true judgment, as well as each conclusion of a logical proof, demands a sufficient reason for its truth. Also, in the sphere of human action and motivation, could one speak of sufficient reason? The absolute foundation of the principle of sufficient reason is not *Zeitlichkeit* (as Schopenhauer posits it to be the schema of all-sufficient reason),<sup>118</sup> nor does the principle of sufficient reason say, as he maintains (p. 158), "dass immer und überall jegliches nur vermöge eines Anderen ist." ("That always and everywhere anything is only because of another one"). Both of these theses are false. Rather, the most fundamental origin of the principle consists in this: that everything (both in regard to what it is and what it is) demands - either within itself or outside itself - an explanation sufficient to account for it and to answer the question "why?."

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<sup>117</sup> See Josef Seifert, *Where was God in Auschwitz?* (Irving, TX/Gaflei, Liechtenstein/Santiago de Chile/Granada, Spain: The International Academy of Philosophy Press, Create Space, Kindle-Books, 2016). See also the VIth part of the present work.

<sup>118</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *Ueber die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde*. Eine philosophische Abhandlung von Arthur Schopenhauer, Doctor der Philosophie, Rudolstadt, in Commission der Hof-Buch-und Kunsthandlung. 1813. Zweite, sehr verbesserte und beträchtlich vermehrte Auflage, Frankfurt a. M.: Joh. Christ. Hermann'sche Buchhandlung, F.G. Suchsland, 1847.

From this principle follow all the others: knowledge, in order to be and to be knowledge, demands such a sufficient reason. Logical truth of judgment (which Schopenhauer identifies with knowledge) demands a sufficient explanation for being and for being true. Real beings that come to be or change demand a power through which they are (and eventually other reasons such as purposes, etc.) and which explains again that and what they are (Schopenhauer's physical necessity of the principle of sufficient reason as the principle of causality). (Schopenhauer unduly restricts the sphere of efficient causality to the physical world, although it applies to all changes in the spiritual world, too, and the explanations of the physical world he reduces unduly to efficient causality.) The mathematical necessity of which Schopenhauer speaks, finds likewise its explanation in the widest sense in which the principle was formulated, and so does the principle of sufficient reason in the moral sphere.

The thesis that all these spheres demand necessary reasons or reasons that necessitate the *explicandum* is not only not immediately evident but evidently false. The opinion that the principle of sufficient reason demands a *necessary* reason for everything fails to see that each being, depending on whether necessary or contingent, free or unfree, meaningful or relatively meaningless and absurd, demands an explanation in accordance with its nature. Hence, we must not come with a preconceived notion that all things demand necessary reasons without first establishing what kind of being they are and, consequently, which type of explanation they demand. And if we do so, we will see that NOT all things have a necessary reason.

Returning from here to the contingency of the world's existence and the existence of any being in the world, we can concretize our understanding of the principle of sufficient reason. It is impossible that the existence of the world has no explanation, no answer whatsoever to its why. This much is absolutely certain and evident. It is equally certain that existence which could also not be, which is only a fact, a *possible*, and does not flow from the nature of the existing being, does not explain itself. Since it could also be reduced to nothing, it precisely calls for the question "why is it?" in such a manner that it itself cannot answer this question. This question poses itself against the background of its possible non-being. Why is it that we can say with Leibniz that we should expect for there to be nothing - since it would be far easier that there be nothing than that there be something? Why does the world exist when it does not have to be?

The answer to this query cannot be found in the essence of the respective being since we have seen that neither the world as a whole nor any being in it contains the reason for its existence in itself and thus would explain it sufficiently. There is not any ground in an individual, why this or that individual (*tode ti*) is while infinitely many others of the same nature are not. The being as a whole, which is the mysterious unity of a non-necessary act of existence and nature, cannot answer our question either. Thus, we have to look outside the contingent being itself. But

where? In other contingently existing beings? Certainly not, for what cannot contain within itself the reason for its own being can never provide an ultimate answer to why other beings are. But we find that all beings in the world and the world as a whole, which is also multipliable (in time at least), are contingent. Since its existence is just there without having any reason within itself for being there, it demands a reason outside itself. Sartre has well seen the contingency of the world. He says that the *être en soi* (being when all consciousness is thought away) is opaque, just there, ultimate. It is not *causa sui* which is a meaningless notion. But instead of seeing that the contingent being needs a cause outside of itself in order to exist, Sartre claims that it is gratuitous, *de trop*, is there without reason: “Contingency itself is absolute and therefore perfectly gratuitous...Uncreated, without reason for being, being-in-itself is gratuitous for all eternity.”

Again, as in the case of temporality, we grasp two supreme and necessary metaphysical truths: Only a necessarily existing being can contain sufficient reason for its being within itself. Only it can give from and through itself the ultimate answer to the question: “Why is it?” Secondly, we find that it alone can provide the ultimate explanation for contingently existing beings because a) they must have a sufficient reason for their being and b) they do not possess in themselves a sufficient reason for being. Thus, only a necessarily existing being can give the ultimate explanation for why there are real beings at all. And it alone can also give the ultimate answer to why there are contingent beings.

But how is this possible? How can a being which does not begin to act in time produce temporal beings? How can a necessarily existing being perform actions that are not necessary, like His being, and create contingently existing beings? Must the absolute Being’s actions not also be necessary and thus necessarily produce whatever it creates? But how can the necessarily existing God create contingently existing, let alone free beings?

Here we touch upon some of the apories which Kant mentions in the context of the fourth antinomy of pure reason and which coincide with those immense difficulties that motivated Parmenides’ acosmistic position.

How can the effect caused by a necessary Being be contingent, and how can persons created by a necessary Being be free? This seems absurd and entirely impossible. Yet we know that it must be the only possible answer to why there are contingent and free beings in the world. If we cannot figure out how the eternal being produces temporal entities or how the necessary one brings forth contingent beings, we must not be amazed, for, as Descartes says in the *Principia Philosophiae*, it should not astonish us that many things in the infinite being and actions of God surpass our understanding if we contemplate the fact that He is infinite, our understanding finite. But the finitude of our understanding does not prevent us from seeing that, indeed, no other being can possibly answer the ultimate why of being except a necessarily existing one and that this being alone can contain in His own



necessarily existing Being the answer to why it is, and that therefore this *ens necessarium* alone can explain non-necessary entities, whose being is a great puzzle and riddle and demands an explanation.

At this point, we gain another crucial insight. If our insight into the contingency of the world is such that we understand that there is neither an intrinsic nor an extrinsic absolute necessity for the world's being but that it truly is contingent and non-necessary, then we also understand that the necessarily existing being must possess free will and act with freedom of choice in creating contingent beings. For if it acted by necessity, according to the necessity of its own being, it would bring forth the contingent world necessarily and the world would cease to be contingent. Then the divine action would flow from the eternal necessary essence of God and thus could only have an eternal and necessarily existing effect. Mysterious as it is to think of how an eternal and necessary God can create temporal and contingent beings, only divine personhood and freedom can possibly explain this. Of course, this freedom follows also from the consideration of the meaningfulness and purposiveness of the world but most of all from the existence of contingent persons. If there are free contingent beings, and if freedom is a pure perfection that also the absolute being possesses in the highest degree, and if, moreover, no being that does not possess free will can endow another being with free will, then certainly the cause of beings that possess free will must itself possess free will. No being besides a free one could create free will. Necessity and chance, pure nature not endowed with free will, could not be the sufficient reason for contingent free will. This, too, is evident from the very essence of contingent freedom and causality.

From the insight into the contingency of the world, one can also find one access to God as the first and uncaused cause of the universe (2nd via Thomas). For the beings that are contingent in their existence and could also not exist demand a cause through the power of which they exist and are what they are. Moreover, it is evident here, as it was from the essence of time, that this power must not only bring the non-necessary being into being but also sustain it in being. This does not immediately become evident because we cause many unnecessary objects in art without sustaining them continuously in being. But the decisive point is to comprehend the deep metaphysical level at which contingent beings need a cause for their coming to be and their continued being. The contingency of existence does make them unexplained in their own being from themselves at any moment of their existence. They call for a *causa essendi* and not only for a *causa fieri*. We speak here of an entirely non-empirical level of efficient causality that cannot be understood in terms of non-sufficient empirical causes that do not address the whole issue of the contingency of existence, which demands a similarly transcendent eternal cause as the structural temporal movement of beings-in-time of which we have spoken before.

If we consider the cause which gives being to non-necessarily existing beings, we comprehend another reason why this being can in no way be of and in the world, above and beyond the reason that no being in the world exists necessarily. But the

absolutely spiritual and omnipresent mode of acting and the production of all beings and free wills and finite persons is of such an admirable efficacy that absolutely no being in the world, even if it existed, necessarily, could carry it out. Thus, we see how we ascend from the contingency of existence to a necessarily existing being as the sole self-explanatory being and as the sole possible cause of the world and how this necessarily existing being has to be a personal being. Such necessarily existing and eternal personal beings we call God. God has to be utterly transcendent in his being, power and operation to the world. At the same time, God has to be intimately present in his creation of esse from nothing, and particularly in His act of freely producing free beings and truly contingent ones which are – while infinitely many possible beings are not – elected freely in a most mysterious manner from the unlimited possible worlds which equally could be but are not. On the background of this metaphysical knowledge, both our true contingency and its origin in a necessarily existing and freely acting being, the wonder and gift of our existence and the existence of a personal God emerges as it expresses itself in the poem cited above:

Ich danke Gott und freue mich  
 Wie's Kind zur Weihnachtsgabe,  
 dass ich bin, bin! Und dass ich dich,  
 Schön menschlich Antlitz! habe...

I thank God and rejoice,  
 Like a child upon receiving his Christmas gift,  
 That I am, am! And that I have thee,  
 Noble human countenance.<sup>119</sup>

In all its simplicity and religious tone, this *Täglich zu singen* of Matthias Claudius is a metaphysical poem and one of the few works which captures those immense truths of the *tertia via*.

## 2. From Being in Time that Moves towards Nothingness to Eternal and most Real Being

Thus far, we have fundamentally taken three steps: first, we have found that temporal being can neither explain its own existence and being through itself nor can it explain other temporal things; secondly, we have found that only eternal being is self-explanatory; thirdly, we have found that only eternal being, because it alone explains itself, can provide the ultimate reason for the finite and temporal world. The

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<sup>119</sup> Matthias Claudius. *Täglich zu Singen* (1. 1-4).

only possible source of the existence of temporal beings, which can absolutely not account for their own existence, must thus lie in the eternal being.

At the center of this argument lies the double intuition into the necessary and intelligible essence of temporality as non-self-explanatory, which reveals through itself – and in its ontic “mirror” – the essence of eternity, which alone is self-explanatory. While we have no direct experience of eternity, we grasp the necessary essential correlation between temporality and eternity, and this implies that we possess a true knowledge of the nature of both time and eternity.

We have seen that the being that moves and is not identical with itself does not remain absolutely the same, does not possess its life perfectly, but possesses a life that always flees into the past. Therefore it can likewise never explain its own being-in-time. And in its lack of possessing the sufficient reason for its being in itself, temporal being revealed to us a radically different being that is strictly correlated to and called for by it. The insight into the fact that a temporal being cannot explain itself goes necessarily hand in hand with the insight that only an eternal being can account for its own being, containing sufficient reason for itself in itself. This self-explanatory eternal being is immovable and absolutely and perfectly identical to itself and stands firm in his life. We have come to see that temporal life which consumes itself like the flame, cannot explain itself because it is lacking in full possession of life. Therefore only eternal and eternally actual life, which never consumes itself and never passes away, can explain itself. The imperfect-finite life of a temporal being does not provide the ultimate reason for its actuality.

Only the perfect, infinite life, which already wholly is what it is, can do so; only that life in which there is nothing past nor future, and which is wholly simultaneously, can explain itself. We have found that not that being which never remains and is not the full actuality of life but passes into actuality can explain itself. Rather only that which fully remains and which is the perfect activity and actuality of life; not that which is sometimes this and sometimes that, but only that being, which does not only appear to be and to live but fully IS and lives. Not that which is sometimes not and different, but only that which is never not and never alters; not that which is changeable, but that which is unchangeable; not that which contains distinction from other phases of its being, but that which is of an indistinguishable oneness. Not that life, the actualities of which are distant from one another, but the distance-less self-possession of life can explain itself. Not that which must actualize itself and develop in time, which gets more and more extended, which has earlier or later phases, can explain itself; rather only that which is never changing, which does not know the distance between the different actualities of its being because it always and perfectly IS, which does not develop and actualize itself or get more extended in its duration, or knows earlier or later, but rather that which purely IS. Not that, which in virtue of its temporality is not fully itself, but that which is in virtue of its very own being and life and which is fully what it is.

The eternal being cannot be that which is always in the sense of a mere “being at all times,” in the sense of never-ending in time, but that which possesses the “good” infinitude of being and life in such a way that it IS always. It is that which cannot and does not have to say, I was, but I AM.

The transition from the TO ESTIN (the IT IS) to the EIMI (I AM) is justified here by virtue of all the reflections that lead us to recognize that only a personal being can possess all perfection and all actuality of life. Not that being is in profound and perpetual motion, namely that which exists in time, but that which is unmoved and immovable can explain itself. Not that which never stands in its being, but that which is the self-standing and remaining. But these attributes can only be possessed by the eternal, never by the temporal that never firmly “stands” in its being. Not that which is restless, but only that which is in eternal rest, not that which cannot gather its whole being into unity, which lives in a plurality of moments, which is divisible but that which is indivisibly one and gathers its whole actuality in an everlasting single now.

It is all-decisive to see the strict and cogent character of this classical metaphysics of time and eternity, to see that this philosophical reflection and speculative knowledge of an eternal being that is not directly accessible to our experience, is still phenomenologically grounded in the self-given and extremely intelligible nature of time and temporality, as well as in the absolute necessity which implies that temporal nature cannot explain itself. Likewise necessary and intelligible is the nature of the eternal being, which is reflected, again with essential necessity, in the essential traits of time.

And yet, in spite of the radical difference between time and eternity, the temporal being can truly be analogous to the eternal. As the eternal being gathers all past and future and exceeds them in a single NOW, the finite beings, analogously, in the extended island of lived time possess a present actuality that bridges the abyss of infinitely many distinct moments into which that temporal being cannot be dissolved. While the eternal being possesses its perfection in standing in itself, the temporal being can only imitate the plenitude of the eternal being in the duration of time, in realizing its perfection in a multiplicity of moments, in which it actualizes true and pure perfections, which are truly analogous to the perfection of infinitely self-possessing life. Also, the dynamic force of life and the being of the absolute being can be imitated and analogously represented in that actuality of existence, being, and life of the finite entity. The perfect self-possession in consciousness and personhood is truly represented analogously in the finite personhood and self-possession of human consciousness and in memory. So we can say with Plotinus<sup>120</sup> that the temporal being “can imitate the perfect, whole being that is gathered in itself and

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<sup>120</sup> See Plotinus, *Ennead* III, 7, xi, 55-56.

perfectly infinite, when it, in regaining its being always again (in time), remains in being.” But also this aspect of analogy between eternal and temporal being will become much clearer in the light of chapters 11 and 12. We have come to the conclusion that eternal being is not the negation of time, the simple absence, as in nothingness, but it must be conceived in the light of the all-perfect nature and is the transcendent archetype and first analogate of all temporal things. We can now also conceive that the eternal being IS present at and in all times, that it shares with the temporal being duration but possesses that duration perfectly and not imperfectly, as things temporal. Eternity is not so much the opposite of time as it encompasses within its perfect actuality all times and simultaneously transcends them because they can never actualize absolute infinity of duration.

Also, the absolute transcendence of God over the world has become clear through the metaphysical reflections of this chapter. For it is evident that no being in the world could ever possess eternity in the sense of the perfect and simultaneous possession of all life and actuality. Therefore, the entity, which alone is and can be eternal, must be radically distinct from each and every being in the world and from all entities in the world in their totality. Here, we touch on the true ontological difference between the beings (*die Seienden*) and the being (*das Sein*), which Heidegger has radically falsified. Martin Heidegger, by reducing both beings and Being to the sphere of the temporal, undermined classical metaphysics and deprived himself of the possibility of recognizing the true and infinite ontological difference between entities and beings that are in time and the only full and true Being, which lives in everlasting eternity, and of which man is not the pastor. This absolute Being must be a person and does not depend on Dasein (“being there” - man), but through Him alone, Dasein (man) receives Being and the actuality of existence (*Sein*), which differs in all temporal entities from their essence.