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**BEING AS THE SOURCE OF ALL IDEAS ACCORDING TO ANTONIO ROSMINI**

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**A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE BACCALAUREATE DEGREE IN  
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## DECLARATION

I declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the three years' degree in philosophy. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit.

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## **DEDICATION**

This research is in honor of my parents, Mr. John Zacharia and Ms. Agnes Linda, my brother Stanislaus and my sisters (Juliana and Jackline), and to all people in the society where I have grown up.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I want to start by expressing my gratitude to the omnipotent God for protecting me throughout the entire time. Secondly, my regards to my entire family particularly to my late mother Agnes Linda for her care and unconditional love she had for me, and for the rest of the members thank you all.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This long essay is about the role played by Rosmini's idea of being as the source of all ideas. It will concentrate on how we derive several other concepts from the concept of being. Rosmini, a rationalist, will aid us in comprehending the notion of being the entrance to all concepts. The concept of being can be referred to as "truth" when it is seen as the representative of things insofar as they are known. In addition, this concept of being is known in ethics as the fundamental moral law and the basis for all moral judgments. This long essay is presented in four chapters, namely thesis design, the origin and nature of the idea of being, idea of being in relation to other ideas, and the possible application. Furthermore, each chapter has both an introduction and conclusion, also this paper contains a general conclusion, footnotes and sources of the material used. Chapter one talks about thesis design. In this chapter we shall introduce the work generally starting from the background, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, literature review, research methodology, theoretical framework, research findings and conclusion. The second chapter introduces us the philosophical meaning of the idea of being according to Rosmini. In this chapter we shall see the very nature and origin of the idea of being, we shall also see the life and works of Antonio Rosmini and the conclusion. The third chapter will discuss how truth, goodness, and justice relate to the concept of being. We shall also see how the concept of being is also called the first moral law in ethics. In the fourth chapter we shall explain the possible applications of the idea of being. In this chapter, we'll explore how the principle by which we know things changes when the concept of being is applied to them. The final chapter will be a summary, in which we shall discuss the significance of the notion of being, or the light of reason, as Rosmini refers to it, as the only means of understanding other notions. In this chapter we shall conclude that it is through the idea of being we know other ideas, that is through understanding the meaning of our existence we can come to the knowledge of other ideas. In summary, this paper is all about understanding the meaning of our existence, that in Rosmini's understanding the concept of being or the light of reason is given to us at our conception therefore, we cannot think of anything without this idea, and hence reason should be at the center of our life.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Introduction

This dissertation deals with the Idea of being. It is defined as an innate idea which is given to us at conception, this is the idea from which all other ideas develop. “This idea of being is the ‘ultimate reason’, cannot be divided and there is no other idea which can exist without the idea of being.”<sup>1</sup> We think ‘being’, that is, we know what being is, what existence is. That’s why we use the verb ‘to be’ all the time, ‘He is’ or ‘I am’ or ‘The sun exists’. We have the ability to think universally without restriction, and everyone agrees that this is a simple reality. Now why the idea of being? In searching of the meaning and the cause we may see the contradiction between the Empiricists and Rationalists.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

From definition Epistemology ‘is the science which studies the origin and the status of all our ideas’ I asked myself if the human mind is capable of arriving at the truth? And again, is our knowledge truthful?

Considering Rene Descartes who started his philosophy by doubting the knowledge he thought he had, subjecting it to a most thorough investigation. In his research, he discovered a fundamental doubt toward what he had previously believed to be an unquestionable fact, "Cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am). The works of John Locke all lied on the statement that ‘All ideas come to us through the senses’<sup>2</sup> This made me to think whether it was true or false.

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<sup>1</sup> AA Belsito, *Rosmini today at the Spring of knowledge* (Rosmini Publication, 2005), 29.

<sup>2</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Pennsylvania state University, 1999), 87.



The works of Rosmini from metaphysics to ethics all touched the fields of human knowledge, and particularly in his book of "*The Principle of Ethics*", He created the justification for his claim that "the light of reason is the immutable foundation of our moral conduct." and he argues on how and why we should subject our actions to the light of reason, by which for him he called it the idea of being.

Rosmini who was a great contemporary philosopher and theologian wrote several philosophical and theological books including *The Origin of Thoughts*, *The Origin of Ideas*, *Anthropology as an Aid to Moral Science*, *The Principles of Ethics*, *The Triune Being*, *Five wounds of the Church* and *Theosophy*. In his book of *The Principles of Ethics* he held that "all morality lays on the light of natural reason" (the idea of being), and as a result, the idea of being serves as the foundation for all other ideas especially our morality.

Based on his philosophy, it is evident that some human beings who are gifted with rationality have abandoned it and are acting depending on their taste and emotions. For instance, on September 21, 2013, Al-Shabaab assaulted Nairobi's West Gate Mall and resulted in the deaths of over 71 individuals.<sup>3</sup>.

Rosmini believed that 'there is only one innate idea, the idea of being. This idea is not produced by our spirit but comes from without and it enlightens our mind together with the world of our perception'<sup>4</sup>. This idea enters into all ideas communicating to them its special qualities like necessity, objectivity, immutability, eternity, universality. Rosmini calls it as the principle of all disciplines since is the ultimate reason of all sciences and is the absolute truth.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/04/westgate-mall-attacks-kenya>.

<sup>4</sup> AA Belsito, *At the spring of Knowledge*, 27.

The concept of being is the light which enlightens every person who enters into this world, and it comes from the mind of God as Rosmini calls that it is the light in the physical world which comes from the sun without being the sun. This idea is the 'single point' from which the universe of the mind has its origin. Therefore, the idea of being is the only principle that can help us to be moral agents, in such a way that our morality depends on natural reason and every human being has it by nature for it is innate. Guided by this principle that 'one must freely do good and avoid evil' we must have an ability to make a clear distinction between good and evil, and this process lies in the light of natural reason or the first moral law, that's why Rosmini calls it the idea of being which is the source of all other ideas.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Discussion on the idea of being started from the ancient to contemporary thinkers. In the contemporary world, this concept of the idea of being has solved the problems which had caused shipwreck to so many famous philosophers both ancient and modern. The amazing discovery of the idea of being as 'the single point' of all knowledge became the shining light not only for the solution of the issue with where ideas come from, but it manifested itself as being the starting point for all other branches of philosophy, and for natural and supernatural religion. In our world today, there are so many immoral and irrational actions which are against the rationality of human being. Actions like abortion, suicide cases, people killing one another and environment pollution. In the midst of all these where is the rationality of the human person? Our actions should depend on our rationality (the light of reason) or the idea of being. Then if this concept of being is universal and every human person possesses it at birth why some people act against it?

According to Antonio Rosmini we have an innate, universal idea which is the foundation of our first judgement, and this is the concept of being. If that is the case, then how is our judgement

possible if we assume that we do not previously have an innate universal idea? It is clear that, not every universal idea will be sufficient, it has to be a special one, the idea of existence. The idea of being is therefore the light of the mind and we use it to acknowledge being in whatever object our internal or external sensation make us feel.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To examine Rosmini's conception of the meaning and the origin of the idea of being
2. To examine the relationship between the idea of being and other ideas
3. To consider how the concept of being might be applied in relation to other concepts

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What is the meaning of the idea of being in Rosmini's philosophy as opposed to the other rationalists and empiricists?
2. What is the relationship between the idea of being and other ideas?
3. What is the application of the idea of being as the means of knowing all other things according to Rosmini in the contemporary society?

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Research**

The work's main objective is to examine critically the notion that it is the source of all other notions. The study will base on philosophical arguments which show that how other ideas depend on the idea of being. This long essay being purely analytical will be limited to the library research sources like books, magazines, journals and internet materials as well, and there will be no collecting of public opinions.

## **1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study**

Throughout the history of philosophy, the answer to the origin of thoughts and the creation of a solid foundation for all knowledge can be found in the discovery of the innate idea of being. Plato, Leibniz, and Kant were among the philosophers who failed to find a solution because they admitted far too many innate notions. Plato believed that "all our thoughts are innate," but Leibniz and Kant believed that only "traces" of ideas are inborn, specifically the 14 categories. Because they all accepted too many innate notions, they were unable to identify the "mother of all ideas," the underlying concept that serves as the basis for all other concepts, the concept of being, in Rosmini's view. As a result, their systems cannot offer solid philosophical foundations.

We hope this paper will add materials on the research topic and will help people to comprehend the concept of oneself as the origin of all other concepts. Knowing that humans are formed intelligent from birth by the constant perception of the notion of being—an idea that is independent of them, is supplied to them always unchanged, and whose light creates intelligence will also be helpful. Moreover, based on the metaphysics and the principle of ethics of Rosmini, we suppose this paper will help people understand the idea of being and act according to the innate first moral law.

## **1.7 Literature Review**

This section comprises the evaluation of texts which relate to our research topic. Antonio Rosmini was not the first philosopher to talk about the idea of being. The evolution of this concept started from the ancient period of philosophy to contemporary time. Despite the diversity of epistemological theories, Rosmini was not the primary source of the idea rather he built his arguments and foundation on his predecessors. Therefore, there are so many philosophers in

history who have discussed the idea of being, or we may call it the idea of the rationality, some of them are;

According to *Plato* the idea of being, which is the last and most challenging idea to be acknowledged, is the purest of all ideas. In many places he compares the mind with the eye which sees only by means of the sun's rays. The idea of 'ens' (being) by which Plato calls, it is the light which illumines the mind but is lacking to the senses. Rosmini says that this light comes from God (the ENS), though Plato states that 'this light is not God', a distinction which Platonists have abused, and he says that "The sun we see is not the sun itself"<sup>5</sup>

According to Plato the idea of being is the lamp illuminating all other things. To illustrate how challenging it is for us to get from the perception of sensible objects to the vision of understandable things and to "ens," he employs a picture. He envisions a straight, underground cave with an aperture at one end through which light travels directly to the other end. There are people in the cave who are chained in such a way that they are only able to look at the end wall and are never able to turn their heads or backs to see the opening and the light. Vases and statues of people and animals are placed at the cave's entrance so that they cast their shadows on this wall; as a result, the captives can only see the shadows who think that nothing else exists except the shadows<sup>6</sup>.

Plato discovered that the world of senses cannot give us knowledge of good or bad because it is in constant flux consequently he based his ethical principles on the notion that good takes the form of forms, meaning that the soul possesses this knowledge of good in the world of forms, through reminiscence the soul remembers the world of forms and all ethical principles hence in examining

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<sup>5</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Trans. John Llewelyn Davis and David James (New York: A.L. Burt Company Publishers, 1988), 184.

<sup>6</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, 210.

our life we can be moral<sup>7</sup>, Plato also held the view that there is no room for error in the context of reason (the notion of being).

According to *St Thomas* the idea of being is 'the light of the acting intellect' and he says that "all of our knowledge is first implanted within us through universal notions that are immediately understood by the light of the acting intellect. These universal ideas serve as what may be described as universal criteria by which we assess other things that we are aware of in advance. Additionally, St. Thomas asserts in his teaching that students already possess some knowledge, however imperfectly. It is included in foundational ideas because the universal concepts that are naturally present to us are like seeds that hold all we can ever know."<sup>8</sup>

According to St Thomas he contends that God himself is the source of the intellectual light that the intellect derives from, and that "such an active power is a form of participation in the intellectual light from different substances." Thomas establishes the absurdity of assuming that an entity outside of us might be the acting intellect. For him, it is ludicrous to think that human nature would be deficient in any necessary knowledge, or in the ability to carry out the action for which it is fundamentally created. Thomas believed that without the principles necessary for him to engage in his own proper activity understanding and without the assistance of his two intellects, man would not have been adequately created by nature (possible and acting intellects) that is an intellect in potency and an intellect in act.

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<sup>7</sup> D. Composta, *History of Ancient Philosophy*, Trans, by Myroslow (Rome, Urbaniana University Press ,1990), 192.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Herbert, *De Veritate*, Trans by Merick H. Carre (Bristol: University of Bristol, 1937), 55.

## **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

This thesis will be informed by Rosmini's metaphysics which asserts that all other notions, including our moral behavior, come from the concept of existence. This concept of being, which only humans possess and animals do not, is ingrained in the human spirit and serves as the light that illuminates our darkness.

Rosmini's metaphysics is the most relevant to this study and to the contemporary world because the innate idea of being solves the problem of how we can make the very first judgment. Every judgment requires, as a predicate, a universal idea, but all universal ideas are the product of a judgement. We can form the initial judgment and all subsequent judgments using the innate notion of being and the universal idea of being.

## **1.9 Methodology of the Research**

In this paper we shall use a couple of philosophical methods which will help us to investigate critically the study and draw a suitable conclusion. This paper being purely analytical we shall use different materials from the library, also will rise criticism, arguments and counterarguments on different philosophical positions concerning the idea of being which will help us to understand also other ideas how do they relate to this idea of being.

## **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has explained in detail what the long essay is all about. From chapter one we have realized that this paper will help us to know the necessity of the idea of being to other ideas. The reason why we focus on the idea of being is that because it is the light which illumines our mind, and it is the single point which is the source of all thoughts, of all ideas in the 'universe' of the mind, and in this light, there is no possibility of making an error.

When we ask ourselves, we have many ideas in our minds, where do they come from? How did we get all these ideas? One may begin by saying that we got our ideas through the senses, that we have the idea of a 'pen', the idea 'horse' simply because we have experienced by either seen or touch. The question comes in now How can sensations produce ideas given their completely opposite qualities? A particular sensation cannot produce a universal idea. These questions will take us to the next chapter which will give us in detail the meaning, origin and the concept of the idea of being according to Rosmini.



## CHAPTER TWO

### AN OVERVIEW ON THE IDEA OF BEING ACCORDING TO ROSMINI

#### 2.0 Introduction

We shall briefly cover Rosmini's life and thoughts in this chapter, which are informed by his extensive work on metaphysics. *A New Essay concerning the Origin of Ideas*.

Rosmini also known as the philosopher of being was the only philosopher who laid a foundation and thought that God is the source of the idea of being. The idea of being by which Rosmini calls it as the light of reason or the first moral law is the main idea in most of all his works especially in ethics and the origin of ideas.

In this chapter, we shall also see how Rosmini's idea of being is the mother of all ideas and how other ideas proceed from the idea of being. We shall be able to know the origin and nature of the idea of being as it plays a great role in knowing other ideas and as the basis of the first moral law. Through the concept of being we shall know how we can make the very first judgement, and hence at the end of this chapter we shall be able to answer questions like, does this idea of being come from bodily sensation? Does it originate from a sense of one's own existence?

Moreover, we shall see how this idea of being relates to the idea of good in which Rosmini puts it very clearly that the idea of being was imprinted to us by God, and therefore the idea of good comes after this idea of being. Consequently, since this notion of being is the source of all concepts, it must serve as our compass.

## 2.1 The Life of Rosmini

Antonio Rosmini Serbati, an Italian philosopher and a theologian was born on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1797 at Rovereto in northern Italy. When he was seven years old, he started school, finished the required coursework, and simultaneously taught himself as a polymath in his uncle's library. He learned to read at home from the Bible and religious books,”<sup>9</sup> he read a lot of books, which demonstrated his intellectual prowess. Rosmini had read or consulted 428 books in a year when he was 17 years old.”<sup>10</sup> After completing his academic education at the Padua University's faculty of theology and canon law, he also pursued some in-depth study of medicine because, after all, his ordination took place in 1821.

He wrote so many books of he edited correspondence (about two-thirds of all his letters, some of which become treaties on their own, run to 13 volumes of over 700 pages apiece) and more than 80 volumes on every topic related to philosophy and theology”<sup>11</sup> in which most of them reconciled between reason and faith. One of his great Principles is the basic moral rule that governs all other moral rules; it is the mental construct that one uses to determine if an action is moral or immoral. He says, "In whatever you do, follow the light of reason."<sup>12</sup> whereby in the light of reason there is no possibility of making an error.

Rosmini also known as the persecuted prophet faced a lot of challenges especially in his writings, in which many people could not understand his writings and this led to some of his books like *Five wounds of the Holy Church* and *The Civil Constitution according to Social Justice* to be put on the

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<sup>9</sup> Denis Cleary, *Antonio Rosmini, Introduction to His life and Teaching* (Rosmini house, 1992), 10.

<sup>10</sup> J. Anthony Dewhirst, *An introduction to the Thoughts of Blessed Antonio Rosmini* (Rosmini house, 1988), 14.

<sup>11</sup> Denis Cleary, *Antonio Rosmini, Introduction to His life and Teaching*, 10.

<sup>12</sup> J. Anthony Dewhirst, *Rosmini's theory of Ethics* (Washington, Tyne and Wear, 2000), 21.

index of forbidden books for a long time<sup>13</sup>, for they were challenging both the church and the society. In his book *Five wounds of the Church*, Rosmini addressed the five major problems as wounds in the church, which are, the cleric-clergy rift in liturgy, the clergy's inadequate education, the bishops' divide, the nomination of bishops being left up to the people, and the limitations on the church's freedom to use her own possessions at her leisure.<sup>14</sup> In 1832 when he published the five wounds of the church, Pope Pius IX under the influence of cardinals and bishops forced Rosmini to explain what he had written in that book, and they also viewed him as Pope Pius IX's wicked genie and a most formidable foe.'<sup>15</sup>

Though some of his books were put in the index of the forbidden books, Rosmini continued writing books until he died in 1855 while writing his last book on Theosophy. Apart from being a philosopher and theologian, he founded a congregation in the year 1828 called the society of charity which is known as nowadays as the Institute of Charity for priests and brothers, and he is also known as the founder of the sisters of divine providence as well.

According to Rosmini, the only inborn thought that God put in our minds at conception is the idea of being, the first moral law, or the light of reason, and through these all-other ideas follow or they depend on it for them to exist, this is found in his book of *An Essay Concerning the Origin of Ideas*.

## **2.2 Rosmini on the Concept of Being**

Antonio Rosmini being one of the rationalists holds that “we are conceived with the notion of being, which is an innate thought that we are born with,”<sup>16</sup> this is the idea from which all other

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<sup>13</sup> C. Leetham, *Rosmini: Priest, Philosopher and Patriot*, (Durham, Rosmini house, 1992), 397.

<sup>14</sup> AA Belsito, *The five wounds of the Holy Church*, (Rosmini Publications, 2014), 3.

<sup>15</sup> AA Belsito, *The five wounds of the Holy Church*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> AA Belsito, *Rosmini today at the Spring of Knowledge*, 86.

ideas develop. This idea of being is the ‘ultimate reason’ which cannot be divided and there is no other idea which can exist without this idea of being.

Rosmini referred to the concept of being as the only innate idea in the human mind which is found neither in sensations nor reflection. It is innate in the human spirit and was put in it by God at conception. He calls this idea as the mother of all ideas. The concept of being is the light which helps us to acquire knowledge, it can be compared to the light of the sun which enlightens everything on the universe without it being the sun itself.

The concept of being is the source of reason that illuminates our minds. It does not originate in our spirits; rather, our minds consider the concept of being in all of its total objectivity. According to Rosmini the innate idea though having its divine origin it is not the matter of faith but the pure reason this will conclude that the idea of being is present in everyone without exception, the same as the light of the sun enlightens everyone without exception. This idea of being is the light which illumines our minds that’s why Rosmini used the terms “concept of being” and “light of reason” are used synonymously.

According to Rosmini, the concept of being is the solitary concept necessary for the existence of all others. Because of this, the concept of being is the most universal concept and endures after the last feasible abstraction. Without it, all thought is halted, and all other concepts are impractical.

### **2.3 The Nature of the Idea of Being**

According to Rosmini, the concept of pure being cannot be represented by a sensible image since a sensible image cannot be created from anything unless that something is decided, personalized, corporeal, and perceivable through the senses.

The concept of being does not refer to some abstract or unknown entity, like P, Q, or R in mathematics, that has attributes other than real existence. It just refers to the idea of being, mere possibility, and does not involve judgment or persuasion about the existence of even an undecided ens.

“Therefore, the last abstraction and the most universal idea of all is what we might simply refer to as the idea of existence.”<sup>17</sup> Rosmini would contend that without the concept of being, we are unable to think of anything. Existence is the most universally shared attribute among all others, and without the concept of existence, we cannot have knowledge or thought. As an illustration, if you take any object, you like and first abstract its specific qualities, then its fewer common qualities, then its more common qualities, and so on, the final quality will be existence, by means of which you can still think something, an ens. However, without its mode of existence, the object of your thought is a perfectly undetermined something unknown as to its qualities, an X. However, it is something because existence still exists even though it is still unknown, thus it is not nothing because nothing can possibly exist. Either you believe that an ens can or will exist with all the traits required for its existence, even though you are unaware of them, or you are not considering these possibilities. However, what you are thinking is a thought, although one that is entirely speculative. However, if you eventually remove being, the most universal of all qualities, nothing is left in your mind; thought has vanished, and with it any notion of the ens.”<sup>18</sup>

Since all other ideas are impossibly impossible without the idea of being, which endures after the last possible abstraction, it is the universal thought.

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<sup>17</sup> Antonio Rosmini, *A New Essay Concerning the Origin of Ideas* (Durham: Rosmini house, 2001), Volume 2, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Antonio Rosmini, *A New Essay Concerning the Origin of Ideas*, 17.

## **2.4. Origin of the Idea of Being**

Antonio Rosmini asserts that this concept of being is not derived from physiological experience. Since sensations are merely specific alterations or experiences in our own constitution and cannot help us perceive the world objectively in the manner characterized by intellectual perception, what is felt only exists in relation to ourselves. Therefore, sensation simply allows us to perceive how something external to us is related to us and how much influence it has over us. The subject of this power could never be presented to us as it is in itself if our senses were our only means of communication. We do not see existence in and of itself since the terms "to exist in itself" and "to be felt" denote opposites of what is absolute and what is relative, concepts which directly exclude one another. Therefore, sensation can only let us perceive something in relation to us and not as it is in itself. According to Rosmini, the notion of being is supplied to us in some way by sensations because sensations are merely some alterations in us while ideas are mental conceptions of something that existing irrespective of any modification or experience in another person.

The perception of one's own existence does not give rise to the concept of being. Since emotion is merely a persistent, internal experience, it follows that the idea of being, and thus all other ideas, cannot come to us from that source. Therefore, it is now necessary to distinguish between the emotional sensation I have about myself and my ideas or logical view of myself. The way I feel about myself is basic. The idea, on the other hand, is made up of two components, according to Rosmini: the feeling of myself, which is the object of knowledge; and the idea of being, which is the form to which the mind refers the feeling of myself and thereby knows it. This means that I think of myself as an ens and consider it to be true in and of itself. I am subject, and as such, I am entirely specific in relation to myself, a true, established ens. I must evaluate if this is anything that is objectively referred to as being not to myself just as I consider any other specific sensible thing

in order to understand this subject or have a notion of it. The sense of my own existence, which is the sensation of being rather than the idea of existence in all its universality, only provides me with my own specific existence. Since I must be innate to myself, my own feelings are innate; nonetheless, my intellect's ability to perceive my existence is acquired. The concept of being comes before the concept of myself. It is created by my intellectual perception of myself, which is created by the concept of existence.

Locke's reflection does not give rise to the concept of being. Locke's reflection enables us to comprehend the faculty by which our spirit focuses on our internal or exterior sensations (feeling includes here all the operations of our spirit felt by us). In other words, I use Locke to explain myself. This explanation of Locke's reflection is supported by a comparison between what he says about reflection and what he says about intrinsic notions. In fact, according to his definition of reflection, it is "the perception of the operations of our own mind within us while it is employed about the concepts it has obtained from the senses."<sup>19</sup> is too ambiguous to have any systematic application.

Since we cannot have ideas without the idea of being, it is assumed that ideas are already established if they are just the perception of the activities of our spirit on concepts provided by our senses. Rosmini stated that Locke's reflection is only a faculty for watching and discovering what is in our experiences and feelings without adding anything to either, and he emphasized that the idea of being is not contained in any way in either exterior sensations or our internal feelings. Locke's reflection reveals that it is unable to identify what is absent from our senses or feelings and,

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<sup>19</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 54.

as a result, is unable to identify the missing notion of being. Therefore, this concept must originate from another source.

Therefore, Locke's reflection is not possible. Without concepts to guide our spirits, enable them to integrate and evaluate senses, and allow them to freely move their attention from reflection to sensation, how can we reflect on our sensations in order to extract ideas from them? Our spirit can focus on any sensation for greater enjoyment when it only has senses and no ideas. This isn't introspection in the traditional sense; rather, it's a reminder to pay attention to our senses rather than to our understanding. In reality, it would be more accurate to describe it as an application of instinctual, animal force that is naturally drawn in by the pleasurable sensation rather than attention.

In the act of perception, the concept of being does not first emerge in our spirits. Because bodily sensation does not include the concept of being, it frequently cannot be used as the basis for reflection, which just observes the elements of feeling that already exist without adding anything new. We have yet to determine whether the concept of being manifests to our spirit through an act of feeling or reflection in a way that compels us to think about and acquire it. Self-observation does not reveal any knowledge of any sudden presence of this notion in us or of any immediate illumination, indicating that the idea of being does not exist in our spirit during the act of perception, it doesn't explain the enormous step our spirit must take to go from not having this concept to having it; it also doesn't provide us any memories of either when we didn't have it or when we did. On the contrary, we are simply aware of how often this notion which we have always taken to be our own is used.

Being is a concept that is inborn. The conclusion that the concept of being is innate follows from what has already been explained. If the concept is so crucial to the formation of all our ideas that



the thought process would be impossible without it, if it is not derived from sensations or extracted through reflection from internal or external sensations, if it was not created by God at the moment of perception, and if its emanation from ourselves is absurd, then the concept of being is innate. The theory that being is innate in our spirit and that we are born with the vision of a possible being but only become aware of it much later is the only remaining possibility.

The following provides evidence that there is no other case, which is proof by exclusion at the end. The presence of the concept of being in all of its universality is the reality that needs to be explained: If something exists, it was either created beforehand or was given to us by nature; there is no in-between. Again, there is no middle ground if it was generated later; it was either produced by us or by something else. Production by us must either be sensible (the activity of bodies) or insensible (an intelligent being other than ourselves, such as God), as there is never a third option, yet all of these two possibilities were disregarded. Because it has been condensed to alternatives and a middle phrase has been eliminated as nonsensical, the list of potential scenarios is now complete. The idea of being, however, is innate and not created, even if all the scenarios that assume it is something we acquire once we are born are ruled out. That's what we had to demonstrate.

In the first stages of our existence, the concept of being is concealed in our spirit and goes unnoticed and unspoken. Until our reflection is prompted to look for it and consider it, it goes unseen. But after enough thought has been put into it to identify it, the idea may be presented clearly and without hesitation.<sup>20</sup> In reality, this is what occurs in the early stages of our existence because our spirit lacks any external stimuli or interests that would compel it to dwell on itself. In

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<sup>20</sup> Antonio Rosmini, *A New Essay Concerning the Origin of Ideas*, Vol 2, 48.

fact, everything that influences our soul causes it to focus on external, sensible objects, which pulls it away from itself. Our senses are bombarded with many new experiences from the beginning, and as we mature, the ability to reflect is stimulated. Even when we are stimulated in this way, we do not always identify and determine the thought immediately or effortlessly. In fact, in order to be conscious of an idea in our mind, we must be drawn to do so by some unique need or interest in addition to noting it affectively.

Rosmini claimed that if every thought and event in our spirit were constantly available to us, human philosophy would be pointless because everyone would be a philosopher or, more accurately, would have a thorough understanding of the spirit without the precise philosophical meditations necessary to ascertain what is in us. No philosopher would know more than another or be able to confirm a colleague's denials about our spirit or right observations. No matter how bizarre it may sound, observation requires us to draw the conclusion that ideas may exist in our minds without conscious advertence, awareness, affirmation, or statement on our side. We could be oblivious of them and unable to assert them to ourselves or others. Therefore, this issue does not stop us from proposing that existence is something that is innate. It is undeniable that we are unable to witness this concept in the early stages of our existence and for a long time afterward since when everything draws our attention to the outer world, there is no purpose or stimulation for us to focus on our spirit inside rather than on any exterior issues. Even when sufficiently stimulated in early adulthood to look for what is present and happening in our spirits, our attention is unable to readily uncover this concept of pure existence.

To identify the idea of pure being in the ideas we already have ideas of bodies it requires a very difficult abstraction to separate it from the other elements making up these ideas. If we seek to view the idea directly as it is, there is nothing to bring attention to it. After all the accidents, forms,

and modes of being of an item have been distinguished and detached from it, we can only arrive at this concept by a final abstraction.

Rosmini stated that the spirit needs a lot of practice to be able to continue a succession of abstractions all the way to the point where it discovers the concept of being. Because of this, very few people have the time or resources to achieve this. Many give up, turning away from the path that, if only they had the fortitude to take it, would have brought them to the reflex thought. One of the most skilled abstract thinkers, Kant fell short of completing his schemata, the twelve categories, and the structure of space and time. These are merely somewhat general modes of the idea of being, which, however, resides considerably beyond them and is actively immune from all modes of determination.

## **2.5 How other Ideas develop from the Idea of Being**

According to Rosmini the one innate notion in the human mind, the idea of being, is the source of all other ideas. We can have no idea of anything without first conceiving possible existence, which constitutes the formal a priori part of our knowledge, and if an idea contains something other than the mental conception of being, this can only be a mode of being. Rosmini was able to explain the origin of all other ideas through this concept of the idea of being. It implies that every concept at all is either independent of mode or is somewhat influenced by its modes. The outcome establishes knowledge a posteriori or the subject of knowledge<sup>21</sup>.

Rosmini established a link between the first judgment and the concept of being such that our assessments are influenced by this concept. For him, the idea of being, without which they would not exist, is the source of all principles, including moral principles and those of logic (such as the

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<sup>21</sup> Antonio Rosmini, *The origin of Thought*, Trans by D. Cleary and T. Watson (Durham: Rosmini house, 1987), 43.

principles of cognition, contradiction, substance, and effect and cause), which serve as our daily guides.

Let's use a football as an example. When I imagine a football, I envision two things: first, something that can exist because I could never imagine a football without also picturing something that can exist, and second, something that has a specific size, weight, and shape. Now that I've been given the notion of a potential existence, all remains is for me to explain how I came to think of this football. I need to demonstrate how characteristics like weight, shape, size, color, and others affect the potential being I infer. This proves that these being determinations are proposed to my spirit by the senses that detect them outside, and that I recall what I have perceived.

## **2.6 Conclusion.**

This chapter has shown us in detail Antonio Rosmini's philosophical stance on the concept of being, which is deeply ingrained in human nature. We have shown that the concept of being is the ultimate moral law, meaning that it may be used to make judgments about moral good as well as about what is good in general.

Some philosophers like John Locke, Bishop Berkeley, David Hume, Thomas Reid and Etienne de Condillac are the main opponents of Rosmini's idea of being. This is because they did not admit the existence of the innate idea. For them as empiricists believed that ideas have their origin from sense and they refuted innate ideas. Kant believed in the existence of many innate ideas which have their origin in the human spirit, he was very close to Rosmini's understanding but the only mistake he made was to believe in many innate ideas which have their origin in the human spirit, in his understanding he made knowledge objective. The concept of being is the gate way of knowing all other ideas since all other ideas depend on it, how we make our first judgements all

arise from the idea of being. Now in the next chapter we shall discuss the idea of being in relation to the idea of truth and justice.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE IDEA OF TRUTH, JUSTICE AND GOOD IN RELATION TO THE IDEA OF BEING

#### 3.0 Introduction

The concept of being is referred to as “truth,” “justice,” or “beauty” depending on the relationship and so serves as the ultimate standard or first and unwavering guide for judging all truths, all deeds, and all varieties of beauty. The concept of fairness is the moral science's guiding principle, and the concept of truth is the logic's guiding concept.

The concept of truth has been the greatest challenge among different philosophical schools for even some deny the existence of absolute or objective truth and consider truth as constructed by society, religion and traditions, they say that it is a man-made reality. It is very important for us to distinguish ‘certainty’ from ‘truth’ since we may sometimes entertain the greatest certainty for that which is false.

Truth is the idea of being as argued by Rosmini, “it is the mother of all ideas and the ultimate reason of any proposition”<sup>22</sup> therefore it is not man-made, it comes us from without and is the light which enlightens every person.

In this chapter we shall discuss the relationship between truth, justice and the idea of truth. Some of the questions we shall discuss are, if certainty is a strong, convincing argument that supports the truth, then are all certainties ultimately based on the idea of being? When do we know the idea of truth and justice as well? Then we shall also look how different philosophers in the course of

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<sup>22</sup> AA Belsito, *At the Spring of Knowledge*, 111.

history of philosophy explained the concept of truth and justice, then the take of Rosmini on the concepts.

### **3.1 The Idea of Truth**

Today's trend among philosophers is to deny the existence of absolute Truth and to consider truth as constructed by society, religion, traditions, and they say that it is a man-made reality. But According to Rosmini is that we are bound to truth by the bowels from the moment of conception therefore Truth is the concept of being which is the mother of all ideas and the ultimate reason of any proposition, it is not man-made for it comes to us from without and is the light that enlightens every person.

There are as many truths as there are ideas. Rosmini defines Idea as 'the exemplar of things', since it contains the essence of things. He gives an example that an animal is a horse if it corresponds to its exemplar of horse, its idea. The truth about the horse, sun, and the whale is to be found in the ideas of horse, sun and whale, being the ideas, the exemplar containing the essential features of the horse, sun and whale. To call 'an axe an axe' or its equivalent is expressing the same truth.

Rosmini defines Truth that 'is the exemplar of things'<sup>23</sup>. A relationship with that which is copied from the exemplar, or with its duplicate, is included in the concept of an exemplar. When a duplicate exactly matches its original, it is said to be "true." As a result, when we state that Truth is the exemplar and that things are true when they follow their exemplar, that is, when they share in Truth, we must make a distinction between truth and truthful things.

A thing's similarity to its exemplar defines its truth. When a thing resembles its exemplar in truth, this term is utilized. By citing this truth, we can affirm the object's veracity and demonstrate how

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<sup>23</sup> Antonio Rosmini, *A New Essay Concerning the Origin of Ideas*, vol 3, 62.

it corresponds to the example from which it was derived. According to Rosmini, in order to have a precise, distinct notion of likeness the sole concept by which we can determine if something is genuine or false, we must first have that concept in our minds.

Any object, even one that is external, can be regarded as an example as long as we take into account how it relates to other beings that must be created in accordance with and similar to it. In this sense, we may say that the entirety of nature serves as an example for artists who copy and depict its various components. Since only a mental construct may function as an exemplar, an exemplar is essentially only an idea and frequently has an associated visual.

For Avicenna ‘the quality of something's existence that is permanent to it is what is meant by that thing's truth<sup>24</sup> but for Rosmini the concept truth in so far as an idea is the exemplar of things, while Truth, according to St. Thomas, “is rightly in the intellect and less properly in things, just as we say a medication is healthy, but technically speaking healthy is solely in the animal.”<sup>25</sup>

Truth can also be used in everyday speech with an absolute meaning and is always singular. This is what the skeptics mean when they assert that knowledge of the truth is possible or that it does not exist. But when the word is employed in this way, what meaning has humanity given it? If a concept symbolizes or informs us of a class of entia, it serves as an example of that class and is exclusive to that group. The manner and degree of being that distinguishes and confines members of the same species. However, all things, regardless of their species, share a common ingredient that makes them all equal, and this element is existence itself (regardless of its modes and degrees).

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<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics; The complete works of Aristotle*, Edited by Jonathan Barres (Princeton: University press princeton, N.J, 1991), 121.

<sup>25</sup> Herbert Edward, *De veritate*, 76.



According to Rosmini, the concept of being is that which encompasses all entia of all species and by which all entia are recognized and reduced; as a result, it is referred to as the specie of species. The concept of being also differs from all species and genera in a way that makes all of them the same concept with some restrictions. Consequently, if each species and genus of things has a unique exemplar, or truth in the specific or generic idea, if there is another idea above this exemplar that is the exemplar and thus the truth of all possible species, and if this last idea is the concept of pure being, then the truth of everything is the idea of being. Therefore, the concept of being can be referred to as “truth” when it is viewed as the standard for things in the sense that we are aware of them. Because it is the universal exemplar and the one that expresses that in which all things are equal, the thought of being is the one, universal, absolute truth by which we know everything.

### **3.2 Truth and Certainty**

Truth is the idea of being, the exemplar of all exemplars, and so to say, certainty is a strong, convincing argument that supports the truth as discussed by Rosmini. All certainties are ultimately based on the idea of being which is the reason of all reasons.

According to Rosmini, ‘Certainty’ and ‘Truth’ are not the same thing. We may entertain the greatest certainty for something which is not in accordance with the truth. Certainty based on truth needs a reason which displays the splendor of truth. All our certainties must be based on valid reasons not on blind faith. It is true that often we may have certainties without thinking of the reasons behind them, yet they are reasonable certainties because we can provide a reason if necessary.

Descartes in tackling the problem of truth, he understood that before we can talk sense about anything we need to know if we can reach certainty about truth. Can we be sure that there is an objective truth? Can we be sure that the human mind has the ability to arrive at the objective truth?

Do we possess any truth that can be seen rationally and universally as unassailable from any doubt whatsoever? In his meditation he argued that truth is available to us. He established the fundamental truth “Cogito ergo Sum” (I think therefore I am) which he brought the unshakable rock on which to build the edifice of truth.

Rosmini criticized Descartes’ claim on the basis that the Cogito ergo Sum cannot be the very first truth since it is already a ‘reflection’ presuming other truths which had not been explained, example the concepts of existence and the “I”. The search for the truth does not require us to travel too far from home or to engage in the most arduous and painful investigation. Since truth is the idea of being, it is with us from the moment of our conception and gives us intelligence. Since childhood, we have used this idea constantly, and no idea is uninfluenced by the notion that it is based on reality. Truth is always and walks alongside us.

We see the words ‘truth’ and ‘the idea of being’ have been used as equal interchangeability how then can it be said that the concept of being is the universal truth? What does it mean to state that the truth and the idea of being are two sides of the same light that illuminates every man in this world? As we have seen, the concept of being permeates all of our concepts, serves as the furthest abstraction from any concept, and serves as the source of all of our knowledge, which is therefore one in its whole. The principle of knowing is the notion of being, which encompasses all other ideas and all potential knowledge.

We can ask ourselves when can we acquire ‘certainty’ about the knowledge we possess? What can give us the certainty needed for our progress in the field of knowledge and for our own peace of mind? In what sense is the idea of being the principle of certainty? According to Rosmini, certainty is derived from three factors, which are (Truth in the object, firm persuasion in the subject, and a reason producing the persuasion). Now because certainty depends upon a reason that convinces us

and compels us to assent to a proposition, it can never be blind or purely instinctive action of our spirit.

For Rosmini truth is the ultimate or supreme reason of a proposition for when we want to know whether a proposition is true or false, we seek its reason. This reason may be expressed by another proposition whose reason we also want to know. To be completely satisfied we need to move from one proposition to another, from one reason to another until we reach the self-evident ultimate reason. We then say we have grasped the truth of the first proposition intuitively because we have the supreme principle of its certainty, the supreme reason. As soon as we know the ultimate reason, we may say that we see the truth of the matter. Thus, a reason is the general cause of certainty. Persuasion in us is produced by a reason that manifests the truth of the proposition.

Whenever we see the truth in what is presented to our mind, we need no other motive or reason for being certain of the thing that has been thought. Truth is therefore identical with the ultimate or supreme reason of any proposition. Each proposition can have only one ultimate reason by which is the truth of the proposition and before which our mind immediately gives its assent, it is this ultimate reason that generates a firm and reasonable persuasion. It is true that we reach the final reason by a series of subordinate reasons, these minor reasons do not give us certainty until we reach the final reason or the truth of proposition.

Example of a number of subordinate reasons that become more and more general as they ascend towards the final reason confirming the truth of the first proposition, “The human being is the noblest of animals”, because the intelligence with the human being is endowed is nobler than feeling. Because intelligence has being in general as its object, while feeling is confined to a body. The being seen by the intelligence has the divine qualities of objectivity, immutability, eternity, necessity, universal, simplicity and absoluteness, while the bodily feeling is particular, finite,

temporary, limited, subjective and mutable. The human being has the eternal and the universal as his/her friend, while the animal cannot move outside its own limited and temporal feelings. The eternal and universal seen in the idea of being will find its rest in the absolute Real Being (God), whereas the corporeal, temporal feelings of the animal will disintegrate and perish.

Once we reach the final reason, we know the truth of the first proposition and of all propositions following the first, and at this stage knowledge and truth become one. It is clear that the final reason must be seen immediately as true by our faculty of intuition so that our mind can find rest and assurance in the truth which it sees how clearly and distinctly.

Now the idea of being is therefore the last possible ‘reason’ of all propositions, the ultimate reason of all propositions. Rosmini calls it as the ultimate reason of any proposition, the truth of the proposition, hence the idea of being which is the ultimate reason of any proposition, is the truth of all propositions, consequently, the truth of everything is the idea of being. in so far as they are known. If the principle of certainty is true, it can only apply to one of every scenario and is therefore a special notion that was introduced into our nature to make us clever and capable of understanding the truth.

### **3.3 The Idea of Justice**

This idea of Justice in the works of Antonio Rosmini is regarded as the principle of Moral law, by which he stated that ‘follow reason in all that you do.’<sup>26</sup> The first moral rule and the guiding premise of ethics, according to him, is the idea of being, and the goal of ethics is to help us become morally upright people. The idea of being is the ultimate moral rule in ethics by which we assess the morality of our deeds because our morality depends on an upright will.

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<sup>26</sup> J. Anthony Dewhirst, *Rosmini's Theory of Ethics*, 22.

A “notion of the mind utilized for forming a judgment regarding the morality of human activities, which must be led by it,” according to Rosmini, is a moral rule.<sup>27</sup> Since judgments cannot be produced without ideas, a notion or idea is always regarded as the guiding principle or standard of judgment. For instance, in order to determine whether a mountain is high, one must understand what a mountain is as well as what height is. What is the initial moral rule that all other moral rules are based on? Comparable to asking what the mind's initial concept is, upon which all subsequent concepts are predicated. According to Rosmini, the concept of being is the pinnacle of all concepts.

When we adopt the idea of a specific person, we can set away everything that is appropriate for him or her, leaving us with the general notion of “human being.” However, if we remove the characteristics that make up a human, all that is left is the concept of “animal.” We are left with the concept of “vegetative body” if we once more abstract the characteristics unique to an animal. Leaving aside the characteristics of a vegetative body, we get the “concept of body in general.” This is still just an idea, and if we ultimately abstract everything that makes up a “body,” we are left with the concept of an indivisible being. The notion of being has no need of any other ideas to be known, meaning it is knowable via itself and is the source of all other ideas; it is innate in use, and we cannot move any further without stopping to consider.

According to Rosmini, when God forms the human soul, He imparts to us this concept of being, or ideal being. It sets us apart from non-intelligent creatures by allowing us to think and feel. It is obvious that we are not to associate it with ourselves. It is unbiased and entirely separate from us, the human being. It exists in an unchanging way and is the yardstick by which we assess our

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3. <sup>27</sup> Antonio Rosmini, *Principle of Ethics*, Trans by D.Cleary and T.Watson (Durham: Rosmini house, 1988),

knowledge; we are not accountable for it. Its purpose is to endow the human subject with the ability to engage in intelligent and logical behavior.

Rosmini demonstrates in his ethics how the concept of being is the foundational moral principle and the basis for all moral judgments. Since the idea of being is the notion that all others depend on and that precedes them all, and since the idea of being is a mental construct that we use to make judgments about moral actions, it follows that it is the final notion with which we can make moral judgments and create the idea of moral law.

Rosmini contends that although the concept is impartial and separate from the individual who perceives it, it nevertheless forms a component of human nature. In order for the moral rule to be represented in the phrase “in all that you do, follow the light of reason,” being, which is truth itself and is completely unchangeable, is required. Morality’s ruling principles do not, therefore, belong to an individual. They are objective standards to which we must adhere in order for our deeds to be honorable and consistent with reality.

### **3.4 The Idea of Good**

Rosmini asserts that goodness is that which is sought, which necessitates the existence of a being capable of desire, as goodness is a connection between things and that which desires them. The relationship between the things desired and the one who desires them is central to the concept of “good.”

A being with this ability to desire wants to continue existing, to be preserved, and to have everything that will make it more perfect and whole. It longs for the qualities or perfections that make its own nature perfect as well as those that contribute to this perfection. A sensation must be presented to the mind in order for it to be thought to be good.

Rosmini believes that the purity of nature and the longing for it are inextricably linked. This perfection cannot exist without the presence of sensible desire. As a result, sense and perfection are interdependent since sense denotes an inherent order in things that corresponds to their ideal state. We frequently consider the essence of anything to be its order. Everything that is inherent in a thing is seen as excellent, so the order starts with its essence and existence before adding the other components required for its completion.

We may determine whether something is good or has a certain level of perfection when we are aware of the order that a natural entity possesses and expresses in its essence. The idea makes sense in this order. Knowing something's order of being is knowing it is good, hence knowing something is knowing it is nice.

According to Rosmini, nature has an ideal condition that it invariably aspires to. Our thoughts have the capacity to focus on the absolutely necessary order of things. Good is a term for a being's perfections or gifts. We can think of them as actual, objective, and positive things even when we think of them as the origins of pleasurable sensations. What tends to give the object its fullness of existence is these endowments.

In Rosmini's philosophy on the idea of good, he argued that "Everything is both good and wicked, depending on how it is."<sup>28</sup> Being is the same as being good. Goodness is "being" taken into account in its proper sequence; it is being felt in relation to intelligence. "The idea of being is the thought, rule and principle with which I measure and identify the good of all the natures I perceive and know," according to Rosmini. '<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Antonio Rosmini, *Principles of Ethics*, 29.

<sup>29</sup> Antonio Rosmini, *Principles of Ethics*, 32.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Rosmini's work leads us to the conclusion that truth is the idea of being, the model for all models, and that certainty is a solid and convincing argument that complies with the truth. The basic moral principle and the foundation upon which we base all moral judgments is known as the idea of being in the field of ethics. Example being a lawyer does not guarantee someone to be a good person or moral if there is no use of reason in an action. The potential uses of the concept of being and how it transforms into the principles by which we know things are covered in detail in the next chapter. We'll also discover the benefits of relying on the concept of being in our daily lives.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS OF THE IDEA OF BEING**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The principle by which we know things is created when the concept of being is applied to things. The idea of being, though one, is articulated in various principles and appears to multiply itself depending on the perspective through which this application is viewed and the differences between the applications themselves. One thing to keep in mind is that we are addressing potential applications here rather than real ones.

The principles of knowledge, contradiction, substance, and causation, together with the principle of ethics, were all derived from the idea of being in this chapter, and as a result, they are only the idea of being applied. Therefore, the justification offered for the concept of existence also applies to these principles, and the idea's certainty is mirrored by the principles' certainty.

The ability of the notion of being to draw conclusions with confidence about objects beyond the mind that we know in that idea was demonstrated by Rosmini when he demonstrated the idea's objectivity. However, Kant and his adherents rejected this ability of human intellect because he overlooked the rule that makes the application of the concept of being valid when applied to objects that are not immediately evident to the senses but are instead taken into account in isolation. According to the premise, "anything my internal reasoning deduces from necessary inference about exterior things must be true relative to the things themselves." I could reason internally if that weren't true. However, it does exist.

According to Rosmini, our internal thinking is real and has a built-in need. If things are assumed to have no force when taken as a whole, then our internal reasoning cannot be accurate and necessary even in the simplest arrangement of thoughts.

Because this confidence is a prerequisite for the assurance we already have about ideal connections, we are therefore confident in the external world. Internal harmony is ideal and required by definition. It must be accepted because it cannot be disputed. Without the exterior real order, the inside ideal order might not be what it is. Therefore, we are certain in what we know regarding the order of actual things thanks to our essential certainty in the ideal order. The reverse appeared to be true because the division between internal and exterior certainty divided certainty, which is one, into two. Internal certainty would not exist in any way unless what is declared internally is confirmed outside, which was overlooked. The congruence between what is thought and what is, then, is what makes something certain.

Our main goal in this chapter is to examine the idea of being's potential applications, how it transforms into the principle by which we know things, and finally, how it can assist humans in being decent and just and understanding the meaning of their existence, particularly in today's world.

## **4.2 On the Principles of Knowledge and Contradiction**

According to Rosmini, concepts are expressed as propositions that must be simplified, like mathematical equations, in order to be studied. As long as they don't modify the formula's value or the inquiry, mathematicians are free to reduce a formula to the expression that best serves their needs.

“A proposition indicates a judgement that is a relationship between the two terms, predicate and subject,” according to Rosmini. The simplest and most natural way to express the principles of reason is to directly indicate the predicate with one distinct word or phrase, the subject with another, and the relationship between them with a third. This is because the principles of reason are judgments, which include a predicate and a subject.

Let’s use the contradiction principle as an example: “That which is (being) cannot not be.” The link between being and not-being is impossibility, as expressed by the copula “that which is” as the subject, “not be” as the predicate, and “cannot” as the verb. This is the logical impossibility. According to the principle; it is impossible to think about being (that which is) and not being at the same time. The combination of being and not-being results in nothing, the not being canceling the previously asserted being, and all ideas dissipate. The mere possibility of cognition is the principle of contradiction.

Without this principle, it would be impossible to investigate other issues because we cannot cast any doubt on its validity or efficacy. This skepticism assumes that the concept is already true and working, just like any other thought. Without presupposing cognition, questioning, and reasoning, we cannot start to think, question, or reason. The principle of contradiction is totally protected from any attacks in this way possibility that is neither thought able nor real.

If we think at all, regardless of what we think, we admit the principle of contradiction stating “I think or I do not think, there is no middle term because to think without thinking is impossible.” The principle of contradiction states that “we cannot think without thinking” and that in order to think, the thought must be possible. As a result, the principle of contradiction is independent of all ideas and beliefs held by humans, making it the only principle that allows for such things.

I might hear someone declare, “I deny the possibility of thought.” In response, I would say that to rule out an option is to accept it. Would you consider thinking at all? Your response, whether it be that you think or do not think, confirms the law of contradiction. The response “I am thinking while I am not thinking” would be absurd and pointless if you wanted to disprove the premise.

The fact that Being and non-being cannot be thought of simultaneously is expressed by the principle of contradiction, which is a statement. In other words, “thinking does not exist unless it has Being for its object.” This fact demonstrates that the concept of being informs and develops our intelligence. As a result, we frequently refer to intelligence as the skill of seeing what is (being). Being and not-being together expresses nothing, and nothing is the polar opposite of being, which is something. We may be persuaded that the principle of contradiction has its genesis from the idea of being, which is the form of our reason, by demonstrating that our intellect and reason is the power of seeing existence, thus it is simply the concept of being in its application.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, the law of contradiction is in some ways innate. They assert that when we first utilize reason, the principle emerges from the human spirit.<sup>30</sup> When Rosmini enters, she makes the claim that although the concept’s basis appears to be innate, the principle itself is not. He cited the fact that propositions are used to express principles, which take the shape of judgments. In reality, the premise “the object of thinking is being or ens” can be used to infer the principle of contradiction from the principle of knowing. As a result, “being and not-being” is not a mental object.

We must have used it, that is, started to judge and reason, in order for the idea of being to have assumed the shape of the principle of contradiction. We must have created a mental image of

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<sup>30</sup> Battista Mondin, *Medieval Philosophy*. Trans by Myroslaw A. Cizdyn (Bangalore: Theological publication in India, 1991), 296.

nothing, learned the concepts of affirmation and denial through thought, and realized that affirmation plus negation equals nothing. Even if they are swiftly applied and inextricably linked to the notion of being, judgment and reasoning are just the idea of being in their application, covered up by relationships. Our reason must be sprung out of its initial state of total dormancy like a spring. However, anything that develops in us as a result of such a contingent intellectual process is acquired. Such is the stated principle of contradiction of judgement.

#### **4.3 On the Principles of Substance and Cause**

The principle of contradiction is dependent on the principle of knowing, a necessary truth whose expression is “the object of thought is being.” It is the fundamental tenet of all tenets, the rule of intelligent nature, and the very foundation of intelligence. Being and not being cannot be thought of simultaneously, according to the second principle, which follows directly from the first.<sup>31</sup> According to the third principle, “Accidents cannot be considered without substance,” accidents cannot be thought. A new creature cannot be thought of without a cause, according to the fourth principle, which is causation.

According to Rosmini, accidents are experienced by their effects on us and occasionally go by the generic label of “happenings,” which is perfectly apt given that they are events that happen to things without their necessity. There is no distinction between accidents and effects other than that accidents are treated as a single entity along with its substance and terms, whereas effects are treated as distinct entities from their causes and proper to other entities.

The principle of cause can be stated as follows: “Every occurring (everything that begins) has a cause that generates it.” This is how the concept of cause arises from the principle of contradiction

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<sup>31</sup> Chishugi Appolinaire, *class notes on Philosophy of Being*, (Unpublished, 2021).

and, in turn, from the principle of cognition. In other words, considering a happening without thinking a reason for it means that “what does exist, acts,” which is impossible for human brain to achieve. Therefore, an event without a cause is contradictory, as shown by the following arguments;

Regarding the major: Rosmini’s mental conception of an action (change) without an ens is a contradiction because it amounts to conception without conception. According to the knowing principle that “the object of mind is ens,” we are unable to mentally conceive of anything without an ens. It is contradictory to apply an action to something that does not exist, which is what it is to “conceive” without “conceiving” the entity that performs the action.

As regards to minor: according to Rosmini, an occurrence is a change or action in progress. If this action does not exist since it is self-contained and not a part of an ens, then there is either another action that is identical to this one or one that does not exist.

Because knowledge is the only concept of being that can be applied to it, the principle of cause follows from the principle of contradiction. When seen in relation to human reasoning, of which it is the formal cause, this concept thereby assumed the shape of a principle and is articulated in a proposition.

#### **4.4 On the Principle of Ethics**

The simplest and most fundamental of all laws, the idea of being is the supreme rule of all moral judgments made by the human mind. As such, it is the supreme rule of all laws. This rule can be

summed up as “do whatever seems right in the light of reason.” Of all the ethical declarations, it is the most inclusive.<sup>32</sup>

For Rosmini, this is a common principle across various fields of knowledge because the concept of being governs all judgments, including moral judgments. The concept of being is, in a unique sense, the concept of good in all disciplines of knowledge that are concerned with what is good because being and good are the same thing.

We must now understand how the concept of existence acts as the moral code. How can we distinguish between what is equitable and what is unjust by using the concept of “being” in a practical way? What distinguishes good from wrong? It goes without saying that the notion of good in general must come before moral judgments. Then, we narrow this idea to only be thought of as the ethical principle or the particular type of good that ethics is concerned with.

The connection between objective good and the will a good that is perceived by the mind as the subject of thought and is taken to be true regardless of the subject of the thought is what constitutes moral good.

According to the idiom “in whatever you do, follow the light of reason,” the moral faculty of the will and the light of reason are being recognized as being the authors of our own deeds. We are sure that “the will must strive towards being,” meaning it must love something no matter where it is found. However, because being is by definition orderly, loving being also means loving being in accordance with its order. This led to a reformulation of the moral law, which is now “the will must strive towards being according to the order found in being.”

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<sup>32</sup> Ochieng’ Ojwang, *class notes on the seminar on Principles of Ethics*, (unpublished, 2022).

In order for the act of the will to be fully accomplished and entirely excellent, the will must end its love in individuals who alone serve as its ends (i.e., things are simply means in the will's scheme of things). A final and ultimate being would not contain the conclusion and duration of its act. The will's final propensity is to love intelligent beings rather than stuff.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Following the concepts, we have given above, we observe that when the concept of being is combined with other concepts, it transforms into the guiding principle by which we understand the world. We see that all those principles like substance, contradiction, ethics and causality were simply deduced from the idea of being.

Being is the source of all judgments, including moral judgments, and the will is the moral faculty that enables us to be authors of our own actions. Additionally, since being and good are synonymous, the idea of being is also the notion of good in a unique way, the principle of all knowledge concerned with what is good. As a result, this idea of being is the entryway to all ideas. This will lead us to the overall conclusion, where we'll wrap up our effort by making a broad observation.



## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The main aim of the study was to explain in detail Rosmini's concept of being as the source of all other ideas, basing on his book *New Essay Concerning the Origin of Ideas*, this study has been able to solve the problem I stated in chapter one. Antonio Rosmini as one of the Rationalists built his ideas on his predecessors and hence the study has tackled the problem from a different philosophical point of view especially from Plato, St Thomas, Immanuel Kant, Rene Descartes and other philosophers.

This research paper has been presented systematically in five chapters. In the first chapter we presented a general introduction which also explained the reason for doing this research. In the second chapter, we have explained Rosmini's conception on the idea of being, and how it can be a solution to the problem stated in chapter one. In the third chapter we introduced the concept of Truth, Good and Justice, how they relate to the idea of being. In chapter four we saw the application of the idea of being especially to every other idea be it metaphysically or morally.

This study has helped us to know that it is through the idea of being we come to know other ideas, through understanding the meaning of our existence it is when we know also other ideas, even coming to our moral actions we must be guided by this concept of being which is the light of reason given to us at our conception.

Consequently, the principle by which we know things is created when the concept of being is given to things. Principles like contradiction, substance, ethics and cause so to speak all were deduced from the idea of being and are simply the applied idea of being, and if an idea is certain, the same may be said for its underlying principle.

We cannot think of anything without the idea of being, since the last abstraction from any idea is always being, and every idea terminates in being. Without being the idea cannot exist, is nothing. It is the mother of all ideas and is in every idea as that which gives it universality, objectivity, immortality and immutability.

In a nutshell, this idea of being is innate whereby all human beings have it from the time of conception, and is the origin of all other concepts. According to Rosmini ideas about the world have the idea of being as their form, and the matter is given by the objects of perception, therefore the joining of the form to the matter to generate ideas is called intellective perception, now we can conclude by speaking that the idea of being is the cause of all other ideas.

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