

Chapter 1 from *Believing Unity*

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I

BEING

When contemplating the nature of existence, a profound and perplexing question arises: “Why is there Something rather than Nothing?” Throughout history, various attempts have been made to tackle this question. One explanation suggests the existence of an “infinitesimally small point” with infinite properties, including gravity, density, and energy. This primordial point, existing “before time,” underwent rapid expansion, giving birth to the Universe and unfolding the grand theatre of space, time, eggs, chickens, and all the rest of the drama and dance.

Many religions claim that God or a god was before all of this and created the universe through choice. Some mathematicians claim that mathematics existed prior to the Universe. Some believe information is the fundamental nature of reality and existed prior to all of this... somethingness.

When contemplating these various explanations for the existence of the universe, it becomes evident that all of these proposals revolve around different conceptions of ‘something.’ Whether it is a divine being, a mathematical structure, or an informational framework, these ideas all posit the existence of a fundamental entity or principle. None of these perspectives address the question from the standpoint of absolute nothingness. Instead, they offer different interpretations of the nature and origins of this ‘somethingness.’

The proposed explanations for the origin of the universe, while fascinating, do not directly address the question of why there is something rather than nothing. Instead, they focus on elucidating how a particular event or entity could lead to the existence of the cosmos as we know it. However, these explanations all presuppose the existence of an initial

event or entity that serves as the starting point for the cascade of events. Whether it is mathematics, information, an infinitesimally small point, or a chosen deity, they all assume the presence of something from which everything else unfolds. The question of why there is something rather than nothing remains unanswered by these explanations, as they still rely on a fundamental existence of ‘something’ to account for the existence of the universe.

Why isn’t ‘Nothing’ prevailing over all existence? Let’s look at the question directly. First, it’s probably best to define the terms in the question so that we all know what we mean when we use them.

“Why is there [1] Something [2] rather than [3] Nothing [4]?”

1 - Why is there...

If I ask “Why is there...” I feel like I’m requesting a reason for, or information about, some situation that is. Perhaps it’s a request for a purpose or, a form of comparison.

I could ask of someone with an apple on their head, “Why is there an apple on your head?” I’m looking for a reason, a rationale, regarding the situation of an apple being on your head. It’s odd. This often leads us to look to the past for an answer. ‘I have an apple on my head because you asked me to, so that you could make a point.’

If the question were phrased as: ‘What is the purpose of the apple being on your head?’ purpose implies future. Purpose is then reason gained from the past, projected into the future: ‘Why are there two loaves of bread in the cupboard?’ ‘So that we don’t run out over the weekend.’

Posing the question at all also carries the implication that the situation may be unreasonable or abnormal by comparison to some other (perhaps ‘more rational’ or more commonplace) situation. For instance, ‘Why is there an apple on your head (as opposed to it being in a fruit bowl)?’

We’ll take all three meanings into this investigation:

- Reason based on the past
- Purpose based on a potential future outcome, and
- Comparison to a different circumstance that could be the case instead.

2 - *Something*

In the context of the question being asked, the word ‘Something’ is used to represent reality as we know it; existence itself in its entirety without omission; the actuality and totality of existence; the blatant and undeniable truth that being **is**.

‘Something’ is then used as a synonym for ‘existence’. It doesn’t seem like any other definition of ‘Something’ would allow us to fully answer the question.

3 - ... *rather than...*

The phrase ‘rather than’ is comparative. It follows on from ‘why is there...’ going on to suggest a different scenario and so setting up one concept against another. In answering a question posed like this, we’re looking to understand more about both concepts. We look to understand their relationship to each other and their individual relationship to the situation. ‘Why is there a carrot in my hand and not a chocolate bar?’ ‘Because you’re trying to be healthier and a carrot is healthier for you than chocolate.’

In the context of our original question, this phrase is used to define ‘something’ and ‘nothing’ as inherently different and separate realities - supposing it is possible for them to be compared.

So far, the terms are defined so that we can ask the question a little more explicitly. The question is a request for a reason, and/or a purpose, and/or a comparison, regarding the fact of existence being the case as opposed to ‘nothing’. What then, is this ‘nothing’?

4 - *Nothing*

I don’t feel there is any value in comparing this something that we know, observe and experience, with a theoretical one that we do not know, observe or experience. I’m also not looking for a relative ‘nothing’ as in, “There is nothing in the fridge”.

By using ‘nothing’ in the context of this question, what we really want to compare to ‘something’ is a total absence of all something-ness. Based on the definition of something, nothing therefore means absence of existence. It means non-existence, non-being.

Feel free to take a few moments to contemplate complete absence. Is it possible?

What is your experience of nothing?

The full question is now more transparent. It is a request for a reason and/or purpose and/or comparison, regarding the observable fact that existence is the case, and non-existence is not the case.

We're asking why non-existence doesn't exist, and why existence exists.

If you let that question sit with you now, reason, purpose or comparison, what comes back?

When seeking a reason from the past, it becomes clear that existence is because non-existence cannot have existed in the past. Thus, the continuity of existence is undeniable: existence is all there has ever been.

If we're asking for a purpose for the future, the answer is also clear. Non-existence will never exist in the future, therefore existence will always be.

If we look at the present we see that right now, nonexistence isn't, and existence is.

If we're asking for a comparison to understand the relationship between them, perhaps we must go a little deeper.

If non-existence were to exist, what form would it take? Wouldn't it become a 'something' that exists? It seems that any manifestation of 'non-existence' would inherently be a form of existence. So is a state of non-existence possible? And if so, what would that state be like?

A state of non-existence would necessarily have to be devoid of any and all *existent* properties. This means there'd be no things, no matter present whatsoever.

The space that would contain those things also can't be present. This state also couldn't 'be' or exist for any length of time either. It would therefore be completely timeless and spaceless. This 'state of non-existence' would be ◦ energy in ◦ volume space for ◦ amount of time. This state would necessarily never end because actually, having never existed in or as time, never even began in the first place.

Is a state that never was, is or will be, a state? It's a description of an environment of no environment. A state of non-existence is inherently paradoxical and self-defeating, defying the very notion of statehood.

Whatever it is we might think about when trying to imagine 'nothingness' with the mind, *cannot* be it. Nothingness does not exist as an objective reality because then it is a something. It also cannot be a subjective reality because then it is a perspective. This necessarily means that total non-existence - Nothingness - is endlessly, beginninglessly and infinitely non-existent. Forever.

Proposing even the possibility of non-existence somehow existing prior to (or instead of) existence is in fact, totally meaningless.

The implications for 'existence' are even more profound. Since complete non-existence is inherently impossible, it logically follows that existence must be eternal and infinite. Moreover, this eternal existence is not some distant concept, it is unfolding right now in this present moment.

Take a moment to truly contemplate this. See, right now, that *you* are existing. You are present! Whatever it is that you are, you exist, and so you *are necessarily* that same eternity of being.

To propose that you are not that which is, is to propose that you do not exist. From where could you possibly declare this? - Only from existence. You are that. You even say it yourself: "I am."

As yet, we don't really know what existence is made of; the nature of its activity or the extent of itself. So, if you're ready to continue, let's keep going.

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Is it the case that 'something' held in this hand, and 'nothing' not held at all, are really opposites of one another? Can we genuinely compare them?

On one hand, non-existence is inherently characterised by its absence, by its sheer lack of presence. Paradoxically, does this absence imply that non-existence, by not being, manifests as a form of being - present as absence itself?

It's a strange one.

The only way to grasp the concept of non-existence would be through reflection on its absence. Standing in front of a mirror you say, "Here I am, caught in the act of being! Nonexistence, the sly trickster, can only be noticed when it's nowhere to be found!"

So again, does the *absence* of nothingness only help to demonstrate its existence? Every moment that existence **IS**, non-existence is **NOT**. Are the two happening simultaneously?

Take a few moments to contemplate this paradox. Observe your surroundings. Everything that you perceive through your senses, conceive within your mind, and become aware of, including your very awareness itself, is intricately intertwined with the absence of non-existence. It is within this absence that the essence of all things unfolds: a profound

presence. Consider the sheer magnitude of this realisation. In every breath you take, in every experience you encounter, you are the eternal present.

Existence and non-existence cannot be truly considered as relative or separate from one another. As we delve deeper into their essence, we begin to perceive their inherent interconnection and the seamless continuum they comprise. The notions of ‘something’ and ‘nothing,’ or existence and non-existence, appear to dissolve into an indivisible reality.

Consider this: Existence does not strive to overcome or move towards total oblivion, for it already is total oblivion. It is akin to a state of perfect balance, a sublime harmony. However, the term ‘balance’ typically implies the reconciliation of opposing forces, whereas in this context, no such opposition is evident.

Instead, we find ourselves immersed in a profound unity, where existence and non-existence converge into an ineffable whole. It is within this enigmatic realm that the true nature of reality unveils itself, transcending the boundaries of dualistic concepts.

So where does the supposed opposition between existence and non-existence arise from? It seems to me to be out of the fabrication of a *concept* of non-existence as an existing void. This setup creates an illusion of division where, upon thorough investigation, there really doesn’t seem to be any.

If this perceived division is taken as fundamental it could, I imagine, lead to further perceived divisions off the back of it. This fundamental split between existing and not existing would lead to such supposed states as alive and dead, awake and asleep, self and other, and so to innumerable concepts in a finite, dualistic reality. However, any culture that rides the wave of finitude, bound by its inherent limitations, will eventually find itself dissolving on the shores of its own transience. The nature of the finite is such that it cannot endure indefinitely.

Given that there is no inherent division between existence and non-existence, as it’s primarily a conceptual distinction, these two terms shouldn’t truly exist as separate entities. Beyond their individual conceptual frameworks i.e. in reality, they are synonymous. In an attempt to capture this unified essence, I’d like to consolidate them into a single word.

Drawing inspiration from the practice of combining different terms into a single character, as seen in Japanese or Chinese writing, we find a good example in the term ‘Advaita’ used in ancient Eastern traditions¹. While this term aligns with the idea, it carries

¹ Literally translated: ‘a’ = non-, ‘dvaita’ = dual.

with it a complex web of associated traditions and interpretations, so we will avoid this for now to avoid confusion.

Therefore, I have chosen the term 'Being' as a concise expression of this unification. It encapsulates the essence of both existence and non-existence without the need for a conceptual divide. By utilising this single word, we aim to convey the underlying unity that transcends the limitations of dualistic thinking and can use it in subsequent chapters as we move forward.

I chose 'Being' because it is not a statement about something else, it is self-contained and self-describing. Being is what is, is neither a noun that could lend itself to a particular image, nor a verb that is carried out by something specific. It is somewhere in between noun and verb. Being is also nonexclusive. It is common to everything that could be known, experienced, imagined, or lived. Being is absolutely equal in every sense as there isn't anything that could be seen as less than or unworthy of Being, because, by virtue of being known, is already Being itself.

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There are a few things that may seem to have been blown past and not really investigated; concepts like eternity, infinity and finitude; or like the nature of the activity of Being, such as rocks and trees and humans and fire and physics and so on. We're going to investigate these now, starting with the profound realms of Infinity, Eternity and Finitude.

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