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# UNIT 1    BEING AND RELATION

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## 1.0    OBJECTIVES

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Being is that which is some way or ‘something.’ There is no being which is not ‘something.’ Something or Being underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all beings. Being is the Being of beings. Being, as the ultimate foundation of all beings, is related to all beings. “To be is to be related.” Being is related to beings both ontologically and epistemologically. Hence, this Unit explains both:

- Ontology of relation
- Epistemology of relation

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## 1.1    INTRODUCTION

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Relation comes from the Latin word, *referre* which means bring back, the reference of one thing to another, mutual inter-directedness. It is defined as the bearing (reference, respect, attitude, ordination) of one thing to something else. ‘To be is to be related’. Being is the Being of beings. As Being is the Being of beings, it is always related to beings and all beings are also simultaneously and radically related to Being (hence relative to Being), which is always the object and subject of knowledge. We cannot think and speak of Being without any knowledge of it. Both ontology and epistemology are inseparably related. They are the two aspects of ‘the same coin,’ which is metaphysics. Metaphysics is metaphysics of Being and knowledge. Hence, metaphysics of relation presupposes both ontology of relation and epistemology of relation.

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## 1.2    ONTOLOGY OF RELATION

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**Factors of Relation:** Every relation contains three factors: subject, term, and foundation. Subject is the radical principle of the relation. It is that which is related to another, e.g., I know him. Term is that to which the subject of the relation is referred or related, e.g., I know him. Foundation is the proximate principle from which the relation springs. It is the origin or ground of the relation, e.g., I know him. It is the basis, the ground, the reason why the subject is related to the term. It is the bond which unites the subject and term together, and places them ‘in relation’ to each other. Foundation is further distinguished into two: Immediate and Mediate. Immediate foundation is the foundation which is intrinsic to the subject of the relation, e.g., I know him. Knowledge is intrinsic. Mediate foundation is the foundation which is extrinsic to the subject of the relation, e.g.,

#### Relation of Being and Beings

I have a pen. Possession of the pen which is the foundation of the relation is extrinsic to the subject.

From this it is plain that one thing alone can never form a relation. Relation must exist between two or more things taken in reference to each other. The essence of 'relation,' consists in the '*esse ad*', the 'Being-toward' of one thing to another. It is the bearing, the reference, the attitude, the ordination of one to another due to some foundation which is the necessary condition for a relation, but not the 'relation' itself. The foundation is present in both the subject and the term. Two white horses, for example, are similar to each other in their white colour. Their whiteness is not the relation of their similarity, but only the reason or foundation of their relation by which they stand to each other in a relation of similarity. The 'relation', therefore, results from the presence of a common foundation in a subject and term and is considered to be distinct from the foundation, the subject, and the term.

Every category contains foundation. Substance contains the foundation for specific identity and diversity. Two flasks of water, two sparrows, two humans, etc. (the two members of each pair being compared together), are identical in species. Each pair, compared with another pair in this series, is different in species. Here is the relation of specific identity among all the individuals of a certain species, and the relation of specific diversity among the individuals of different species. Quantity contains the foundation for the relation of equality and inequality. Things that have the same weight, size, volume, shape, or dimensions are equal, while things which differ from each other in these respects are unequal. Two globes of the same diameter have the relation of equality. Quality contains the foundation of similarity and dissimilarity. For example, we speak of two painters as being similar or dissimilar in their technique, of two philosophers as being similar or dissimilar in their opinions, or of two cats as being similar or dissimilar in their behaviour. Action and passion (reaction) contain the foundation of the relation of cause and effect as observed in mechanical, physical, and chemical agencies. Salt, the effect of the combination of sodium and chlorine, is in relation to these two chemicals. Electricity, which produces light and heat, is related to them as effects to their cause. Time contains the foundation for priority, simultaneity, and posteriority in successive duration. Place contains the foundation of the relation of distance, nearness, and relative positions. The moon is nearer to the earth than to the sun. Therefore, there is the relation of comparative nearness between the moon and the earth. The positions of north and south, east and west, or right and left, or before and behind, or up and down, or inside and outside, etc., give rise to relations among objects. Posture and habitus contains the foundation of the relation of similarity and dissimilarity between things, but in a different manner than the qualities. To be prone, or to be erect, makes objects either similar or dissimilar. Thus, there is a relation of dissimilarity between one human lying down and another standing. So too, to be clothed or not clothed makes two persons either similar or dissimilar. From this it is seen that every category contains items which may be the foundation for various sorts of relations between things.

**Kinds of Relation:** Relation can be grouped into two main classes: logical and real. Logical relation is the relation which exists only in the mind. It is a relation made solely by the mind and placed by the mind between entities. These entities may exist outside the mind or in the mind itself as concepts, judgements, and

inferences. The foundation for such a relation is an *ens rationis*, a logical entity without any real foundation in the extra-mental things themselves. The relation is strictly a product of the mind's thinking. For instance, we systematise our ideas when we study a certain branch of knowledge, and in this manner bring them into relation with one another. There exists logical relation of comprehension and extension between every subject and predicate in a sentence, between the premises and conclusion of an inference, and between a number of inferences in an extended argumentation; such relations are logical as they exist solely in the mind and its operations. Similarly, there are also relations between objects outside the mind, although these relations have no reason or foundation in the properties of the things themselves. For instance, a sceptre represents royal dignity; a palm, victory; a red light, danger; a flag, a country; but the relation between these things is purely of the mind's own making and has no foundation in the things themselves.

Real relation is a relation which exists between things, independent of the mind and its thinking. The subject and the term are real entities in nature, while the foundation of the relation is present in them objectively and not merely conceived by the mind as being there. There is thus a connection or bond between real things, due to something present in them, independent of all thought. Such a relation exists, for instance, between parent and offspring, between plant and flower, between two pups of the same litter, between two trees of equal height, between two houses of the same architectural style etc. A real relation may be either essential (transcendental) or accidental (categorical or predicamental). An essential (or transcendental) relation is one in which the very essence of one thing has a relation to something. This relation will always be present as soon as and as long as this essence is present. The essence cannot exist without this relation. Thus the relation between every being and an intellect, making this being 'true' and 'good,' is essential or transcendental; for it is an essential or transcendental attribute of all being to be true and good. Every creature owes its entire essence and existence to the creator, and thus the relation of the creature to the creator is an essential one. In the same way, the relation between body and soul in human is an essential relation since both are ordained toward each other to form a composite substance. Real Relation can also be subsistent or accidental. Subsistent relation is a relation which is identical with its subject and immediate foundation, e.g., the reality of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the Trinity. Accidental Relation is a relation which is really distinct from both its subject and immediate foundation. An accidental (categorical or predicamental) relation is based upon an accident as its foundation. The accident is something superadded to the essence and its absence would not destroy the essence itself. For instance, two children have blond and curly hair; in this instance they stand to each other in the relation of similarity. Two men are six feet tall; they are related to each other through the equality of the quantitative measurements. Obviously, 'blond and curly hair' and the equal 'height of six feet' are accidental modifications of these persons without belonging to their essence.

The subject of a real relation is always a substance. For, a real relation is something that accrues to some absolute nature; it is, therefore, an accident. Since the relation is something real, it is a real accident. But only a substance can be the subject of a real accident. As an accident, therefore, a real relation inheres in its subject. Accordingly, it is an inherent accident, though not an absolutely inherent one like quantity or quality. It depends also on something outside its subject, i.e., on

its term. The term of a real relation is something really existent. If the term perishes, the relation thereby perishes. Relation is essentially dependent on its term. In this way the real relation is not absolutely inherent in the subject. It can go out of existence without any change (substantial or accidental) in the absolute reality of the subject. It inheres therefore not absolutely but in dependence upon its term. It can come into being without any change in the absolute reality of its subject, as when a man becomes an uncle through the birth of a nephew about which the child knows nothing. The one subject really ceases to be equal; the other really becomes an uncle. In this case there is difference in relative reality, but not in the absolute reality of the subjects. For, the subjects change relatively, independent of human intellectual activity. Hence, it is the term that specifies a relation. It is, of course, remotely determined by the kind of subject in which it inheres, and by the foundation or ground upon which it rests. But the ultimate specification comes from the term. For instance, a father is ultimately denominated from a child, a grandfather from a grandchild. In every case the term gives the final specification. Since subject and term are at opposite ends of the relation, they may both be called its terms (*extrema*). The subject is the term (*a quo*) from which the relation proceeds, and the term is that to which (*ad quem*) the relation is directed. If either is lacking, the relation cannot exist. Every relation, in this way, is in some sense reciprocal. But the nature of the relations need not be the same. In one term it may be a real relation, but in the other a relation of reason. For instance, in creation the relation of creature to creator is real, while that of creator to creature is only a relation of reason. Similarly, the relation of knower to thing known is real, but that of the thing known to the knower is a relation of reason. The foundation or ground of relation always remains while the relation may perish. For instance, the ground would really remain in the sugar cube if every other sugar cube in the world had perished. The sugar cube, however, would no longer be similar in reality to any other. The real relation of similarity would have perished, while the ground would still really endure. The absolute reality of the ground and the relative reality of the relation, accordingly, cannot really coincide.

From another standpoint relations are mutual and non-mutual. A relation is non-mutual, if its foundation is real or logical in one of the extremes only. For example, the relation of knowledge between the knowing subject and the known object in which the foundation of the relation is the real transition from a state of non-knowledge to a state of knowledge with regard to some definite object. It is obvious, however, that only one extreme undergoes this transition and change, namely, the knowing subject which acquires the knowledge. The relation of knowledge is real only on the part of knower; on the part of the known it is only logical. A relation is mutual, if its foundation is real or logical in both extremes. If two horses are white, the foundation of the relation of their similarity, namely, 'white colour' is present in both horses. When two poles have a length of ten feet, the foundation of their equality in length, namely, their quantity, is found in each pole, because each one is ten feet long independent of the other. The relation, therefore, is mutual. A mutual relation is one of the same denominations or symmetrical, when the foundation in both extremes is the foundation of the same nature and degree. The whiteness of the horses, the common origin or children in the same family, the equal length of the poles, are of the same denomination, because the foundation is of the same nature and degree in each. A mutual relation is of mixed denomination or asymmetrical, when the foundation present in both

extremes is of a different nature or degree. This means a difference of foundation in both, and consequently also a difference in relation of the one to the other. Many relations are of this kind; for example, that between parents and children, husband and wife, master and servant, physician and patient, lawyer and client, judge and criminal, teacher and pupil, superior and subject, king and people, and so on. These examples for mutual relations pertain to all relations which are mutually present in both extremes, whether of the same or of a mixed denomination. They may also be purely logical, having a foundation which is conceptual or logical in both extremes. Thus, all relations existing between concepts, judgements, and inferences rest upon foundations which have no existence except in the mental order, since they are logical entities and as such have no existence outside the mind. Such is the relation between subject and predicate in a sentence, all relations of grammatical construction, etc. Formal logic is practically a treatise on mutual logical relations.

**Relative and Correlative:** Correlatives are simultaneous in nature. By this we mean that relative things, precisely and formally as in relation to each other, must exist at the same time. Thus, ‘mother’ and ‘child’ are correlatives. Obviously, the mother as a ‘woman’ or ‘human being’ exists before her child. But as a ‘mother’ she must have a ‘child’ and she cannot be a ‘mother’ before she has a ‘child’. Correlatives are simultaneous in knowledge. This means that the knowledge of one extreme as ‘relative’ always involves the knowledge of the other extreme as ‘correlative’. And in truth, it is impossible to know what ‘parent’ is without also knowing what ‘offspring’ is. If we know that St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome is more beautiful than Bom Jesu Basilica in Goa, we must have knowledge of the beauty of each. Correlatives connote each other. This means that as the intelligibility of the one extreme is dependent on the intelligibility of the other, they can be understood only in reference to each other. This follows from the foregoing principle that the concept of ‘offspring’ involves the concept of ‘parent’, and vice versa. That two figures are similar to each other in their triangularity, implies that the understanding of the ‘triangular shape’ of the one involves the understanding of the ‘triangular shape’ of the other. Hence, no relative term, as ‘relative’, can be understood without bringing the correlative term into the understanding, since they cannot be understood except in reference to each other.

**Absolute and Relative:** It has become almost commonplace in recent philosophy to say that all things are only ‘relative.’ The reason lies in the fact that anything, in order to be known, must enter into a relation with the mind and as such must be ‘relative to mind.’ It is true that nothing can be known unless it enters into a relation with the mind, because ‘knowledge’ in its very concept and essence implies such a relation. But this only means that a thing, when known, has a relation to the mind and that the knowledge of the thing is dependent on this relation. It does not, however, mean that the thing is dependent on the mind and its knowledge-relation, so that the reality of the thing would be dependent on our knowing it. A thing must be real or ‘absolute’ before it can become known, before it can become ‘relative’ to our mind.

All creatural beings are ‘relative’; for they are essentially and necessarily dependent on God, the First Cause, for their being, and this ‘dependence’ is a form of relation. In this sense, only God is ‘absolute’, because God alone is without dependence on any other being. Creatural beings are also related in many



ways among themselves as similar or dissimilar, equal or unequal, acting or acted upon, specifically identical or diverse. A thing is said to be relative, when it is taken in reference to something else; it is absolute, when it is taken in itself and on its own account. A relation always implies the three factors: subject, term, and foundation; and the relation is conceived as something ‘existing between’ the subject and the term due to their common foundation. The ‘subject’ and ‘term’ must be distinct in entity. No being is said to be related to its own self; it is always in reference to something else.’ Consequently, both the subject and the term must be ‘something in itself and on its own’ before each can have a reference to the other. For, if they had no being or existence of their own, they could never have a reference to anything account,’ and that means to be absolute. Things, therefore, cannot be ‘relative’ unless they are first ‘absolute.’ It follows that creatural beings in the universe are both absolute and relative. But is this not a contradiction in terms? Certainly, if it were stated that something was ‘absolute’ and also ‘relative’ from the same standpoint and in the same respect, a contradiction would be involved in the statement. A thing, however, can very well be ‘relative’ from one standpoint and ‘absolute’ from another, and then there is no contradiction. Considered in themselves all things have a reality of their own, independent But to have a being and existence of its own means to be ‘something in itself and on its own of the being and existence of other things, and hence, from this standpoint, they are absolute. Compared, however, with other things, they are either similar or dissimilar, equal or unequal, etc., and viewed from this standpoint, they are relative. As a matter of fact, they can be ‘relative’ to others only because they are ‘absolute’ in themselves. Hence, the knowledge of things as ‘relative’ presupposes the knowledge of them as ‘absolute’: we must always know the terms of a relation before we know the relation itself. Consequently, the knowledge of the absolute is prior to the knowledge of the relative.

We may summarize the doctrine of relation in the following sentences: Not all relations are logical in character; some relations are real in nature; the entity of the ‘relation’ is really identical with the entity of the ‘foundation’ in the extremes, with a virtual distinction between them; a knowledge of the ‘absolute’ is necessary before knowledge of the ‘relative’ is possible.

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### 1.3 EPISTEMOLOGY OF RELATION

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Many of the Indian philosophers understand and interpret relation as both ontological and epistemological, without making any clear demarcation between them. For them, relation is essentially non-monistic in its connotation and therefore it necessarily presupposes a dualistic or pluralistic conceptual framework. All relations imply two or more distinct factors: *anuyogi* (adjunct) and *pratiyogi* (subjunct). Relation is mainly of five kinds: *samyoga* (conjunction), *vibhaga* (disjunction), *prthaktva* (separateness), *samkhya* (number), and *samavaya* (inherence). *Samyoga* is a relation between two independently existing things that they can be in and out of relation without their essential nature being affected. It is a separable, terminable, and repeatable relation. *Vibhaga* inheres in pairs of individuals which have just parted from contact with each other. *Prthaktva* is a quality which resides in pairs of separate substances. *Samkhya* refers to numbers higher than one. *Samavaya* is a relation between two or more inseparably existing objects. It is a relation of ‘being-in’ or ‘inhering in’ like the

cloth inhering in the threads, or colour in the threads. In the Buddhist tradition all relations are regarded as mental construction without objective existence. Relations are only hypostatized as external and superimposed upon the reals which are impermanent or momentary particulars. They are discrete, unrelated, and superimpositions (*upadhi*). Relation is an interpretation of reality rather than reality itself.

Most of the Western philosophical traditions make a clear distinction between subject and object in the act of knowledge. They would interpret knowledge as a relation between two beings: the known and the knower. Through this relation the knowing subject (knower) opens oneself to the world. One who knows leaves oneself and turns to the surrounding world. However, in knowledge one returns to oneself as the known being ‘penetrates’ into the subject in some way, since knowledge takes place not outside but inside the subject. This knowledge is the result of a natural process.

**Process of Human Knowledge:** Human knowledge is the result of the following process. The physical stimuli proceeding from the things activate external senses, arousing a nerve impulse which travels along the nerve fibres to respective centres of the cortex as sensation of colour, sound, flavour, odour, pain, warmth, etc. In this way the sensing subject is determined in its sensory response, partly by its own vital nature and partly by the character of the incoming stimuli. Sensation is thus to be the product of a double factor: one is objective? the physical stimuli issuing from the external thing; and the other subjective? the vital response of the subject, the particular stimuli with the particular kinds of sensations. The result is the cognitional image of the object (phantasm or sense-image). The **phantasm** is the total sensory impression of the completed cognitional image of the thing furnishing the stimuli which arouse the sensations. The phantasm is the unitive bond between the sensory subject and the thing, making the thing known in a sensory manner. Universals are derived from sense image through abstraction. Sense image represents both the similarities and the differences of the individual things. **Intellect:** The human intellect has two aspects: agent intellect and passive intellect. The active or agent intellect operates on phantasm, and draws out the essence of the individual thing applicable to all the members of the same class. Then the passive intellect (potential intellect) receives the abstracted essence (impressed intelligible species) and makes an intellectual representation of the things (expressed intelligible species), namely, universal idea. Direct universal idea considers only the essence and not the applicability of all the members of the same class. Whereas reflex universal compares the idea (expressed intelligible species) with the individual of the same class, affirming or denying; that is judgement. The universality is the product of mind having its foundation in things themselves. Knowledge, in this sense, is the presence of the known in the knower, the presence of the object to the subject.

**Knowledge as the Presence of the Object to the Subject:** In knowledge, an object makes itself present to the subject. The known ‘reproduces’ itself in the knower; e.g., when the colour blue is known, the blue of the thing penetrates into the subject. This process takes place immaterially. The real thing remains unchanged. The mystery of knowledge is that the object, in so far as it is known, does not act as a body on the subject. “The object exists in the subject in a new way, which is not a material mode of being, but an immaterial one (this does not necessarily mean spiritual), and intentional, in so far as such an objective presence

always refers to the material thing.” For we cannot observe the intentional presence of colour in a subject, as the blue colour in a flame is observed. The intentional presence is an unobservable and absolutely private fact.

**Knowledge as Possession of the Known by the Knower:** Knowledge is a possession of the known on the part of the knower. There is a certain union of the object with the subject. This union, however, does not cancel the difference between the knower and the known. There would be no knowledge without this union. The known is not transformed into another thing; the knower grasps the known as it is. The conformity between the known as it is present in the knower and the real known, is truth. What changes is the mode of being of the known being. There is a material mode of being in the thing insofar as it exists outside the subject, and an immaterial mode insofar as it exists intentionally in the subject. The real object is one but its intentional presence multiplies itself according to the number of knowing subjects.

**Knowledge as Intentional Assimilation:** In the act of knowing, the knower is the known since the knower assimilates the known (assimilation = make something similar) and appropriates it (the knower appropriates the known). Such an appropriation is the deepest root of knowledge. It satisfies the requirements of absolute idealism. However, absolute idealism exaggerates the identity of the subject and the object, which results in a cognitive monism without any distinction between beings. Cognitive assimilation takes place in the immaterial sphere and thus maintains intact the distinction between the knower and the known. There is no real transformation of the object. On the contrary, the knowing subject is transformed by the object which ‘acts’ on the subject.

**Knowledge as the Actualization of the Intentional Species:** The species is an act of the faculty of knowledge. It is an ontological situation of the cognitive soul through which the soul is enriched by an intrinsic principle which has the function of producing the knowledge in act (i.e., the operation of knowledge). The species is not that which is known (for in such a case, knowledge would always be self-knowledge) but that by which the real thing is known. The species through which knowledge is made possible, is not innate, since they proceed from things through a psychic activity. Only angels know by infused species (this is what rationalism claims for man). Knowledge has need of the species since the finite and created intelligence is not the measure of things. God knows the created beings in his supreme essence which is identical with his existence without any species. However, not everything is known by man through the species, but only the object of immediate knowledge. God is known in an analogical way from the ideas of the directly known things, and not through species.

**Knowledge as the Appropriation of the Being of a Thing:** A thing is known by that which is. To know means to possess a being intentionally. Knowledge is always relative to the mode of being. It does not mean that knowledge is extrinsic to Being. It is also a mode of being. Hence, knowledge is also knowable through reflection. Since knowledge refers to Being we can conclude that a thing is knowable insofar as it is, in the measure in which it is. The reason for the knowability of something is its content of being. That which is not, is not knowable. I can know only that which is.



**Being as the Formal Object of Knowledge:** The formal object of knowledge is Being, i.e., insofar as it is, insofar as it possesses Being as an act. If Being is the formal object of knowledge, then it is necessarily contained in the comprehension of every object. The first thing that falls under the scope of knowledge is Being since the comprehension of a being implies the comprehension of the character of Being. Our knowledge is always the knowledge of ‘something,’ of Being. The notion of Being is not innate but the result of experience in which human notices Being as soon as one knows intellectually. Anything that is the object of some comprehension is first grasped *sub ratione entis*, under the aspect of Being. The fact that the formal object of knowledge is Being does not mean that human has a perfect notion of everything. Cognitive progress is made through a growing reflection. Of course, explicit and systematic reflection on Being is the task of metaphysics just as the scientific knowledge of light is the task of optics, and not of the common human who, however, sees everything in virtue of light.

**Check Your Progress**  
**Note:** use the space provided for your Answers  
1) What do you understand by relation? What are the different kinds of relation?  
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2) Bring out clearly the complementarity of both ontology of relation and epistemology of relation.  
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1.4 LET US SUM UP

Being is the Being of beings. As Being is the Being of beings, all beings are also simultaneously and radically related to Being. We cannot think or speak of Being without any knowledge of it. Metaphysics is metaphysics of Being and knowledge. Hence, a metaphysics of relation presupposes both an ontology of relation and an epistemology of relation. Ontology of relation is based on three factors: subject, term and foundation. Subject is the radical principle of the relation. Term is that to which the subject of the relation is referred. Foundation is the proximate principle from which the relation originates. Relation can also be grouped into two main classes: logical and real. Logical relation is the relation which exists only in the mind. Real relation is a relation which exists among things. A real

relation may be either essential or accidental. An essential relation is one in which the very essence of one thing has a relation to something. Real relation can also be subsistent or accidental. Subsistent relation is identical with its subject and immediate foundation, whereas accidental relation is really distinct from both its subject and immediate foundation. An accidental relation is based upon an accident as its foundation.

Many of the Indian philosophers understand and interpret relation as both ontological and epistemological, without making any clear demarcation between them. However, most of the Western philosophical traditions make a clear distinction between subject and object in the act of knowledge. They would interpret human knowledge as a relation between the two: the known and the knower. For them, human knowledge is the result of a process in which the physical stimuli proceeding from the things activate external senses producing sensations which form phantasm or sense-image. The active intellect operates on phantasm and draws out the essence of the individual thing applicable to all the members of the same class. Then the passive intellect (potential intellect) receives the abstracted essence (impressed intelligible species) and makes an intellectual representation of the things (expressed intelligible species), namely, a universal idea. When a universal idea is affirmed or denied of a particular, we have judgment, which is the basic unit of human knowledge. Knowledge, thus, is the presence of the known in the knower, a relation of Being and being known.

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