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The Reality of the World of Being

1. The sophists hold that all existence is illusory, indeed, that each and every being is an absolute illusion that has no existence whatsoever—in other words, that the existence of created things is like a mirage, or like the reflection of an image in water or in a mirror, which is merely an appearance devoid of any basis, foundation, or ascertainable reality.
2. This notion is false, for although the existence of things is an illusion compared to the existence of God, yet in the contingent world it is established, proven, and undeniable. For example, the existence of the mineral is non-existence compared to that of man—since man's body becomes mineral when he physically dies—but the mineral indeed exists within the mineral realm. It is therefore clear that dust is non-existent or has an illusory existence compared to that of man, but that within the mineral realm it exists.
3. In like manner, the existence of created things is sheer illusion and utter non-existence compared to that of God and consists in a mere appearance, like an image seen in a mirror. But although this image is an illusion, its source and reality is the person reflected, whose image has appeared in the mirror. Briefly, the reflection is an illusion compared to that which is reflected. It is therefore evident that although created things have no existence compared to that of God, being instead like a mirage or an image reflected in a mirror, yet in their own degree they exist.

4. That is why Christ referred to those who were heedless of God and denied His truth as dead, even though to outward seeming they were alive; for in relation to the faithful they were indeed dead, blind, deaf, and dumb. That is what Christ meant when He said, “let the dead bury their dead”.