

The Doctrine of Being

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WITH WHAT MUST THE BEGINNING OF SCIENCE BE MADE?

It is only in recent times that there has been a new awareness of the difficulty of finding a *beginning* in philosophy, and the reason for this difficulty, and so also the possibility of resolving it, have been discussed in a variety of ways. The beginning of philosophy must be either *something mediated* or *something immediate*, and it is easy to show that it can be neither the one nor the other; so either way of beginning runs into contradiction.¹

The *principle* of a philosophy also expresses a beginning, of course, but not so much a subjective as an *objective* one, the beginning of *all things*. The principle is a somehow determinate *content* – “water,” “the one,” “nous,” “idea,” or “substance,” “monad,” etc. – or, if it designates the nature of cognition and is therefore meant simply as a criterion rather than an objective determination, as “thinking,” “intuition,” “sensation,” “I,” even “subjectivity,” then here too the interest still lies in the content determination. The beginning as such, on the other hand, as something subjective in the sense that it is an accidental way of introducing the exposition, is left unconsidered, a matter of indifference, and consequently also the need to ask with what a beginning should be made remains of no importance in face of the need for the principle in which alone the interest of *the fact* seems to lie, the interest as to what is the *truth*, the *absolute ground* of everything.

But the modern perplexity about a beginning proceeds from a further need which escapes those who are either busy demonstrating their principle dogmatically or skeptically looking for a subjective criterion against dogmatic philosophizing, and is outright denied by those who begin, like a shot from a pistol, from their inner revelation, from faith, intellectual

¹ There is an allusion here to Fichte. Cf. *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), English trans., *The Science of Knowledge*, Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 93ff. GA, I.2, 255ff.

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intuition, etc. and who would be exempt from *method* and *logic*.² If earlier abstract thought is at first interested only in the principle as *content*, but is driven as philosophical culture advances to the other side to pay attention to the conduct of the *cognitive process*, then the *subjective* activity has also been grasped as an essential moment of objective truth, and with this there comes the need to unite the method with the content, the *form* with the *principle*. Thus the *principle* ought to be also the beginning, and that which has priority for thinking ought to be also the *first* in the process of thinking.

Here we only have to consider how the *logical* beginning appears. The two sides from which it can be taken have already been named, namely either by way of mediation as result, or immediately as beginning proper. This is not the place to discuss the question apparently so important to present-day culture, whether the knowledge of truth is an immediate awareness that begins absolutely, a faith, or rather a mediated knowledge. In so far as the issue allows *passing* treatment, this has already been done elsewhere (in my *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, 3rd edn, in the Prefatory Concept, §§21ff.). Here we may quote from it only this, that *there is nothing in heaven or nature or spirit or anywhere else that does not contain just as much immediacy as mediation*, so that both these determinations prove to be *unseparated* and *inseparable* and the opposition between them nothing real. As for a *scientific discussion*, a case in point is every logical proposition in which we find the determinations of immediacy and mediacy and where there is also entailed, therefore, a discussion of their opposition and their truth. This opposition, when connected to thinking, to knowledge, to cognition, assumes the more concrete shape of immediate or mediated *knowledge*, and it is then up to the science of logic to consider the nature of cognition in general, while the more concrete forms of the same cognition fall within the scope of the science of spirit and the phenomenology of spirit. But to want to clarify the nature of cognition *prior* to science is to demand that it should be discussed *outside* science, and *outside* science this cannot be done, at least not in the scientific manner which alone is the issue here.

A beginning is *logical* in that it is to be made in the element of a free, self-contained thought, *in pure knowledge*; it is thereby *mediated*, for pure knowledge is the ultimate and absolute truth of *consciousness*. We said in the Introduction that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the science of consciousness, its exposition; that consciousness has the *concept* of science,

Phenomenology of
Spirit as
presupposed

² The allusion here is most likely to Jacobi. Cf. also the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, GW 9, 24.10–12.

that is, pure knowledge, for its result.³ To this extent, logic has for its presupposition the science of spirit in its appearance, a science which contains the necessity, and therefore demonstrates the truth, of the standpoint which is pure knowledge and of its mediation. In this science of spirit in its appearance the beginning is made from empirical, *sensuous* consciousness, and it is this consciousness which is *immediate* knowledge in the strict sense; there, in this science, is where its nature is discussed. Any other consciousness, such as faith in divine truths, inner experience, knowledge through inner revelation, etc., proves upon cursory reflection to be very ill-suited as an instance of immediate knowledge. In the said treatise, immediate consciousness is also that which in the science comes first and immediately and is therefore a presupposition; but in logic the presupposition is what has proved itself to be the result of that preceding consideration, namely the idea as pure knowledge. *Logic* is the *pure science*, that is, pure knowledge in the full compass of its development. But in that result the idea has the determination of a certainty that has become truth; it is a certainty which, on the one hand, no longer stands over and against a subject matter confronting it externally but has interiorized it, is knowingly aware that the subject matter is itself; and, on the other hand, has relinquished any knowledge of itself that would oppose it to objectivity and would reduce the latter to a nothing; it has externalized this subjectivity and is at one with its externalization.

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Now starting with this determination of pure knowledge, all that we have to do to ensure that the beginning will remain immanent to the science of this knowledge is to consider, or rather, setting aside every reflection, simply to take up, *what is there before us*.

Pure knowledge, thus *withdrawn* into this *unity*, has sublated every reference to an other and to mediation; it is without distinctions and as thus distinctionless it ceases to be knowledge; what we have before us is only *simple immediacy*.

Simple immediacy is itself an expression of reflection; it refers to the distinction from what is mediated. The true expression of this simple immediacy is therefore *pure being*. Just as *pure* knowledge should mean nothing but knowledge as such, so also pure being should mean nothing but *being* in general; *being*, and nothing else, without further determination and filling.

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Being is what makes the beginning here; it is presented indeed as originating through mediation, but a mediation which at the same time sublates

³ Cf above, 21.32.

itself, and the presupposition is of a pure knowledge which is the result of finite knowledge, of consciousness. But if no presupposition is to be made, if the beginning is itself to be taken *immediately*, then the only determination of this beginning is that it is to be the beginning of logic, of thought as such. There is only present the resolve, which can also be viewed as arbitrary, of considering *thinking as such*. The beginning must then be *absolute* or, what means the same here, must be an abstract beginning; and so there is *nothing* that it may *presuppose*, must not be mediated by anything or have a ground, ought to be rather itself the ground of the entire science. It must therefore be simply *an immediacy*, or rather only *immediacy* itself. Just as it cannot have any determination with respect to an other, so too it cannot have any within; it cannot have any content, for any content would entail distinction and the reference of distinct moments to each other, and hence a mediation. The beginning is therefore *pure being*.

After this simple exposition of what alone first belongs to this simplest of all simples, the logical beginning, we may add the following further reflections which should not serve, however, as elucidation and confirmation of the exposition – this is complete by itself – but are rather occasioned by notions and reflections which may come our way beforehand and yet, like all other prejudices that antedate the science of logic, must be disposed of within the science itself and are therefore to be patiently deferred until then.

The insight that absolute truth must be a result, and conversely, that a result presupposes a first truth which, because it is first, objectively considered is not necessary and from the subjective side is not known – this insight has recently given rise to the thought that philosophy can begin only with something which is *hypothetically* and *problematically* true, and that at first, therefore, philosophizing can be only a quest. This is a view that Reinhold has repeatedly urged in the later stages of his philosophizing,⁴ and which must be given credit for being motivated by a genuine interest in the speculative nature of philosophical *beginning*. A critical examination of this view will also be an occasion for introducing a preliminary understanding of what progression in logic generally means, for the view has direct implications for the nature of this advance. Indeed, as portrayed by it, progression in philosophy would be rather a retrogression and a grounding, only by virtue of which it then follows as result that that, with which the beginning was made, was not just an arbitrary assumption but was in fact *the truth*, and *the first truth* at that.

Against
Reinhold

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⁴ Reinhold, *Beyträge* I (1801), p. 101.

It must be admitted that it is an essential consideration – one which will be found elaborated again within the logic itself – that *progression* is a retreat to the *ground*, to the *origin* and the *truth* on which that with which the beginning was made, and from which it is in fact produced, depends. – Thus consciousness, on its forward path from the immediacy with which it began, is led back to the absolute knowledge which is its innermost *truth*. This truth, the ground, is then also that from which the original first proceeds, the same first which at the beginning came on the scene as something immediate. – It is most of all in this way that absolute spirit (which is revealed as the concrete and supreme truth of all being) comes to be known, as at the *end* of the development it freely externalizes itself, letting itself go into the shape of an *immediate* being – resolving itself into the creation of a world which contains all that fell within the development preceding that result and which, through this reversal of position with its beginning, is converted into something dependent on the result as principle. Essential to science is not so much that a pure immediacy should be the beginning, but that the whole of science is in itself a circle in which the first becomes also the last, and the last also the first.

Conversely, it follows that it is just as necessary to consider as *result* that into which the movement returns as to its *ground*. In this respect, the first is just as much the ground, and the last a derivative; since the movement makes its start from the first and by correct inferences arrives at the last as the ground, this last is result. Further, the *advance* from that which constitutes the beginning is to be considered only as one more determination of the same advance, so that this beginning remains as the underlying ground of all that follows without vanishing from it. The advance does not consist in the derivation of an *other*, or in the transition to a truly other: inasmuch as there is a transition, it is equally sublated again. Thus the beginning of philosophy is the ever present and self-preserving foundation of all subsequent developments, remaining everywhere immanent in its further determinations.

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In this advance the beginning thus loses the one-sidedness that it has when determined simply as something immediate and abstract; it becomes mediated, and the line of scientific forward movement consequently turns *into a circle*. – It also follows that what constitutes the beginning, because it is something still undeveloped and empty of content, is not yet truly known at that beginning, and that only science, and science fully developed, is the completed cognition of it, replete with content and finally truly grounded.

But for this reason, because it is as absolute ground that the *result* finally emerges, the progression of this cognition is not anything provisory, still

problematic and hypothetical, but must be determined through the nature of the matter at issue and of the content itself. Nor is the said beginning an arbitrary and only temporary assumption,⁵ or something which seems to be an arbitrary and tentative presupposition but of which it is subsequently shown that to make it the starting point was indeed the right thing to do; this is not as when we are instructed to make certain constructions in order to aid the proof of a geometrical theorem, and only in retrospect, in the course of the proof, does it become apparent that we did well to draw precisely these lines and then, in the proof itself, to begin by comparing them or the enclosed angles – though the line-drawing or the comparing themselves escape conceptual comprehension.

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So we have just given, right within science itself, the *reason* why in pure science the beginning is made with pure being. This pure being is the unity into which pure knowledge returns, or if this knowledge, as form, is itself still to be kept distinct from its unity, then pure being is also its content. It is in this respect that this *pure being*, this absolute immediate, is just as absolutely mediated. However, *just because* it is here as the beginning, it is just as essential that it should be taken in the one-sidedness of being purely immediate. If it were not this pure indeterminacy, if it were determined, it would be taken as something mediated, would already be carried further than itself: a determinate something has the character of an *other with respect to a first*. It thus lies in the *nature of a beginning itself* that it should be being and nothing else. There is no need, therefore, of other preparations to enter philosophy, no need of further reflections or access points.

Nor can we derive a *more specific determination* or a *more positive* content for the beginning of philosophy from the fact that it is such a beginning.⁶ For here, at the beginning, where the fact itself is not yet at hand, philosophy is an empty word, a received and yet unjustified notion. Pure knowledge yields only this negative determination, namely that the beginning ought to be *abstract*. If pure being is taken as the *content* of pure knowledge, then the latter must step back from its content, allowing it free play and without determining it further. – Or again, inasmuch as pure being is to be considered as the unity into which knowledge has collapsed when at the highest point of union with its objectification, knowledge has then disappeared into this unity, leaving behind no distinction from it and hence no determination for it. – Nor is there anything else present, any content whatever, that could be used to make a more determinate beginning with it.

⁵ i.e. as Reinhold thought.

⁶ The allusion is still to Reinhold.

But, it may be said, the determination of *being* assumed so far as the beginning can also be let go, so that the only requirement would be that a pure beginning should be made. Nothing would then be at hand except the *beginning* itself, and we must see what this would be. – This position could be suggested also for the benefit of those who are either not comfortable, for whatever reason, with beginning with being and even less with the transition into nothing that follows from being, or who simply do not know how else to make a beginning in a science except by *presupposing* a *representation* which is subsequently *analyzed*, the result of the analysis then yielding the first determinate concept in the science. If we also want to test this strategy, we must relinquish every particular object that we may intend, since the beginning, as the beginning of *thought*, is meant to be entirely abstract, entirely general, all form with no content; we must have nothing, therefore, except the representation of a mere beginning as such. We have, therefore, only to see what there is in this representation.

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As yet there is nothing, and something is supposed to become. The beginning is not pure nothing but a nothing, rather, from which something is to proceed; also being, therefore, is already contained in the beginning. Therefore, the beginning contains both, being and nothing; it is the unity of being and nothing, or is non-being which is at the same time being, and being which is at the same time non-being.

Further, being and nothing are present in the beginning as *distinguished*; for the beginning points to something other – it is a non-being which refers to an other; that which begins, as yet *is* not; it only reaches out to being. The being contained in the beginning is such, therefore, that it distances itself from non-being or sublates it as something which is opposed to it.

But further, that which begins already *is*, but *is* also just as much *not* yet. The opposites, being and non-being, are therefore in immediate union in it; or the beginning is their *undifferentiated unity*.

An analysis of the beginning would thus yield the concept of the unity of being and non-being – or, in a more reflected form, the concept of the unity of differentiated and undifferentiated being – or of the identity of identity and non-identity.⁷ This concept could be regarded as the first, purest, that is, most abstract, definition of the absolute – as it would indeed be if the issue were just the form of definitions and the name of the absolute. In this sense, just as such an abstract concept would be the first definition of the absolute, so all further determinations and developments would be only

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⁷ This is Hegel's earliest formulation of his position. Cf. *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (1801), p. 156. GW 4, 6.23.7–21.

more determinate and richer definitions of it. But let those who are not satisfied with *being* as the beginning, since being passes over into nothing and what emerges is the unity of the two – let them consider what is more likely to satisfy them: this beginning that begins with the representation of the *beginning* and an analysis of it (an analysis that is indeed correct yet equally leads to the unity of being and non-being) or a beginning which makes being the beginning.

But, regarding this strategy, there is still a further observation to be made. The said analysis presupposes that the representation of the beginning is known; its strategy follows the example of other sciences. These presuppose their object and presume that everyone has the same representation of it and will find in it roughly the same determinations which they have collected here or there, through analysis, comparison, and sundry argumentation, and they then offer as its representations. But that which constitutes the absolute beginning must likewise be something otherwise known; now, if it is something concrete and hence in itself variously determined, then this *connectedness* which it is in *itself* is presupposed as a known; the connectedness is thereby adduced as something *immediate, which however it is not*; for it is connectedness only as a connection of distinct elements and therefore contains *mediation* within itself. Further, the accidentality and the arbitrariness of the analysis and the specific mode of determination affect the concrete internally. Which determinations are elicited depends on what each individual *happens to discover* in his immediate accidental representation. The connection contained within a concrete something, within a synthetic unity, is *necessary* only in so far as it is not found already given but is produced rather by the spontaneous return of the moments back into this unity, a movement which is the opposite of the analytical procedure that occurs rather within the subject and is external to the fact itself.

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the beginning
cannot be
concrete

Here we then have the precise reason why that with which the beginning is to be made cannot be anything concrete, anything containing a connection *within its self*. It is because, as such, it would presuppose within itself a process of mediation and the transition from a first to an other, of which process the concrete something, now become a simple, would be the result. But the beginning ought not itself to be already a first *and* an other, for anything which is in itself a first *and* an other implies that an advance has already been made. Consequently, that which constitutes the beginning, the beginning itself, is to be taken as something unanalyzable, taken in its simple, unfilled immediacy; and therefore *as being*, as complete emptiness.

If, impatient with this talk of an abstract beginning, one should say that the beginning is to be made, not with the beginning, but directly with the *fact* itself, well then, this subject matter is nothing else than that empty being. For what this subject matter is, that is precisely what ought to result only in the course of the science, what the latter cannot presuppose to know in advance.

On any other form otherwise assumed in an effort to have a beginning other than empty being, that beginning would still suffer from the same defects. Let those who are still dissatisfied with this beginning take upon themselves the challenge of beginning in some other way and yet avoiding such defects.

Against Fichte But we cannot leave entirely unmentioned a more original beginning to philosophy which has recently gained notoriety, the beginning with the “I.”⁸ It derived from both the reflection that all that follows from the first truth must be deduced from it, and the need that this *first* truth should be something with which one is already acquainted, and even more than just acquainted, something of which one is *immediately certain*. This proposed beginning is not, as such, an accidental representation, or one which might be one thing to one subject and something else to another. For the “I,” this immediate consciousness of the self, appears from the start to be both itself an immediate something and something with which we are acquainted in a much deeper sense than with any other representation; true, anything else known belongs to this “I,” but it belongs to it as a content which remains distinct from it and is therefore accidental; the “I,” by contrast, is the simple certainty of its self. But the “I” is, as such, *at the same time* also a concrete, or rather, the “I” is the most concrete of all things – the consciousness of itself as an infinitely manifold world. Before the “I” can be the beginning and foundation of philosophy, this concreteness must be excised, and this is the absolute act by virtue of which the “I” purifies itself and makes its entrance into consciousness as abstract “I.” But this pure “I” is now *not immediate, is not the familiar, ordinary “I” of our consciousness to which everyone immediately links science*. Truly, that act of excision would be none other than the elevation to the standpoint of pure knowledge in which the distinction between subject and object has disappeared. But as thus immediately demanded, this elevation is a subjective postulate; before it proves itself as a valid demand, the progression of the concrete “I” from immediate consciousness to pure knowledge must be demonstratively exhibited within the “I” itself, through its own necessity. Without this

⁸ The reference here is to Fichte. Cf. *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), §1.

objective movement, pure knowledge, also when defined as *intellectual intuition*, appears as an arbitrary standpoint, itself one of those empirical *states* of consciousness for which everything depends on whether someone, though not necessarily somebody else, *discovers* it within himself or is able to produce it there. But inasmuch as this pure “I” must be essential, pure knowledge – and pure knowledge is however one which is only posited in individual consciousness through an absolute act of self-elevation, is not present in it immediately – we lose the very advantage which was to derive from this beginning of philosophy, namely that it is something with which everyone is well acquainted, something which everyone finds within himself and to which he can attach further reflection; that pure “I,” on the contrary, in its abstract, essential nature, is to ordinary consciousness an unknown, something that the latter does not find within itself. What comes with it is rather the disadvantage of the illusion that we are speaking of something supposedly very familiar, the “I” of empirical self-consciousness, whereas at issue is in fact something far removed from the latter. Determining pure knowledge as “I” acts as a continuing reminder of the subjective “I” whose limitations should rather be forgotten; it leads to the belief that the propositions and relations which result from the further development of the “I” occur within ordinary consciousness and can be found pre-given there, indeed that the whole issue is about this consciousness. This mistake, far from bringing clarity, produces instead an even more glaring and bewildering confusion; among the public at large, it has occasioned the crudest of misunderstandings.

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Further, as regards the *subjective* determinateness of the “I” in general, pure knowledge does remove from it the restriction that it has when understood as standing in unsurmountable opposition to an object. But for this reason it would be at least *superfluous* still to hold on to this subjective attitude by determining pure knowledge as “I.” For this determination not only carries with it that troublesome duality of subject and object; on closer examination, it also remains a subjective “I.” The actual development of the science that proceeds from the “I” shows that in the course of it the object has and retains the self-perpetuating determination of an *other* with respect to the “I”; that therefore the “I” from which the start was made does not have the pure knowledge that has truly overcome the opposition of consciousness, but is rather still entangled in appearance.

In this connection, there is the further essential observation to be made that, although the “I” might well be determined to be *in itself* pure knowledge or intellectual intuition and declared to be the beginning, in science we are not concerned with what is present *in itself* or as *something inner*, but

with the external existence⁹ rather of what in *thought* is inner and with the *determinateness* which this inner assumes in that existence. But whatever *externalization there might be* of¹⁰ intellectual intuition *at the beginning* of science, or – if the subject matter of science is called the eternal, the divine, the absolute – of the eternal or absolute, this cannot be anything else than a first, immediate, simple determination. Whatever richer name be given to it than is expressed by mere being, the only legitimate consideration is how such an absolute enters into *discursive*¹¹ knowledge and the enunciation of this knowledge. Intellectual intuition might well be the violent rejection of mediation and of demonstrative, external reflection. However, anything which it says over and above simple immediacy would be something concrete, and this concrete would contain a diversity of determinations in it. But, as already remarked, the enunciation and exposition of this concrete something is a process of mediation which starts with *one* of the determinations and proceeds to another, even though this other returns to the first – and this is a movement which, moreover, is not allowed to be arbitrary or assertoric. Consequently, that from which the *beginning* is made in any such exposition is not something itself concrete but only the simple immediacy from which the movement proceeds. Besides, what is lacking if we make something concrete the beginning is the demonstration which the combination of the determinations contained in it requires.

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Therefore, if in the expression of the absolute, or the eternal, or God (and *God* would have the perfectly undisputed right that the beginning be made with him), if in the intuition or the thought of them, *there is more* than there is in pure being, then this *more* should first *emerge* in a knowledge which is discursive¹² and not figurative;¹³ as rich as what is implicitly contained in knowledge may be, the determination that *first* emerges in it is something simple, for it is only in the immediate that no advance is yet made from one thing to an other. Consequently, whatever in the richer representations of the absolute or God might be said or implied over and above being, all this is at the beginning only an empty word and only being; this simple determination which has no further meaning besides, this empty something, is as such, therefore, the beginning of philosophy.

This insight is itself so simple that this beginning is as beginning in no need of any preparation or further introduction, and the only possible purpose of this preliminary disquisition regarding it was not to lead up to it but to dispense rather with all preliminaries.

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⁹ external existence = *Dasein*.

¹⁰ whatever *externalization there might be* of = *was vom . . . da ist*.

¹¹ *denkende*. ¹² *denkendes*.

¹³ *vorstellendes*.

GENERAL DIVISION OF BEING

Being is determined, *first*, as against another in general; *secondly*, it is internally self-determining; *thirdly*, as this preliminary division is cast off, it is the abstract indeterminateness and immediacy in which it must be the beginning.

According to the *first* determination, being partitions itself off from *essence*, for further on in its development it proves to be in its totality only one sphere of the concept, and to this sphere as moment it opposes another sphere.

According to the *second*, it is the sphere within which fall the determinations and the entire movement of its reflection. In this, being will posit itself in three determinations:

- I. as determinateness; as such, quality;
- II. as sublated determinateness; magnitude, quantity;
- III. as qualitatively determined quantity; measure.

This division, as was generally remarked of such divisions in the Introduction,¹⁴ is here a preliminary statement; its determinations must first arise from the movement of being itself, and receive their definitions and justification by virtue of it. As regards the divergence of this division from the usual listing of the categories, namely quantity, quality, relation and modality – for Kant, incidentally, these are supposed to be only classifications of his categories, but are in fact themselves categories, only more abstract ones¹⁵ – about this, there is nothing to remark here, since the entire listing will diverge from the usual ordering and meaning of the categories at every point.

This only can perhaps be remarked, that the determination of *quantity* is ordinarily listed ahead of *quality* and as a rule this is done for no given reason. It has already been shown that the beginning is made with being *as such*, and hence with qualitative being. It is clear from a comparison of quality with quantity that the former is by nature first. For quantity is quality which has already become negative; *magnitude* is the determinateness which, no longer one with being but already distinguished from it, is the sublated quality that has become indifferent. It includes the alterability of being without altering the fact itself, namely being, of which it is the determination; qualitative determinateness is on the contrary one with its being, it neither transcends it nor stays within it but is its immediate

¹⁴ Cf. above, 21.38 and 39. ¹⁵ Cf A80/B106, B110.

restrictedness. Hence quality, as the determinateness which is *immediate*, is the first and it is with it that the beginning is to be made.

Measure is a *relation*, not relation in general but specifically of quality and quantity to each other; the categories dealt with by Kant under relation will come up elsewhere in their proper place.¹⁶ Measure, if one so wishes, can be considered also a modality; but since with Kant modality is no longer supposed to make up a determination of content, but only concerns the reference of the content to thought, to the subjective, the result is a totally heterogeneous reference that does not belong here.¹⁷

The *third* determination of *being* falls within the section Quality inasmuch as being, as abstract immediacy, reduces itself to one single determinateness as against its other determinacies inside its sphere.

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¹⁶ Cf. below, II.394–409.

¹⁷ There is an almost imperceptible, yet very important difference here between the 1812 and the 1832 edition. In the earlier text, Kant is not mentioned at all, but Hegel seems to accept what is in fact his position regarding modality. In the present text, Kant's position is explicitly mentioned, but Hegel distances himself from it. For the importance of this change, see the editor's "Introduction." Cf. A219/B266.

SECTION I

Determinateness (Quality)

Being is the indeterminate immediate; it is free of determinateness with respect to *essence*, just as it is still free of any determinateness that it can receive within itself. This reflectionless being is being as it immediately is only within.

Since it is immediate, it is being without quality; but *the character of indeterminateness attaches to it in itself only in opposition to what is determinate or qualitative*. *Determinate* being thus comes to stand over and against being in general; with that, however, the very indeterminateness of being constitutes its quality. It will therefore be shown that the *first* being is in itself determinate, and therefore, *secondly*, that it passes over into *existence*, is *existence*; that this latter, however, as finite being, sublates itself and passes over into the infinite reference of being to itself; it passes over, *thirdly*, into *being-for-itself*.

CHAPTER I

Being

A. BEING

Being, pure being – without further determination. In its indeterminate immediacy it is equal only to itself and also not unequal with respect to another; it has no difference within it, nor any outwardly. If any determination or content were posited in it as distinct, or if it were posited by this determination or content as distinct from an other, it would thereby fail to hold fast to its purity. It is pure indeterminateness and emptiness. – There is *nothing* to be intuited in it, if one can speak here of intuiting; or, it is only this pure empty intuiting itself. Just as little is anything to be thought in it, or, it is equally only this empty thinking. Being, the indeterminate immediate is in fact *nothing*, and neither more nor less than nothing.

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B. NOTHING

Nothing, pure nothingness; it is simple equality with itself, complete emptiness, complete absence of determination and content; lack of all distinction within. – In so far as mention can be made here of intuiting and thinking, it makes a difference whether something or *nothing* is being intuited or thought. To intuit or to think nothing has therefore a meaning; the two are distinguished and so nothing *is* (concretely exists) in our intuiting or thinking; or rather it is the empty intuiting and thinking itself, like pure being. – Nothing is therefore the same determination or rather absence of determination, and thus altogether the same as what pure *being* is.

C. BECOMING

1. *Unity of being and nothing*

Pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same. The truth is neither being nor nothing, but rather that being has passed over into nothing and

nothing into being – “has passed over,” not passes over. But the truth is just as much that they are not without distinction; it is rather that *they are not the same*, that they are absolutely distinct yet equally unseparated and inseparable, and that *each* immediately *vanishes in its opposite*. Their truth is therefore this *movement* of the immediate vanishing of the one into the other: *becoming*, a movement in which the two are distinguished, but by a distinction which has just as immediately dissolved itself.

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Remark 1

It is customary to oppose *nothing* to *something*. Something is however already a determinate existent that distinguishes itself from another something; consequently, the nothing which is being opposed to something is also the nothing of a certain something, a *determinate nothing*. Here, however, the nothing is to be taken in its indeterminate simplicity. – If it is deemed more correct to oppose *non-being* to being, instead of nothing, there is no objection to this as regards the result, since in *non-being* there is contained the reference to *being*. Non-being is both, being and its negation as said in *one*: nothing as it is in becoming. But the issue first of all is not the form of opposition, which is at the same time the form of reference, but the abstract, immediate negation, the nothing purely for itself, negation devoid of reference – and this can also be expressed, if one so wishes, simply by saying “*nothing*.”

The *Eleatics* were the first to give voice to the simple thought of *pure being* – notable among them Parmenides, who declared it to be the absolute and sole truth. In his surviving fragments, he did it with the pure enthusiasm of thought which has for the first time apprehended itself in its absolute abstraction: *only being is, and nothing is not absolutely*.¹⁸ – In the oriental systems, essentially in Buddhism, it is well known that nothing, the void, is the absolute principle. – Against that simple and one-sided abstraction, the profound Heraclitus proposed the loftier, total concept of becoming and said: *being is no more than nothing*; or also, all *flows*, that is, all is *becoming*.¹⁹ – The popular proverbs, particularly the oriental ones, that all that exists has the germ of death in its very birth, that death is on the other hand the entrance into a new life, express at bottom the same union of being and nothing. But these expressions have a substrate in which the transition takes place; being and nothing are held apart in time, represented as alternating in it; they are not thought in their abstraction and also, therefore, not so that they are the same in and for themselves.

¹⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 986b.28–29.

¹⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 985b7–8.

Ex nihilo, nihil fit – is one of the propositions to which great significance was attributed in metaphysics. The proposition is either to be viewed as just a barren tautology, nothing is nothing, or, if *becoming* is supposed to have real meaning in it, then, since only *nothing comes from nothing*, there is in fact none in it, for the nothing remains nothing in it. **Becoming entails that nothing not remain nothing, but that it pass over into its other, being.** – Later metaphysics, especially the Christian, rejected the proposition that out of nothing comes nothing, thus asserting a transition from nothing into being; no matter how synthetically or merely imaginatively it took this proposition, there is yet even in the most incomplete unification of being and nothing a point at which they meet, and their distinguishedness vanishes. – The proposition, *nothing comes from nothing, nothing is just nothing*, owes its particular importance to its opposition to *becoming* in general and hence also to the creation of the world out of nothing. **Those who zealously hold firm to the proposition, nothing is just nothing, are unaware that in so doing they are subscribing to the abstract pantheism of the Eleatics and essentially also to that of Spinoza. The philosophical view that accepts as principle that being is only being, nothing only nothing, deserves the name of “system of identity”; this abstract identity is the essence of pantheism.**

If the result that being and nothing are the same seems inherently startling or paradoxical, there is not much to be done about it. We should be amazed rather at this amazement that appears so refreshing in philosophy but forgets that the determinations that occur in this science of logic are quite different from those of so-called common sense – which is not exactly sound understanding but an understanding schooled rather in abstractions and in the belief in abstractions, or more accurately in the superstitious belief in them. **It would not be difficult to demonstrate the unity of being and nothing in every example, in every actual thing or thought.** The same must be said of *being* and *nothing* as was said above of immediacy and mediation (which contain a reference to each other and hence *negation*), *that nowhere on heaven or on earth is there anything which does not contain both being and nothing in itself.*²⁰ To be sure, since we are speaking here of a *certain something* and a *certain actual thing*, those determinations are no longer present in the complete untruth in which they are as being and nothing; they are rather present in some more advanced determination and are grasped, for example, as *positive* or *negative*, the one as reflected being and the other as reflected nothing; but the positive contains being

²⁰ Cf. above, 21.54.

and the negative contains nothing, as their abstract foundation. – Thus even in God quality carries essentially the determination of the negative: *activity, creation, power*, and so forth, are the bringing forth of an *other*. But an empirical elucidation of the claim by means of examples would be entirely superfluous here. For from now on this unity of being and nothing will stand once and for all as foundation, as first truth, and will thus constitute the element of all that follows. All further logical determinations besides *becoming* itself (existence, quality, and in general all the concepts of philosophy) are therefore examples of this unity. – As for that sense that styles itself as common or sound, if it rejects the inseparability of being and nothing, let it try to produce an example in which the one is found separate from the other (let it separate something from limit or limitation, or, as just said, the infinite, God, from activity). Only the empty figments of thought, being and nothing, only these, are separate things, and they are the ones which are accorded priority by common sense over the truth, the inseparability of the two which is everywhere before us.

We cannot hope to address all the confusions in which ordinary consciousness lands itself in connection with this logical proposition, for they are inexhaustible. Only a few can be cited. One cause among others of such confusions is that consciousness brings with it, to such an abstract logical proposition, the figure of some concrete thing, forgetting that the issue here is not anything concrete but only the pure abstractions of being and nothing and that these alone are to be held firmly in mind.

Being and non-being are the same; therefore it is the same whether I am or am not, whether this house is or is not, whether these hundred dollars are in my possession or not. – This conclusion from the proposition, or this application of it, alters its meaning completely. The proposition contains the pure abstractions of being and nothing; but the application makes of them a determinate being and a determinate nothing. But, as we have said, determinate being is not an issue here. A determinate, a finite being, is one that refers to another; it is a content that stands in the relation of necessity to another content, to the whole world. As regards the reciprocal determinations that hold the whole together, metaphysics could make the basically tautological claim that if one speck of dust were destroyed the whole universe would collapse. In the instances adduced against our proposition, something appears as not indifferent to whether it is or is not, not on account of being or non-being, but because of its *content* which connects it with some other content. If a determinate content, some determinate being, is *presupposed*, this being, since it is *determinate*, stands in manifold reference to another content. It is not a matter of indifference

removing
confusions

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to it whether a certain other content to which it refers is or is not, for only through such a referring is it essentially what it is. The same applies to *representing* (inasmuch as we take non-being in the determinate sense of representing as contrasted with actuality). In this case the being or the absence of a content, which is a determinate representation that refers to another, is not a matter of indifference. –

This observation already contains what constitutes a capital point in the Kantian critique of the ontological proof of God's existence, although we only consider it here with reference to the distinction that comes up in it of being and nothing in general and of *determinate* being or non-being. – As we know, that so-called proof presupposed the concept of a being that possesses all realities, including therefore *concrete existence*, which it likewise assumed as one of the realities. Kant's critique took mainly the line that *existence or being (the two taken here as synonymous) is not a property or a real predicate, that is to say, not a concept of something that can be added to the concept of a thing.*⁸ – What Kant means to say is that being is not a content determination. – Therefore, he goes on, the possible does not contain more than the actual; a hundred actual dollars do not contain a whit more than a hundred possible ones;²¹ – that is, the actual one hundred have no other content determination than the possible. And in fact, considered in isolation, it is a matter of indifference to this content whether it is or is not; there is no distinction of being and non-being in it, this distinction does not affect it at all; the one hundred dollars do not become less if they do not exist, or more if they do. Any distinction would have to originate from elsewhere. – “But in my financial state,” Kant reminds us, “there is more to a hundred actual dollars than there is to the mere concept of them (that is, their possibility). For with actuality the *intended object* is not merely included in my concept analytically, but is *synthetically* added to my *concept* (which is a *determination* of my *state*), without the thought itself of the hundred dollars being in the least increased by this being which they have outside my concept.”²²

Here two kinds of “states” (to retain Kantian expressions which are not free of a confused awkwardness) are *presupposed*: one that Kant calls “concept,” by which we must understand “representation”; and another, my “financial state.” For the one as for the other, for the finances and the representation, the hundred dollars are a content determination, or

⁸ *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd edn, pp. 628ff.

²¹ A598/B626–A599/B627. The following dash, presumably, is to set off Hegel's own gloss on the paraphrase of Kant's own words.

²² A599/B627.

“they are added to each *synthetically*,” as Kant puts it. “I,” as *possessing* a hundred dollars or as not possessing them, or again, “I,” as *representing* a hundred dollars to myself or as not representing them, is of course a different content. Stated more generally: the abstractions of being and nothing both cease to be abstractions by receiving a determinate content; being is then reality, the determinate being of one hundred dollars; and nothing is negation, the determinate non-being of the same dollars. This determinate content itself, the hundred dollars, also abstracted by itself, is unaltered the same in the one as in the other. But when being is further taken as a financial state, the hundred dollars refer to this state, and for this state their determinate content is not a matter of indifference; **their being or non-being is only an *alteration*; they are transposed into the sphere of *existence***. When it is therefore urged against the unity of being and nothing that it is not a matter of indifference whether this or that (the hundred dollars) are or are not, the deception is to project the difference, whether I *have* or *do not have* the hundred dollars, into the difference merely of being and non-being. And this is a deception, as we have shown, based on a one-sided abstraction that leaves out the *determinate existence* present in such examples and retains only being and non-being; just as, conversely, it transforms the abstract being and non-being that should be apprehended into a determinate being or non-being, into an existence. **Only *existence* contains the real distinction of being and nothing, namely, a *something* and an *other***. – This real distinction is the one that comes to mind in representation instead of that of abstract being and nothing and their merely intended distinction.

As Kant puts it, “through existence something enters into the context of the whole experience . . . We obtain one more object of *perception*, but our *concept* of the intended object is not thereby augmented.”²³ – This only means, as follows from our explanation, that through existence, essentially because something is a determinate existence, this something is in relationship to *others*, and also to a perceiver among these others. – “The concept of a hundred dollars,” Kant says, “is not augmented through perception.”²⁴ By “concept” is meant here the above noted hundred dollars represented *in isolation*. As so isolated, these dollars are indeed an empirical content, but cut off, without connection or determinateness as against *something else*; their form of immediate self-identity deprives them of external connection and makes them indifferent to whether they are perceived or not. This so-called concept of a hundred dollars is however a false concept; the form

²³ A599/B627–A600/B628. ²⁴ A599/B627.

of simple self-reference does not belong to such a limited, finite content itself; it is a form on loan to it, like a dress, by a subjective understanding; a “hundred dollars” is nothing self-referring but something alterable and perishable.

This thinking or imagining which has before it only a determinate being, existence, must be referred back to the previously mentioned beginning of science which Parmenides made – the one who purified and elevated to *pure thought*, to being as such, his own otherwise pictorial representations and hence also those of posterity, thus ushering in the element of science. – What is the *first* in science had of necessity to show itself to be the *first historically*. And we must regard the *one* or the *being* of the Eleatics as the first instance of knowledge by thought. *Water* and suchlike material principles are indeed *meant* to be the universal even though, as things material, they are not pure thoughts; *numbers* are neither the first simple, nor the self-abiding thought,²⁵ but thought rather which is entirely self-external.

The move from *particular finite* being to being as such in its totally abstract universality is to be regarded not only as the very first theoretical demand but also as the very first practical one. For when a lot of fuss is made about the hundred dollars, that it does make a difference to my financial state whether I *have* them or *not*, still more whether I am or am not or something else is or is not, we can then be reminded that the human being (quite apart from such financial situations in which the possession of a hundred dollars will in fact be a matter of indifference) ought to raise his mind to this abstract universality in which it is in fact indifferent to him whether the hundred dollars, whatever the quantitative relation that they might have to his financial state, are or are not; just as it would be indifferent to him whether he himself is or is not, that is, whether he is or is not in finite life (by which is meant a state, a determinate being), and so on. *Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae*, a Roman even said,²⁶ and still more ought the Christian to find himself in this state of indifference.

Still to be noted is the immediate connection between, on the one hand, the elevation above the hundred dollars and finite things generally, and, on the other hand, the ontological proof and the mentioned Kantian criticism of it. This criticism, because of its popular example, has won universal plausibility. Who does not know that a hundred actual dollars are different

²⁵ *bey sich bleibende*.

²⁶ Flaccus: *Carminum liber tertium*. Ode III, verse 7–8. “If the world were to fall to pieces, the ruins would still sustain the undaunted.”

from a hundred merely possible dollars and that they make a difference to my financial situation? This difference is easily demonstrable in the case of the hundred dollars: therefore, the concept, that is, the determinateness of the content as empty possibility, and being are different from each other; *therefore*, the concept of God and his being are also different, and just as I cannot extract from the possibility of the hundred dollars their actuality, I can just as little “extract”²⁷ God’s existence from his concept. But the ontological proof consists precisely in thus extracting God’s existence from his concept. Now, though there is of course truth to the claim that the concept is different from being, God’s difference from the hundred dollars and other finite things is yet greater. It is the definition of finite things that in them concept and being are different; that the concept and reality, soul and body, are separable; that they are therefore perishable and mortal. The abstract definition of God, on the contrary, is precisely that his concept and his being are unseparated and inseparable. The true critique of the categories and of reason²⁸ is just this: to acquaint cognition with this distinction and to prevent it from applying to God the determinations and the relations of the finite.

21.77

the true critique of reason

Remark 2

Yet another reason can be cited that helps to explain the resistance to the proposition about being and nothing. This reason is that, as expressed in the proposition “*being and nothing are one and the same*,” the result of considering being and nothing is incomplete. The accent falls primarily on the being-*one-and-the-same*, as is the case in judgment generally, where the predicate says what the subject *is*. Consequently, the sense seems to be that the distinction is denied which yet patently occurs in the proposition at the same time; for the proposition says both determinations, being and nothing, and contains them as distinguished. – At the same time, the meaning cannot be that abstraction ought to be made from the two determinations and only their unity retained. This sense would be manifestly one-sided, since that from which abstraction would be made is equally present in the proposition and explicitly named there. – Now, in so far as the proposition “*being and nothing are the same*” expresses the identity of these determinations, yet in fact equally contains the two as distinguished, it internally contradicts itself and thus dissolves itself. And if we concentrate on this result, what we have before us is a proposition which, on closer inspection,

²⁷ Cf. A603/B631.

²⁸ Kant’s critical work was in his day generically referred to as “the critique of reason.”

turns out to vanish spontaneously. It has movement. But in thus vanishing, it is its proper content which comes to be in it, namely *becoming*.

The proposition thus *contains* the result; it is this result *implicit in it*. But the circumstance to which we must pay attention here is the defect that this result is not itself *expressed* in the proposition; it is external reflection that recognizes it there. – In this connection, we must observe right at the beginning that the proposition, in the form of *a judgment*, is not adept to express speculative truths; recognition of this circumstance would go a long way in preventing many misunderstandings of speculative truths. Judgment joins subject and object in a connection of *identity*; abstraction is therefore made from the fact that the subject has yet more determinacies than the predicate has, just as that the predicate is wider than the subject. Now, if the content is speculative, the *non-identity* of subject and predicate is also an essential moment; but this is not expressed in judgment. The paradoxical and even bizarre light in which much of recent philosophy is cast for those not intimate with speculative thought is due in many ways to the form of the simple judgment when used to convey speculative results.

For the purpose of expressing the speculative truth, the defect is first remedied by adding the contrary proposition, namely “*being and nothing are not the same*,” which we also stated above. But another defect then crops up, for these propositions are disconnected and therefore present their content only in an antinomy, whereas the content refers to one and the same thing, and the determinations expressed in the two propositions should be united absolutely – in a union which can then only be said to be an *unrest* of simultaneous *incompatibles*, *a movement*. The commonest injustice done to a speculative content is to render it one-sidedly, that is, to give prominence only to one of the propositions in which it can be resolved. This proposition is then undeniably asserted; but *the statement is just as false as it is correct*, for once one proposition is taken out of its speculative context, the other also must be given at least as much attention and articulation. – Attention must also be drawn at this point to, so to speak, the unfortunate word “unity.” “Unity,” even more so than *identity*, designates a subjective reflection. It is normally taken as a connection that arises from *comparison*, from external reflection. Inasmuch as this reflection finds the same thing in two *different subject matters*, a unity is there with respect to which complete *indifference* is presupposed on the part of the subject matters compared, so that the comparing and the unity do not touch these subject matters themselves but are rather a doing and a determining external to them. Unity thus expresses a totally *abstract* sameness, and it will sound all the harsher and the more discordant the more the terms of

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21.79

which it is asserted show themselves to be utterly distinct. For this reason it would therefore be better to say simply *unseparatedness* and *inseparability*; but then the *affirmative aspect* of the connection of the whole would not be expressed.

So the whole true result that we have here before us is *becoming*, but a becoming which is not the merely one-sided or abstract unity of being and nothing. It consists rather in this movement, that pure being is immediate and simple and for that very reason is just as much pure nothing; that the distinction between them *is*, but equally *sublates itself* and *is not*. This result does also assert, therefore, the distinction of being and nothing, but it asserts it as one which is merely *intended*.

The *ordinary assumption* is that being is the absolutely other of nothing, and that there is nothing as clear as this absolute distinction; indeed, nothing seems easier than being able to state it. But it is just as easy to convince oneself that this is impossible, that the distinction is *unsayable*. *Let those who insist on the distinction of being and nothing, let them just try to state in what the distinction consists*. If being and nothing had any determinateness differentiating them, then, as we said, they would be determinate being and determinate nothing, not the pure being and the pure nothing which they still are at this point. Their distinction is therefore completely empty, each is as indeterminate as the other; the distinction depends, therefore, not on them but on a third element, on *intention*. But intention is a form of subjectivity, and subjectivity does not belong to the present order of exposition. The third element in which being and nothing have their subsistence must however also be present here; and it is present indeed, it is *becoming*. In becoming, they are present as distinct; becoming only occurs to the extent that they are distinguished. *This third is an other than they – they subsist only in an other, which is equivalent to saying that they do not subsist on their own*. Becoming equally is the subsistence of being and of non-being; or their subsistence is only their being in a *one*; precisely this, their subsistence in a *one*, is that which equally sublates their distinction.

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The challenge to produce the distinction between being and nothing also brings with it the challenge to state what, then, is *being*, and *what is nothing*. *Those who resist acknowledging that the two are equally only a transition of the one into the other, and who assert this or that about being and nothing, let them declare whereof they speak, that is, let them advance a definition of being and nothing, and let them demonstrate that it is correct*. Without having satisfied this first demand of the ancient science, whose logical rules they otherwise accept and apply, all their assertions about being and nothing are only assurances without scientific validity. If it has somewhere

been said that existence,²⁹ which is held from the start to be equivalent to being, is the *completion of possibility*, then another determination, namely possibility, is presupposed along with it; so being is not declared in its immediacy but precisely as not standing on its own, as conditioned. For being which is *mediated*, we shall reserve the expression *concrete existence*.³⁰ But the common practice is to *imagine* being, as if it were a picture of pure light, the clarity of unclouded seeing, and then nothing as the pure night – and the distinction between the two is then enshrined into this well-known sensuous difference. But in fact, if this very seeing is more accurately imagined, one can readily perceive that in absolute light one sees just as much and just as little as in absolute darkness; that the one seeing is just as good as the other; that pure seeing is a seeing of nothing. Pure light and pure darkness are two voids that amount to the same thing. Only in determinate light (and light is determined through darkness: in clouded light therefore), just as only in determinate darkness (and darkness is determined through light: in illuminated darkness therefore), can something be distinguished, since only clouded light and illuminated darkness have distinction in them and hence are determinate being, *existence*.

Remark 3

The unity, whose moments, being and nothing, are inseparable, is at the same time different from these moments. It thus stands as a *third* with respect to them – a third which, in its most proper form, is *becoming*. *Transition* is the same as becoming except that the two terms, from one of which the transition is made to the other, are represented in it more as at rest, outside each other, the transition occurring *between* them. Now, wherever and however being or nothing are at issue, this third must be there; for the two have no subsistence on their own but are only in becoming, in this third. But this third has various empirical shapes that abstraction either sets aside or neglects for the sake of holding fast to its two products, being and nothing, each for itself, and showing them as protected against

21.81

²⁹ “I define existence as the complement of possibility.” Wolff, *Philosophia prima, sive ontologia* (1736), §174. Hegel uses here the term “*Existenz*,” which I normally translate as “concrete existence” to differentiate it from “*Dasein*.” See the note immediately following.

³⁰ For the distinction between *Existenz* and *Dasein*, see “Issues of translation” in the editor’s “Translator’s note.” To be noted here is that both terms signify “being” as determinate and therefore as mediated. But the difference is whether the mediation is explicitly expressed within the structure of the logical object itself (as it is the case with *Existenz*, which explicitly refers to “essence”) or is only immediately present there (as it is the case with *Dasein*). I translate *Existenz* as “concrete existence” because of the immediately preceding mention of “possibility” that definitely places it within the realm of “essence,” which is the realm of explicit mediation.

transition. Such a simple manoeuvre of abstraction can be countered, with equal ease, simply by pointing to the empirical concrete existence in which that abstraction itself is only a something, has a determinate existence. Or else it is by virtue of other forms of reflection that this separation of the inseparable would be held fixed. But in any such determination of reflection, its opposite is present within it in and for itself, and it is thus possible to refute it on its own terms without going back to the nature of the fact and appealing to it, by taking the determination as it presents itself, and by pointing to its other in it. It would be labor in vain to attempt to ensnare, so to speak, all the shifts and turns of reflection and its argumentation in order to pre-empt and render impossible all the evasions and the leaps with which it hides its own contradiction from itself. For this reason I also refrain from taking notice of the many self-styled objections and refutations that have been advanced against the claim that neither being nor nothing are something true but that becoming is their truth. The intellectual education required to perceive the nothingness of these refutations, or rather to dispel such arbitrary ideas on one's own, will be attained only through a critical cognition of the forms of the understanding. But those who are the most prolific in such objections straight away set themselves upon reflecting on the first propositions, without helping themselves or having helped themselves through further study of the logic to the awareness of the nature of their crude reflections.

We shall consider some of the cases that occur when being and nothing are posited in isolation, each outside the sphere of the other, with the result that the transition is negated.

mere isolation of
being and nothing.

Parmenides held fast to being and was the most consistent, since he also said of nothing that it *absolutely is not*; only being is.³¹ Totally for itself, being is thus the indeterminate, and has therefore no connecting reference to any other; consequently, it seems that *from this beginning no further forward move is possible* – that is, from that beginning itself – and that an advance can only occur by adding something foreign to it *from outside*. The advance, where being is the same as nothing, thus appears as a second, absolute beginning – a transition which is for itself, and that would be added to being externally. Being would not be an absolute beginning at all if it had a determinateness; in that case, it would depend on another and would not be immediate, would not be the beginning. If, however, it is indeterminate and is therefore a true beginning, it has nothing by virtue of which it can

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³¹ *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker (The Fragments of the Pre-Socratics)* Volume II, ed. Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1956), Parmenides, 232B6.

No transition
from infinite to
finite (against
Parmenides &
Spinoza)

pass over to an other; as beginning it is equally the *end*. It is just as impossible for anything to break out of it as to break into it; with Parmenides as with Spinoza, there is no advance from being or from absolute substance to the negative, the finite. If there is forward movement nevertheless – something which, as just remarked, can occur only externally if we start from being devoid of any connecting reference and so without forward movement – then, this advance is a second, new beginning. Thus, Fichte’s most absolute, unconditional first principle, $A = A$, is a *positing*, a *thesis*; the second principle is a *counter-positing*, an *antithesis*; this latter should be *partly* conditioned, *partly* unconditioned (and so contradiction in itself).³² This is an advance by external reflection that negates the absolute with which it makes its beginning (the counter-positing is the negation of the first identity) while at the same time equally reducing its second absolute, explicitly, to something conditioned. But if there were any justification at all for the advance, that is, for sublating the first beginning, then the possibility that an other could connect with it would have to lie in the nature of this first beginning itself; the beginning would have to be, therefore, a *determinate* being. But *being*, as also the absolute substance, will not be such, quite the contrary. Being is the *immediate*, the still absolutely *indeterminate*.

Fichte’s
synthetic
method

Comment
on Jacobi

The most eloquent, perhaps most forgotten accounts of the impossibility of advancing from an abstraction to something beyond it, and of uniting the two, are given by Jacobi in support of his polemic against the Kantian *a priori* synthesis of self-consciousness, in his *Treatise Concerning the Undertaking of Critique to Reduce Reason to the Understanding* (Jacobi, *Werke*, Vol. III).³³ He defines the task (p. 113) as one of demonstrating the originating or the producing of a synthesis in a *pure somewhat*, be it consciousness, space or time. “Let space be *a one*; time *a one*; consciousness *a one*. Now, do say how any of these three ‘ones’ *purely* turns itself internally into a manifold: each is *a one* and *no other*; an all-the-same-ness; just *selfhood* in general without a he-hood, she-hood, or it-hood, for these still slumber together with the *he*, *she*, *it* in the infinite zero of the indeterminate from which each and every *determinate being* has yet to proceed! What brings *finitude* into these three infinities? What impregnates space and time *a priori* with number and measure, and turns them into a *pure manifold*? What brings *pure spontaneity* (‘I’) into oscillation? How does its pure vowel sound come to its concomitant sound, the consonant, or better, how does its *soundless*, uninterrupted *sounding* interrupt itself and break off in order to gain at least some kind of self-sound, an *accent*?” One

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³² Cf. Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794) §§1, 2; GA I.2. ³³ Leipzig, 1816.

sees that Jacobi very distinctly recognized that abstraction is a *nonentity*, whether this *nonentity* is the so-called absolute (only abstract) space, or the equally abstract time or abstract pure consciousness, the “I.” He insists on this nonentity for the sake of maintaining the impossibility of any advance to an other, which is the condition of a synthesis, and to a synthesis itself. The synthesis which is the point of interest here must not be taken as a tying together of *external* determinations already at hand. Rather, the issue is twofold: one of the genesis of a second next to a first, of a determinate something next to something which is initially indeterminate, but also one of *immanent* synthesis, of synthesis *a priori* – a unity of distinct terms that exists in and for itself. *Becoming* is this immanent synthesis of being and nothing; but because the sense most closely attached to “synthesis” is that of an external gathering of things externally at hand, the name of synthesis, of synthetic unity, has rightly gone out of use. – Jacobi asks, *how* does the pure vowel of the “I” come to its concomitant sound, to the consonant? *what* brings determinacy to indeterminateness? – The question of the *what* would be easy to answer, and has been answered by Kant in his way. The question of the *how*, however, means: in which way and manner? in what relation? and so forth, and requires the application of a particular category; but there can be no question here of a “way” or “manner,” of the categories of the understanding. **The question of the *how* is itself one that belongs to the bad practices of reflection, which demands comprehensibility, but for that it presupposes its fixed categories and is thereby assured from the start to be forearmed against the answer to what it asks.** Nor does the question have in Jacobi the higher sense of a query regarding the *necessity* of the synthesis, for Jacobi, as we said, remains fixed in the abstractions in order to assert the impossibility of the synthesis. Especially graphic is his description (p. 147) of the procedure for attaining the abstraction of space. “For a time I must try clean to forget that I ever saw anything, heard, touched or moved anything, myself expressly not exempted. Clean, clean, clean must I forget all movement, and let precisely this *forgetting* be my most pressing concern, since it is the hardest. Just as I have thought all things away, so must I also get perfectly *rid* of them all, retaining nothing at all except the intuition, which *violently* held its ground, of the infinite *immutable* space. I may not, therefore, *think* even myself *back into it* as something distinguished from it yet equally bound to it; I may not let myself even be merely *surrounded* and *pervaded* by it, but I must rather *give myself over* to it totally, become a one with it, transform myself into it; I must allow no leftover of myself except *this my intuition* itself, in order to behold it as a truly self-subsisting, independent, single and sole representation.”

With this totally abstract purity of continuity, that is, with this indeterminateness and emptiness of representation, it is indifferent whether one names this abstraction “space” or “pure intuition” or “pure thought.” It is altogether the same as what an Indian calls Brahma, when for years on end, looking only at the tip of his nose, externally motionless and equally unmoved in sensation, representation, phantasy, desire, and so on, he inwardly says only *Om, Om, Om*, or else says nothing at all. This dull, empty consciousness, taken as consciousness, is just this – *being*.

In this void, Jacobi now states further, he encounters the opposite of what should happen to him according to Kant’s assurance. He does not find himself to be a *many* and a *manifold* but to be rather a one without any plurality and manifoldness; indeed, “I am *impossibility* itself, the *nihilating* of all things manifold and plural – *cannot*, from my pure, absolutely simple and unchanging essence, *produce again*, or conjure in me as shadow, even *the least bit of anything*. . . Thus all externality and juxtaposition, any manifoldness and plurality dependent on them, are revealed in this purity as a *pure impossibility*.”³⁴

The meaning of this impossibility is nothing else than the tautology: I hold fast to abstract unity and exclude all plurality and manifoldness; I keep myself in indistinctness and indeterminacy, and look away from anything distinguished and determinate. Kant’s *a priori* synthesis of self-consciousness, that is, the work of this unity of differentiating itself but in this differentiation of preserving itself, is diluted by Jacobi to just this abstraction. He one-sidedly reduces that “synthesis *in itself*,” the “*original parting of judgment*,”³⁵ to “*the copula in itself*” – an ‘*is, is, is*’ without beginning and end, without ‘what’, ‘who’, or ‘which’; this repetition of repetition *ad infinitum* is the one single occupation, function, and production of the purest of all pure syntheses; the synthesis is itself this mere, pure, absolute repetition.”³⁶ Though, in fact, since there is no pause in it, that is, no negation, no distinguishing, the synthesis is not a repetition but rather undifferentiated simple being. – But then, is this still a synthesis when Jacobi leaves out precisely that which makes the unity a synthetic unity?

First of all, it must be said that when Jacobi assumes his position in absolute (that is, abstract) space, time, and consciousness as well, he transposes himself into something which is *empirically* false, and fixes himself there. *There is* no such thing as a spatially or temporally unlimited space or time, that is, none is empirically at hand which would not be filled with a continuous manifold of limited existence and of change, so that these

³⁴ pp. 148ff., paraphrase.

³⁵ “parting of judgment” = *Urteil*.

³⁶ pp. 125ff., paraphrase.

limits and these changes would not belong, unseparated and inseparably, to spatiality. Consciousness is likewise filled with determinate sensation, representation, desire, and so forth; it does not exist *in concreto* apart from some particular content or other. – The *transition* to the empirical then goes without saying. Consciousness can indeed make empty space, empty time, and even empty consciousness or pure being, its intended object and content, but it does not stay with them. Rather, from this emptiness it passes over – more than that, it forces itself over to a better content, that is, one which is somehow more concrete and to this extent, however bad as content, still better and truer. Precisely such a content is the synthetic as such, “synthetic” understood in its more general sense. Thus Parmenides has to make do with semblance and opinion, the opposite of being and truth; Spinoza likewise, with attributes, modes, extension, movement, understanding, will, and so forth. The synthesis contains as well as exposes the untruth of those abstractions; in it they are in unity with their other, are not therefore as self-subsistent, not as absolute but strictly as relative.

The demonstration of the empirical nullity of empty space and so forth is not however the task here. Consciousness can of course, by means of abstraction, fill itself with such indeterminateness, and the abstractions to which it thus holds fast are *the thoughts* of pure space, time, pure consciousness, pure being. It is the thought of pure space etc. (that is, pure space etc. taken *in themselves*) which is to be demonstrated to be null, that is, what must be demonstrated is that, as such a thought, its opposite has already forced its way into it, that by itself it is already being that has gone outside itself, a determinateness.

But this happens in them immediately. They are, as Jacobi correctly describes them, results of abstraction; they are expressly determined as *indeterminate* – and this, to go back to their simplest form, is being. **This indeterminateness is however precisely what constitutes their determinateness. For indeterminateness is opposed to determinateness; as opposed, it is therefore itself something determinate or negative – the pure, entirely abstract negative. This indeterminateness or abstract negation which thus has being in it is that to which reflection, whether external or internal, gives voice when it equates such a being with nothing, when it declares it to be an empty product of thought, a nothingness. – Or, one can say, since being is the indeterminate, it is not the (affirmative) determinateness that it is; it is not being but nothing.**

In the pure reflection of the beginning as it is made in this Logic with *being* as such, the transition is still hidden; because *being* is posited as

immediate, the *nothing* only breaks out in it immediately. All the subsequent determinations are however more concrete, like *existence* which follows right after; there is already *posited* in existence that which contains and produces the contradiction of those abstractions, and consequently their transition. In being, when taken in that simplicity and immediacy, the memory that it is the result of a perfect abstraction, and that it is therefore already abstract negativity, nothing, is left back behind the science which, starting explicitly from *essence*, will exhibit that one-sided *immediacy* as a mediated immediacy where being is *posited* as *concrete existence*, and that which mediates being, the ground, is also *posited*.

With the recovery of this memory, it is possible to present the transition from being to nothing, or also, as it is said, to *clarify* it and make it *comprehensible*, as something itself easy and trivial. Of course, the being which is made into the beginning of science is a nothing, since it is possible to abstract from everything, and when abstraction is made from all, nothing is left over. However, one can continue, so understood the beginning is nothing affirmative, not being, but just nothing, and nothing is then the *end*, at least as much as immediate being, and even more so. Shortest is to let such an argument run its course and to observe how the results of which it boasts take shape. **That “nothing” is the result of the argument, and that the beginning would then have to be made with nothing (as in Chinese philosophy)³⁷ need not cause us to lift a finger. For even before we had lifted it, this nothing would have turned into being just as much (see Section B above, “Nothing”).** But further, if we presuppose the said abstraction from *everything* (an “everything” which is an *existent* nevertheless), such an abstraction must be defined with greater exactitude. The result of such an abstraction from everything existent is first of all abstract being, *being* in general. For just as in the cosmological proof of the existence of God from the contingent being of the world, where we ascend above this contingent being, *being* is still taken up with us in the ascent; it is determined as *infinite being*. But of course, one *can* abstract also from this pure being. Being *can* be thrown in with the everything from which abstraction has already been made, and then *nothing* remains. Now, if we want to ignore the *thinking* of nothing, that is, that it turns around into being, or would know nothing of it, one *can* indeed proceed in this way in the style of the “*one can*.” One can (God be praised!) even abstract from nothing (for the creation of the world, too, is an abstraction from nothing). But then, what remains

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³⁷ Apparently Hegel is associating Buddhism with China. Cf. above, 21.70, where Hegel speaks of oriental philosophies.

objection
from triviality

starting with
Nothing

is not nothing, since abstraction would be made even from it and so would be back at being again. – This “*one can*” generates an external play of abstraction in which the abstracting itself is only the one-sided activity of the negative. Directly implied in this very “one can” is that being is just as indifferent to it as nothing, and that as the one vanishes, the other appears in turn; but whether a beginning is made with the activity of nothing or with nothing is equally indifferent, for the activity of nothing, that is, the mere abstracting, is neither more nor less true than the mere nothing.

Plato’s dialectical treatment of the One in the *Parmenides* must also be regarded rather as a dialectic of external reflection. Being and the One are both Eleatic forms which are the same thing. But, as Plato understands them in that dialogue, they are also to be distinguished. After he removes from the One the various determinations of whole and parts, of being-in-itself, of being-in-another, etc.; of figure, time, etc., his result is that being does not pertain to the One, for being does not accrue to a something except according to one of these forms. (Ed. Stephanus, Vol. II, p. 141e.) Plato then turns to the proposition, “*the One is*”; and it is there that we can see how, starting from this proposition, he performs the transition to the non-being of the One. It happens by way of a *comparison* between the two determinations of the presupposed proposition, namely of “*the One is*.” This proposition contains “the One” and “being”; but “the one *is*” contains more than when one only says “the One.” In this, in their being *distinguished*, the moment of negation is demonstrated. It is clear that this method has a presupposition and is an external reflection.

21.88

Just as the One is posited here in combination with being, so is being, which should be held fast abstracted *by itself* in the simplest form without entering into thought, exhibited in a combination that entails the opposite of what should be asserted. Taken in its immediacy, being belongs to a *subject*, is something said, has an empirical *existence* in general, and therefore stands on a ground of restriction and negativity. Whatever the expressions or the turns of phrase that the understanding adopts in protesting against the unity of being and nothing, however much it appeals to what is immediately given, it will find precisely in this experience nothing but *determinate* being, being with a restriction or negation – the very unity which it rejects. The assertion of immediate being thus comes down to an empirical concrete existence, and it cannot reject the demonstration of it, since it is the immediacy outside thought to which it wants to cling.

The same is the case with *nothing*, only in the contrary way. This is a well-known reflection, made often enough respecting nothing. When taken in its immediacy, nothing shows itself as *existing*; for it is by nature

the same as being. Nothing is thought of, represented; it is spoken about; it therefore *is*; nothing has its being in thinking, representing, speaking, etc. But, further, this being is also distinguished from it; it is therefore said that nothing is indeed in thinking or representing, yet for that very reason it is not *it* which *is*, it is not *it* to which being belongs, that only thinking or representing are this being. Even on this distinction, there is no denying that nothing *refers* to a being; but in this reference, though the latter equally also contains distinction, there is a unity with being. In whatever way nothing is said or demonstrated, it shows itself in combination with or, if one prefers, in touch with a being, unseparated from a being, that is to say, precisely in a *determinate existence*.

But when the presence of nothing in a determinate existence is thus demonstrated, this distinction of it from being still commonly comes to mind, namely that the existence of the nothing is nothing at all that pertains to it *per se*. It is said that nothing does not have being in it; that it *is not being as such*; that it is rather an absence of being, just as darkness is only the *absence* of light, cold only the *absence* of warmth, and so forth. It is said that darkness has meaning only with reference to the eye, by being externally compared with the positive, with light, just as cold is something only in our sensation, whereas light, warmth, just like being, are on the contrary objective on their own, they are the real, the effective, of quite another quality and dignity than those negatives, than nothing. One can often find it advanced as a very weighty reflection and a significant item of cognition that darkness is *only absence* of light, cold *only absence* of warmth. Regarding this astute reflection, it can be observed empirically in this field of empirical subject matters that darkness in fact shows its effective presence in light by determining it as color and thereby imparting visibility to it in the first place, because, as we said above, one can see just as little in pure light as in pure darkness. Visibility, however, is an effect in the eye, and the said negative makes just as much of a contribution to it as does the light that passes for the real, the positive; similarly, cold makes itself present enough to water, to our sensation, and so forth, and if we deny its so-called objective reality, we thereby stand to gain absolutely nothing against it. And we should further repeat³⁸ the complaint that here the talk is again of a negative with determinate content; that one has not restricted oneself to the nothing, with respect to which, so far as empty abstraction goes, being is neither at a loss nor at an advantage. – But we must equally take cold, darkness, and similar determinate negations, just for themselves, and, in

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³⁸ Cf above, 21.72 and 75.

respect to their general determination which is at issue here, let us see what is posited thereby. They are supposed to be not nothing in general, but the nothing rather of light, warmth, and so forth, of something determinate, of a content; thus they are a determinate, “contentful nothing” if one may so speak. A determinateness, however, as will be found later on, is itself a negation; thus they are negative nothings; a negative nothing is however something affirmative. The conversion of nothing into an affirmative by virtue of its determinateness (which previously appeared as *a determinate existence* in a subject or in what have you) appears to a consciousness bound to the abstraction of the understanding as the greatest paradox. Simple as it is, or rather because of its very simplicity, the insight that the negation of negation is something positive appears a trivial matter to which the haughty understanding need pay no heed, even though its correctness is undeniable – and not just its correctness, but also, on account of the universality of the determinations involved, its infinite extension and universal applicability, so that it would indeed be well to pay heed to it.

21.90

Regarding the determination of the transition of being and nothing into each other, the further remark can be made that such a transition is to be taken just as it is without additional reflective determination. It is immediate and entirely abstract, on account of the abstractness of the moments in transition, that is, because there is yet to be posited in these moments the determinateness of the other through which they have undergone the transition. Nothing is not yet *posited* in being, even though being is *essentially* nothing, and the other way around. It is therefore improper to apply here more determinate mediations, and to take being and nothing in some relation – their transition is not yet a relation. Thus it is inadmissible to say: nothing is the ground of being, or being is the ground of nothing; nothing is the *cause* of being, and so forth; or, the transition into nothing can have occurred only *under the condition* that something is, or the transition into being only *under the condition* of non-being. The mode of the connecting reference cannot be further determined without the connected *sides* being at the same time also further determined. The connection of ground and consequent, and so forth, no longer has mere being and nothing for the sides which it binds, but has being expressly as ground, and something which, although only posited and not standing on its own, is however not abstract nothing.

Remark 4

One can gather from the preceding what to think of the dialectic directed against the *beginning of the world* and also its end (that dialectic which

would prove the *eternity* of matter), that is, of the dialectic directed at *becoming*, against coming-to-be or passing-away in general. (Kant's antinomies regarding the finitude or the infinity of the world in space and time will be more closely considered below, under the concept of the quantitative infinity.)³⁹ This simple, common dialectic rests on fixing the opposition of being and nothing. That a beginning of the world or of anything is not possible is proven as follows:

21.91

Nothing can begin, either in so far as something is, or in so far as it is not; for in so far as it is, it does not begin to be; and in so far as it is not, it also does not begin to be. – If the world, or anything, had begun, it would have begun in nothing; but in nothing there is no beginning – or nothing is not a beginning; for a beginning implies a being, but nothing contains no being. Nothing is only nothing. In a ground, a cause, and so on, if this is how nothing is determined, there is contained an affirmation, being. – For the same reason, too, something cannot cease to be. For then it would have to contain nothing, but being is only being, not the opposite of itself.

It is clear that in this proof there is nothing brought against becoming, or beginning and ceasing-to-be, against this unity of being and nothing, except an assertorical denial and the ascription of truth to being and nothing taken in separation each from the other. – Such a dialectic is however at least more consistent than ordinary reflective thought. This thought accepts as the whole truth that being and nothing are only in separation, yet allows on the other hand for a beginning and a ceasing-to-be that are equally accepted as true determinations; in these, however, it in fact assumes the inseparability of being and nothing.

Once we presuppose that being and nothing are absolutely divorced, beginning or becoming, as we often hear said, is of course *incomprehensible*, for we make a presupposition which does away with beginning or becoming and yet *again* admits it. And this contradiction, which we create ourselves and make impossible to resolve, this is what is called the *incomprehensible*.

The dialectic just cited is also the same as the understanding deploys against the concept of *infinitesimal* magnitude given by higher analysis. More will be said below about this concept.⁴⁰ – These magnitudes are so determined that they *are in their vanishing* – not *before* this vanishing, for they would then be finite magnitudes; not *after* it, for then they would be nothing. Against this pure thought, it is objected and endlessly repeated that these magnitudes are *either something or nothing*; that there is no *intermediary state* between being and nothing (“state” is here an inappropriate,

21.92

³⁹ See below, 21.228–232. ⁴⁰ See below, 21.252–253.

barbaric expression). – Assumed here is again the absolute separation of being and nothing. But we have shown against this that being and nothing are in fact the same, or to speak in the language cited, that there *is* nothing which is not an *intermediary state between being and nothing*. Mathematics owes its most brilliant successes to precisely that determination which the understanding rejects.

This form of argumentation that falsely presupposes the absolute separation of being and nothing, and insists on it, should be called not *dialectic* but *sophistry*. For sophistry is an argumentation derived from a baseless presupposition rashly accepted without critique; but we call dialectic the higher rational movement in which these, being and nothing, apparently utterly separated, pass over into each other on their own, by virtue of what they are, and the presupposition sublates itself. It is the dialectical immanent nature of being and nothing themselves to manifest their unity, which is becoming, as their truth.

2. *The moments of becoming*

Becoming is the unseparatedness of being and nothing, not the unity that abstracts from being and nothing; as the unity *of being and nothing* it is rather this *determinate* unity, or one in which being and nothing equally *are*. However, inasmuch as being and nothing are each unseparated from its other, *each is not*. In this unity, therefore, *they are*, but as vanishing, only as *sublated*. They sink from their initially represented *self-subsistence* into moments which are *still distinguished* but at the same time sublated.

21.93

Grasped as thus distinguished, each is in their *distinguishedness* a unity with the *other*. Becoming thus contains being and nothing as *two such unities*, each of which is itself unity of being and nothing; the one is being as immediate and as reference to nothing; the other is nothing as immediate and as reference to being; in these unities the determinations are of unequal value.

Becoming is in this way doubly determined. In one determination, nothing is the immediate, that is, the determination begins with nothing and this refers to being; that is to say, it passes over into it. In the other determination, being is the immediate, that is, the determination begins with being and this passes over into nothing – *coming-to-be* and *ceasing-to-be*.

Both are the same, becoming, and even as directions that are so different they interpenetrate and paralyze each other. The one is *ceasing-to-be*; being passes over into nothing, but nothing is just as much the opposite of

itself, the passing-over into being, coming-to-be. This coming-to-be is the other direction; nothing goes over into being, but being equally sublates itself and is rather the passing-over into nothing; it is ceasing-to-be. – They do not sublata themselves reciprocally – the one sublating the other externally – but each rather sublates itself in itself and is within it the opposite of itself.

3. Sublation of becoming

The equilibrium in which coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be are poised is in the first place becoming itself. But this becoming equally collects itself in *quiescent unity*. Being and nothing are in it only as vanishing; becoming itself, however, is only by virtue of their being distinguished. Their vanishing is therefore the vanishing of becoming, or the vanishing of the vanishing itself. Becoming is a ceaseless unrest that collapses into a quiescent result.

This can also be expressed thus: becoming is the vanishing of being into nothing, and of nothing into being, and the vanishing of being and nothing in general; but at the same time it rests on their being distinct. It therefore contradicts itself in itself, because what it unites within itself is self-opposed; but such a union destroys itself.

21.94

This result is a vanishedness, but it is not *nothing*; as such, it would be only a relapse into one of the already sublated determinations and not the result of nothing *and of being*. It is the unity of being and nothing that has become quiescent simplicity. But this quiescent simplicity is *being*, yet no longer for itself but as determination of the whole.

Becoming, as transition into the unity of being and nothing, a unity which is as existent or has the shape of the one-sided *immediate* unity of these moments, is *existence*.

Remark

To sublata and *being sublata* (the *idealized*) constitute one of the most important concepts of philosophy. It is a fundamental determination that repeatedly occurs everywhere in it, the meaning of which must be grasped with precision and especially distinguished from *nothing*. – What is sublata does not thereby turn into nothing. Nothing is the *immediate*; something sublata is on the contrary something *mediated*; it is something non-existent but as a result that has proceeded from a being; it still *has in itself*, therefore, the *determinateness from which it derives*.

The German “*aufheben*” (“to sublata” in English) has a twofold meaning in the language: it equally means “to keep,” “to ‘preserve,’” and “to cause

to cease,” “to put an end to.” Even “to preserve” already includes a negative note, namely that something, in order to be retained, is removed from its immediacy and hence from an existence which is open to external influences. – That which is sublated is thus something at the same time preserved, something that has lost its immediacy but has not come to nothing for that. – These two definitions of “to sublatare” can be cited as two dictionary meanings of the word. But it must strike one as remarkable that a language has come to use one and the same word for two opposite meanings. For speculative thought it is gratifying to find words that have in themselves a speculative meaning. The German language has several such words. The double meaning of the Latin “*tollere*” (made notorious by Cicero’s quip, “*tollendum est Octavium*”)⁴¹ does not go as far; its affirmative determination only goes so far as “lifting up.” Something is sublated only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite; in this closer determination as something reflected, it may fittingly be called a *moment*. In the case of the lever, “*weight*” and “*distance from a point*” are called its mechanical *moments* because of the *sameness* of their effect, in spite of the difference between something real like weight, and something idealized such as the merely spatial determination of “line.” (See *Encycl. of the Phil. Sc.*, 3rd edn, §261, Remark.) – We shall often not help but observe that the technical language of philosophy uses Latin terms for reflected determinations, either because the mother tongue has no terms for them, or, if it has as it does here, because in expressing them it is more likely to call to mind the immediate, whereas the foreign tongue recalls the reflected.

The more precise sense and precise expression that being and nothing receive now that they are *moments* will have to transpire from the consideration of existence, the unity in which they are preserved. Being is being, and nothing is nothing, only as held distinct from each other; in their truth, however, in their unity, they have vanished as such determinations and are now something else. Being and nothing are the same and, *precisely because they are the same, they no longer are being and nothing* but possess a different determination; in becoming they were coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be; in existence, which is another determinate unity, they are again moments but differently determined. This unity now remains their base from which they no longer surface in the abstract meaning of being and nothing.

⁴¹ “Caesar [Octavianus], he says, made no complaints against you to be sure, except as to a remark which he attributed to you: ‘the young man must be praised, honoured, and lifted up [*tollendum*].’” Brutus (2001), Letter 401, to Cicero, p. 307. *Tollendum* can also be translated as “immortalized.” Of course, to be made into a god one must die first.

CHAPTER 2

Existence

Existence is *determinate* being; its determinateness is *existent* determinateness, *quality*. Through its quality, *something* is opposed to an *other*; it is *alterable* and *finite*, negatively determined not only towards an other, but absolutely within it. This negation in it, in contrast at first with the finite something, is the *infinite*; the abstract opposition in which these determinations appear resolves itself into oppositionless infinity, into *being-for-itself*.

The treatment of existence is therefore in three divisions:

- A. existence as such
- B. something and other, finitude
- C. qualitative infinity.

A. EXISTENCE AS SUCH

In existence (a) *as such*, its determinateness is first (b) to be distinguished as *quality*. The latter, however, is to be taken in both the two determinations of existence as *reality* and *negation*. In these determinacies, however, existence is equally reflected into itself, and, as so reflected, it is posited as (c) *something*, an existent.

21.97

a. Existence in general

Existence proceeds from becoming. It is the simple oneness of being and nothing. On account of this simplicity, it has the form of an *immediate*. Its mediation, the becoming, lies behind it; it has sublated itself, and existence therefore appears as a first from which the forward move is made. It is at first in the one-sided determination of *being*; the other determination which it contains, *nothing*, will likewise come up in it, in contrast to the first.

It is not mere being but *existence*, or *Dasein* [in German]; according to its [German] etymology, it is being (*Sein*) in a certain *place* (*da*). But the

representation of space does not belong here. As it follows upon becoming, existence is in general *being* with a *non-being*, so that this non-being is taken up into simple unity with being. *Non-being* thus taken up into being with the result that the concrete whole is in the form of being, of immediacy, constitutes *determinateness* as such.

The *whole* is likewise in the form or *determinateness* of being, since in becoming being has likewise shown itself to be only a moment – something sublated, negatively determined. It is such, however, *for us, in our reflection*; not yet as *posited* in it. What is posited, however, is the determinateness as such of existence, as is also expressed by the *da* (or “there”) of the *Dasein*. – The two are always to be clearly distinguished. Only that which is *posited* in a concept belongs in the course of the elaboration of the latter to its content. Any determinateness not yet posited in the concept itself belongs instead to our reflection, whether this reflection is directed to the nature of the concept itself or is a matter of external comparison. To remark on a determinateness of this last kind can only be for the clarification or anticipation of the whole that will transpire in the course of the development itself. That the whole, the unity of being and nothing, is in the *one-sided determinateness* of being is an external reflection; but in negation, in something and *other*, and so forth, it will become *posited*. – It was necessary here to call attention to the distinction just given; but to comment on all that reflection can allow itself, to give an account of it, would lead to a long-winded anticipation of what must transpire in the fact itself. Although such reflections may serve to facilitate a general overview and thus facilitate understanding, they also bring the disadvantage of being seen as unjustified assertions, unjustified grounds and foundations, of what is to follow. They should be taken for no more than what they are supposed to be and should be distinguished from what constitutes a moment in the advance of the fact itself.

Existence corresponds to *being* in the preceding sphere. But being is the indeterminate; there are no determinations that therefore transpire in it. But existence is determinate being, *something concrete*; consequently, several determinations, several distinct relations of its moments, immediately emerge in it.

b. Quality

On account of the immediacy with which being and nothing are one in existence, neither oversteps the other; to the extent that existence is existent, to that extent it is non-being; it is determined. Being is not the *universal*,

determinateness not the *particular*.⁴² Determinateness *has yet to detach itself* from *being*; nor will it ever detach itself from it, since the now underlying truth is the unity of non-being with being; all further determinations will transpire on this basis. But the connection which determinateness now has with being is one of the immediate unity of the two, so that as yet no differentiation between the two is posited.

Determinateness thus isolated by itself, as *existent* determinateness, is *quality* – something totally simple, immediate. *Determinateness* in general is the more universal which, further determined, can be something quantitative as well. On account of this simplicity, there is nothing further to say about quality as such.

Existence, however, in which nothing and being are equally contained, is itself the measure of the one-sidedness of quality as an only *immediate* or *existent* determinateness. Quality is equally to be posited in the determination of nothing, and the result is that the immediate or existent determinateness is posited as distinct, reflected, and the nothing, as thus the determinate element of determinateness, will equally be something reflected, a *negation*. Quality, in the distinct value of *existent*, is *reality*; when affected by a negating, it is *negation* in general, still a quality but one that counts as a lack and is further determined as limit, restriction.

Both are an existence, but in *reality*, as quality with the accent on being an existent, that it is determinateness and hence also negation is concealed; reality only has, therefore, the value of something positive from which negating, restriction, lack, are excluded. Negation, for its part, taken as mere lack, would be what nothing is; but it is an existence, a quality, only determined with a non-being.

Remark

Reality may seem to be an ambiguous word, since it is used in different, even opposite determinations. In philosophical usage, for instance, one speaks of *mere empirical* reality as of a worthless being. But when it is said of thoughts, concepts, theories, that they *have no reality*, this means that there is no *actuality* to them. Of the idea of a Platonic republic, for instance, it is said that it might well be true *in itself* or in its concept. Here the idea is not denied its value and is even allowed room *alongside* reality. However, as against the so-called *mere* ideas, the *mere* concepts, “the real” counts as alone true. – The sense in which external existence is made the criterion of the truth of a content is for its part just as one-sided as when

⁴² This will happen in the Subjective Logic, when the logical object assumes the form of “concept.”

the idea, the essence, or even inner feeling, is represented as indifferent to external existence and is even held to be all the more estimable the more remote it is from reality.

In connection with the term “reality,” mention must be made of the former metaphysical *concept of God* that was once made the foundation of the so-called ontological proof of God’s existence.⁴³ God was defined as *the sum-total of all realities*, and of this sum-total it was said that it contained no contradiction within, that none of the realities canceled any other, for a reality is to be taken only as a perfection, as *something affirmative* that contains no negation. Consequently, as it was said, the realities are not in opposition and do not contradict one another.

21.100 On this concept of reality, the assumption is that the latter still remains after all negation has been thought away; however, to do this is to remove all determinateness from reality. Reality is quality, existence; it therefore contains the moment of the negative and is the determinate being that it is only through it. Taken in the so-called *eminent sense*, or as *infinite* in the ordinary meaning of the word – as we are said we should – reality is expanded into indeterminateness and loses its meaning. God’s goodness is supposed to be such not in the ordinary sense but eminently; it is not different from justice but is rather *tempered* by it (an expression of mediation of Leibnizian origin)⁴⁴ just as contrariwise justice is tempered by goodness; and so neither is goodness goodness any longer, nor justice justice. Power should be tempered by wisdom – but is then no longer power as such, for it is subject to wisdom. – Wisdom should be expanded into power, but then it vanishes as end and measure setting wisdom. The true concept of the infinite and of its *absolute* unity that will later emerge⁴⁵ is not to be understood as a *tempering*, a *mutual restricting* or *blending* – a superficial, nebulous connection that can only satisfy mindless representation. – When reality, taken in the sense of a determinate quality as in the said definition of God, is made to transgress its determinateness, it ceases to be reality; it becomes abstract being; God as the *pure* reality in all realities, or as the *sum-total* of all realities, is the same empty absolute, void of determination and content, in which all is one.

If, on the contrary, reality is taken in its determinateness, then, since it essentially contains the moment of the negative, the sum-total of all realities becomes just as much a sum-total of all negations, the sum-total

⁴³ “The most perfect being is defined as one in which all co-possible realities inhere in the absolutely highest degree.” Christian Wolff, *Theologia naturalis methodo scientifica pertractata* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1741), §6.

⁴⁴ Leibniz, *Monadology* (1714), §41. ⁴⁵ Cf. below, 21.130–37.

of all contradictions, a sort of first absolute *power* in which everything determinate is absorbed. However, since reality only exists in so far as it still has over against it something which it has not sublated, by being thought expanded in this way into an accomplished power void of restrictions, it becomes the abstract nothing. The said reality in everything real, the *being* in all existence that should express the concept of God, is nothing else than abstract being, the same as nothing.

21.101

That determinateness is negation posited as affirmative is Spinoza's proposition: *omnis determinatio est negatio*,⁴⁶ a proposition of infinite importance. Only, negation as such is formless abstraction. However, speculative philosophy must not be accused of taking negation or nothing as an ultimate: negation is as little an ultimate for it as reality is for it the truth.

The unity of Spinoza's substance, or that there is only one substance, is the necessary consequence of this proposition, that determinateness is negation. Spinoza had of necessity to posit *thought* and *being* or extension, the two determinations, namely, which he had before him, as one in this unity,⁴⁷ for as determinate realities the two are negations whose infinity is their unity;⁴⁸ according to Spinoza's definition, about which more later on,⁴⁹ the infinity of something is its affirmation. He therefore conceived them as attributes, that is, such as do not have a particular subsistence, a being-in-and-for-itself, but only are as sublated as moments; or rather, since substance is the total void of internal determinateness, they are not even moments; the attributes, like the modes, are distinctions made by an external understanding. – Also the substantiality of individuals cannot hold its own before that substance. The individual refers to itself by setting limits to every other; but these limits are therefore also the limits of its self; they are references to the other; the individual's existence is not in the individual. True, the individual is *more* than just restrictions on all sides; but this *more* belongs to another sphere, that of the concept; in the metaphysics of being, the individual is an absolutely determinate something; and against this something, against this finite that would be in and for itself as such, determinateness asserts itself essentially as negation, dragging it into the same negative movement of the understanding that makes everything vanish into the abstract unity of substance.

Negation stands immediately over against reality; further on, in the sphere proper to reflected determinations, it will be opposed to the *positive*,

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⁴⁶ Letter 50 (1674) to Jarig Jellis. *Works of Spinoza*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), Vol. II, pp. 369–370.

⁴⁷ *Ethics*, Part 2, Prop. 1, 2.

⁴⁸ *Ethics*, Part I, Prop. 8, note 1.

⁴⁹ Cf. below, 21.139.

which is reality reflecting upon negation – the reality in which the negative, still hiding in reality as such, shines forth.⁵⁰

Quality specifically is a *property* only when, in an *external connection*, it manifests itself as an *immanent determination*. By properties of herbs, for instance, we understand determinations which are not just *proper* to a something but are such that, in virtue of them, the something *holds its own* while referring to others and will not give in to the alien influences posited in it by them; on the contrary, it *imposes* its own determinations in the other – though it does not keep it at a distance. On the other hand, more stable determinacies such as figure or shape are not called properties, nor even qualities, for they are thought of as alterable and therefore as not identical with *being*.

“*Qualierung*” or “*Inqualierung*,” an expression of Jacob Boehme’s profound but also profoundly turbid philosophy, signifies the movement within a quality (sourness, bitterness, fieriness, etc.) inasmuch as in its negative nature (in its *Qual* or torment) the quality posits itself, securing itself from another; it signifies in general the internal unrest of quality by which it produces and preserves itself only in conflict.⁵¹

c. *Something*

In existence its determinateness has been distinguished as quality; in this quality as something existing, the distinction *exists* – the distinction of reality and negation. Now though these distinctions are present in existence, they are just as much null and sublated. Reality itself contains negation; it is existence, not indeterminate or abstract being. Negation is for its part equally existence, not the supposed abstract nothing but posited here as it is in itself, as existent, as belonging to existence. Thus quality is in general unseparated from existence, and the latter is only determinate, qualitative being.

This sublation of the distinction is more than the mere retraction and external re-omission of it, or a simple return to the simple beginning, to existence as such. The distinction cannot be left out, for it *is*. Therefore, what *de facto* is at hand is this: existence in general, distinction in it, and the sublation of this distinction; the existence, not void of distinctions as at the

⁵⁰ Cf. below II.273ff.

⁵¹ For mention of *Inqualierung*, see Böhme, *Sämtliche Schriften*, Vol. I, *Aurora, oder Morgenröthe im Aufgang*, ed. August Faust and Will-Erich Peuckert (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns, 1955), chapter 13, §40. Böhme refers to these specific qualities mentioned by Hegel in chapter 4, §6 of the same text. (This text is a facsimile of the edition from 1730 in 11 volumes.)

beginning, but as *again* self-equal *through the sublation of the distinction*; the simplicity of existence *mediated* through this sublation. This state of sublation of the distinction is existence's own determinateness; existence is thus *being-in-itself*; it is *existent, something*.

Something is the *first negation of negation*, as simple existent self-reference. Existence, life, thought, and so forth, essentially take on the determination of an existent being, a living thing, a thinking mind ("I"), and so forth. This determination is of the highest importance if we do not wish to halt at existence, life, thought, and so forth, as generalities – also not at *Godhood* (instead of God). In common representation, *something* rightly carries the connotation of *a real thing*. Yet it still is a very superficial determination, just as *reality* and *negation*, existence and its determinateness, though no longer the empty being and nothing, still are quite abstract determinations. For this reason they also are the most common expressions, and a reflection that is still philosophically unschooled uses them the most; it casts its distinctions in them, fancying that in them it has something really well and firmly determined. – As *something*, the negative of the negative is only the beginning of the subject – its in-itselfness is still quite indeterminate. It determines itself further on, at first as *existent-for-itself* and so on, until it finally obtains in the concept the intensity of the subject. At the base of all these determinations there lies the negative unity with itself. In all this, however, care must be taken to distinguish the *first* negation, negation as negation *in general*, from the second negation, the negation of negation which is concrete, *absolute* negativity, just as the first is on the contrary only *abstract* negativity.

Something is an *existent* as the negation of negation, for such a negation is the restoration of the simple reference to itself – but the something is thereby equally the *mediation of itself with itself*. Present in the simplicity of something, and then with greater determinateness in being-for-itself, in the subject, and so forth, this mediation of itself with itself is also already present in becoming, but only as totally abstract mediation; mediation with *itself* is *posited* in the something in so far as the latter is determined as a simple *identity*. – Attention can be drawn to the presence of mediation in general, as against the principle of the alleged bare immediacy of a knowledge from which mediation should be excluded. But there is no further need to draw particular attention to the moment of mediation, since it is to be found everywhere and on all sides, in every concept.

This mediation with itself which something is *in itself*, when taken only as the negation of negation, has no concrete determinations for its sides; thus it collapses into the simple unity which is *being*. Something *is*, and

is therefore also an existent. Further, it is *in itself* also *becoming*, but a becoming that no longer has only being and nothing for its moments. One of these moments, being, is now existence and further an existent. The other moment is equally an existent, but determined as the negative of something – an *other*. As becoming, something is a transition, the moments of which are themselves something, and for that reason it is an *alteration* – a becoming that has already become *concrete*. – At first, however, something alters only in its concept; it is not yet *posited* in this way, as mediated and mediating, but at first only as maintaining itself simply in its reference to itself; and its negative is posited as equally qualitative, as only an *other* in general.

B. FINITUDE

- (a) Something and other: at first they are indifferent to one another; an other is also an immediate existent, a something; the negation thus falls outside both. Something is *in itself* in contrast to its *being-for-other*. But the determinateness belongs also to its *in-itself*, and
- (b) the *determination* of this in-itself in turn passes over into *constitution*, and this latter, as identical with determination, constitutes the immanent and at the same time negated being-for-another, the *limit* of something which
- (c) is the immanent determination of the something itself, and the something thus is the *finite*.

In the first division where *existence* in general was considered, this existence had, as at first taken up, the determination of *an existent*. The moments of its development, quality and something, are therefore of equally affirmative determination. The present division, on the contrary, develops the negative determination which is present in existence and was there from the start only as negation in general. It was then the *first* negation but has now been determined to the point of the *being-in-itself* of the something, the point of the negation of negation.

a. *Something and an other*

i. Something and other are, first, both *existents* or *something*.

Second, each is equally an *other*. It is indifferent which is named first, and just for this reason it is named *something* (in Latin, when they occur in a proposition, both are *aliud*, or “the one, the other,” *alius alium*; in the case of an alternating relation, the analogous expression is *alter alterum*).

If of two beings we call the one A and the other B, the B is the one which is first determined as other. But the A is just as much the other of the B. Both are *other* in the same way. "This" serves to fix the distinction and the something which is to be taken in the affirmative sense. But "this" also expresses the fact that the distinction, and the privileging of one something, is a subjective designation that falls outside the something itself. The whole determinateness falls on the side of this external pointing; also the expression "*this*" contains no distinctions; each and every something is just as good a "this" as any other. By "this" we *mean* to express something completely determinate, overlooking the fact that language, as a work of the understanding, only expresses the universal, albeit *naming* it as a single object. But an individual name is something meaningless in the sense that it does not express a universal. It appears as something merely posited and arbitrary for the same reason that proper names can also be arbitrarily picked, arbitrarily given as well as arbitrarily altered.⁵²

Otherness thus appears as a determination alien to the existence thus pointed at, or the other existence as *outside* this one existence, partly because the one existence is determined as other only by *being compared* by a Third, and partly because it is so determined only on account of the other which is outside it, but is not an other for itself. At the same time, as has been remarked, even for ordinary thinking every existence equally determines itself as an other existence, so that there is no existence that remains determined simply as an existence, none which is not outside an existence and therefore is not itself an other.

Both are determined as *something* as well as *other*: thus they are *the same* and there is as yet no distinction present in them. But this *sameness* of determinations, too, falls only within external reflection, in the comparison of the two; but the *other*, as posited at first, though an other with reference to something, is other also *for itself apart from the something*.

Third, the *other* is therefore to be taken in isolation, with reference to itself, has to be taken *abstractly* as the other, the τὸ ἕτερον of Plato who opposes it to the one as a moment of totality, and in this way ascribes to *the other* a *nature* of its own. Thus the *other*, taken solely as such, is not the other of something, but is the other within, that is, the other of itself. – Such an other, which is the other by its own determination, is *physical nature*; nature is the *other of spirit*; this, its determination, is at first a mere relativity expressing not a quality of nature itself but only a reference external to it. But since spirit is the true something, and hence nature is

⁵² Hegel is repeating the argument of Chapter 1 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

what it is within only in contrast to spirit, taken for itself the quality of nature is just this, to be the other within, that *which-exists-outside-itself* (in the determinations of space, time, matter).

The other which is such for itself is the other within it, hence the other of itself and so the other of the other – therefore, the absolutely unequal in itself, that which negates itself, *alters* itself. But it equally remains identical with itself, for that into which it alters is the *other*, and this other has no additional determination; but that which alters itself is not determined in any other way than in this, to be an other; in *going over* to this other, it *only unites with itself*. It is thus posited as reflected into itself with sublation of the otherness, a self-*identical* something from which the otherness, which is at the same time a moment of it, is therefore distinct, itself not appertaining to it as something.

2. The something *preserves* itself in its non-being; it is essentially *one* with it, and essentially *not one* with it. It therefore stands in *reference* to an otherness without being just this otherness. The otherness is at once contained in it and yet *separated* from it; it is *being-for-other*.

Existence as such is an immediate, bare of references; or, it is in the determination of *being*. However, as including non-being within itself, existence is *determinate* being, being negated within itself, and then in the first instance an other – but, since in being negated it preserves itself at the same time, it is only *being-for-other*.

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It preserves itself in its non-being and is being; not, however, being in general but being with reference to itself *in contrast* to its reference to the other, as self-equality in contrast to its inequality. Such a being is *being-in-itself*.

Being-for-other and being-in-itself constitute the *two moments* of something. There are here *two pairs* of determinations: (1) *something* and *other*; (2) *being-for-other* and *being-in-itself*. The former contain the non-connectedness of their determinateness; something and other fall apart. But their truth is their connection; being-for-other and being-in-itself are therefore the same determinations posited as *moments* of one and the same unity, as determinations which are connections and which, in their unity, remain in the unity of existence. Each thus itself contains within it, at the same time, also the moment diverse from it.

Being and nothing in their unity, which is existence, are no longer being and nothing (these they are only outside their unity); so in their restless unity, in becoming, they are coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be. – In the something, being is *being-in-itself*. Now, as self-reference, self-equality, being is no longer immediately, but is self-reference only as the non-being

of otherness (as existence reflected into itself). – The same goes for non-being: as the moment of something in this unity of being and non-being; it is not non-existence in general but is the other, and more determinedly – according as being is at the same time *distinguished* from it – it is *reference* to its non-existence, being-for-other.

Hence *being-in-itself* is, first, negative reference to non-existence; it has otherness outside it and is opposed to it; in so far as something is *in itself*, it is withdrawn from being-other and being-for-other. But, second, it has non-being also right in it; for it *is* itself *the non-being* of being-for-other.

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But being-for-other is, first, the negation of the simple reference of being to itself which, in the first place, is supposed to be existence and something; in so far as something is in an other or for an other, it lacks a being of its own. But, second, it is not non-existence as pure nothing; it is non-existence that points to being-in-itself as its being reflected into itself, just as conversely the being-in-itself points to being-for-other.

3. Both moments are determinations of one and the same, namely of something. Something is *in-itself* in so far as it has returned from the being-for-other back to itself. But something has also a determination or circumstance, whether *in itself* (here the accent is on the *in*) or *in it*; in so far as this circumstance is *in it* externally, it is a being-for-other.

This leads to a further determination. *Being-in-itself* and being-for-other are different at first. But that something also has *in it what it is in itself* and conversely is in itself also what it is as being-for-other – this is the identity of being-in-itself and being-for-other, in accordance with the determination that the something is itself one and the same something of both moments, and these are in it, therefore, undivided. – This identity already occurs formally in the sphere of existence, but more explicitly in the treatment of essence and later of the relations of *interiority* and *externality*, and in the most determinate form in the treatment of the idea, as the unity of concept and actuality. – Opinion has it that with the *in-itself* something lofty is being said, as with the *inner*; but what something is *only in itself*, is also *only in it*; in-itself is a merely abstract, and hence itself external determination. The expressions: there is nothing *in it*, or there is something *in it*, imply, though somewhat obscurely, that what is *in a thing* also pertains to its *in-itselfness*, to its inner, true worth.

It may be observed that here we have the meaning of the *thing-in-itself*. It is a very simple abstraction, though it was for a while a very important determination, something sophisticated, as it were, just as the proposition that we know nothing of what things are in themselves was a much valued piece of wisdom. – Things are called “in-themselves” in so far as abstraction

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is made from all being-for-other, which really means, in so far as they are thought without all determination, as nothing. In this sense, of course, it is impossible to know *what* the thing-in-itself is. For the question "*what?*" calls for determinations to be produced; but since the things of which the determinations are called for are at the same time presumed to be *things-in-themselves*, which means precisely without determination, the impossibility of an answer is thoughtlessly implanted in the question, or else a senseless answer is given. – The thing-in-itself is the same as that absolute of which nothing is known except that in it all is one. What there is *in* these things-in-themselves is therefore very well known; they are as such nothing but empty abstractions void of truth. What, however, the thing-in-itself in truth is, what there basically is in it, of this the Logic is the exposition. But in this Logic something better is understood by the *in-itself* than an abstraction, namely, what something is in its concept; but this concept is in itself concrete: as concept, in principle conceptually graspable; and, as determined and as the connected whole of its determinations, inherently cognizable.

Being-in-itself has at first the being-for-other as a moment standing over against it. But *positedness* also comes to be positioned over against it, and, although in this expression being-for-other is also included, the expression still contains the determination of the bending back, which has already occurred, of that which is not in itself into that wherein it is *positive*, and this is its being-in-itself. *Being-in-itself* is normally to be taken as an abstract way of expressing the concept; *positing*, strictly speaking, first occurs in the sphere of essence, of objective reflection; the ground *posits* that which is grounded through it; more strongly, the cause *produces an effect*, an existence whose subsistence is *immediately* negated and which carries the meaning that it has its *substance*, its being, in an other. In the sphere of being, existence only *emerges* out of becoming. Or again, with the something an other is posited; with the finite, an infinite; but the finite does not bring forth the infinite, does not *posit* it. In the sphere of being, the *self-determining* of the concept is at first only *in itself or implicit*, and for that reason it is called a transition or passing over. And the reflecting determinations of being, such as something and other, or finite and infinite, although they essentially point to one another, or are as being-for-other, also stand on their own *qualitatively*; the *other exists*; the finite, like the infinite, is equally to be regarded as *an immediate existent* that stands firm on its own; the meaning of each appears complete even without its other. The positive and the negative, on the contrary, cause and effect, however much they are taken in isolation, have at the same time no meaning each

without the other; their *reflective shining* in each other, the shine in each of its other, is present *right in them*. – In the different cycles of determination and especially in the progress of the exposition, or, more precisely, in the progress of the concept in the exposition of itself, it is of capital concern always to clearly distinguish what still *is in itself or implicitly* and what *is posited*, how determinations are in the concept and how they are as posited or as existing-for-other. This is a distinction that belongs only to the dialectical development and one unknown to metaphysical philosophizing (to which the critical also belongs); the definitions of metaphysics, like its presuppositions, distinctions, and conclusions, are meant to assert and produce only the *existent* and that, too, as *existent-in-itself*.

In the unity of the something with itself, *being-for-other* is identical with its *in-itself*; the being-for-other is thus *in* the something. The determinateness thus reflected into itself is therefore again *a simple existent* and hence again a quality – *determination*.

b. Determination,⁵³ constitution, and limit

The *in-itself*, in which the something is reflected into itself from its being-for-other, no longer is an abstract in-itself but, as the negation of its being-for-other, is mediated through this latter, which is thus its moment. It is not only the immediate identity of the something with itself, but the identity by virtue of which the something also has *present in it* what it is *in itself*; the being-for-other is *present in it* because the *in-itself* is the sublation of it, is in itself *from it*; but, because it is still abstract, and therefore essentially affected with negation, it is equally affected with being-for-other. We have here not only quality and reality, existent determinateness, but determinateness *existent-in-itself*; and the development consists in *positing* such determinateness as thus immanently reflected.

1. The quality which in the simple something is an in-itself essentially in unity with the something's other moment, its *being-in-it*, can be named its *determination*, provided that this word is distinguished, in a more precise signification, from *determinateness* in general. Determination is affirmative determinateness; it is the in-itself by which a something abides in its existence while involved with an other that would determine it, by which it preserves itself in its self-equality, holding on to it in its being-for-other. Something *fulfills* its determination to the extent that the further

21.III

⁵³ *Bestimmung* also carries the meaning of "vocation" or "destiny" as in "*die Bestimmung des Menschen*," the vocation of humankind.

determinateness, which variously accrues to it in the measure of its being-in-itself as it relates to an other, becomes its filling. Determination implies that what something is *in itself* is also *present in it*.

The *determination of the human being*, its vocation, is rational thought: thinking in general is his simple *determinateness*; by it the human being is distinguished from the brute; he is thinking *in himself*; in so far as this thinking is distinguished also from his being-for-other, from his own natural and sensuous being that brings him in immediate association with the other. But thinking is also *in him*; the human being is himself thinking, he *exists* as thinking, thought is his concrete existence and actuality; and, further, since thinking is in his existence and his existence is in his thinking, thinking is *concrete*, must be taken as having content and filling; it is rational thought and as such the *determination* of the human being. But even this determination is again only *in itself*, as an *ought*, that is to say, it is, together with the filling embodied in its in-itself, in the form of an in-itself in general *as against* the existence which is not embodied in it but still lies outside confronting it, immediate sensibility and nature.

2. The filling of the being-in-itself with determinateness is also distinct from the determinateness which is only being-for-other and remains outside the determination. For in the sphere of the qualitative, the distinguished terms are left, in their sublated being, also with an immediate, qualitative being contrasting them. That which the something has *in it* thus separates itself and is from this side the external existence of the something and also *its* existence, but not as belonging to its being-in-itself. – Determinateness is thus *constitution*.

Constituted in this or that way, the something is caught up in external influences and in external relationships. This external connection on which the constitution depends, and the being determined through an other, appear as something accidental. But it is the quality of the something to be given over to this externality and to have a *constitution*.

In so far as something alters, the alteration falls on the side of its constitution; the latter is that *in the something* which becomes an other. The something itself preserves itself in the alteration; the latter affects only this unstable surface of the something's otherness, not its determination.

Determination and constitution are thus distinct from each other; something, according to its determination, is indifferent to its constitution. But that which the something has *in it* is the middle term of this syllogism connecting the two, determination and constitution. Or, rather, the *being-in-the-something* showed itself to fall apart into these two extremes. The simple middle term is *determinateness* as such; its identity belongs to

determination just as well as to constitution. But determination passes over into constitution on its own, and constitution into determination. This is implied in what has been said. The connection, upon closer consideration, is this: in so far as that which something is *in itself* is also *in it*, the something is affected with being-for-other; determination is therefore open, as such, to the relation with other. Determinateness is at the same time moment, but it contains at the same time the qualitative distinction of being different from *being-in-itself*; of being the negative of the something, another existence. This determinateness which thus holds the other in itself, united with the being-in-itself, introduces otherness in the latter or in determination, and determination is thereby reduced to constitution. – Conversely, the being-for-other, isolated as constitution and posited on its own, is in it the same as what the other as such is, the other in it, that is, the other of itself; but it consequently is *self-referring* existence, thus being-in-itself with a determinateness, therefore determination. – Consequently, inasmuch as the two are also to be held apart, constitution, which appears to be grounded in something external, in an other in general, also *depends* on determination, and the determining from outside is at the same time determined by the something's own immanent determination. And further, constitution belongs to that which something is in itself: something alters along with its constitution.

This altering of something is no longer the first alteration of something merely in accordance with its being-for-other. The first was an alteration only implicitly present, one that belonged to the inner concept; now the alteration is also posited in the something. – The something itself is further determined, and negation is posited as immanent to it, as its developed being-in-itself.

21.113

The transition of determination and constitution into each other is at first the sublation of their distinction, and existence or something in general is thereby posited; moreover, since this something in general results from a distinction that also includes qualitative otherness within it, there are two somethings. But these are, with respect to each other, not just others in general, so that this negation would still be abstract and would occur only in the comparison of the two; rather the negation now is *immanent* to the somethings. As *existing*, they are indifferent to each other, but this, their affirmation, is no longer immediate: each refers itself to itself *through the intermediary* of the sublation of the otherness which in determination is reflected into the in-itselfness.

Something behaves in this way in relation to the other *through itself*; since otherness is posited in it as its own moment, its in-itselfness holds

negation in itself, and it now has its affirmative existence through its intermediary alone. But the other is also qualitatively distinguished from this affirmative existence and is thus posited outside the something. The negation of its other is only the quality of the something, for it is in this sublation of its other that it is something. The other, for its part, truly confronts an existence only with this sublation; it confronts the first something only externally, or, since the two are in fact inherently joined together, that is, according to their concept, their connectedness consists in this, that existence *has passed over* into otherness, something into other; that something is just as much an other as the other is. Now in so far as the in-itselfness is the non-being of the otherness that is contained in it but is at the same time also distinct as existent, something is itself negation, *the ceasing to be of an other in it*; it is posited as behaving negatively in relation to the other and in so doing preserving itself. This other, the in-itselfness of the something as negation of the negation, is the something's *being-in-itself*, and this sublation is as simple negation at the same time *in it*, namely, as its negation of the other something external to it. It is one determinateness of the two somethings that, on the one hand, as negation of the negation, is identical with the in-itselfness of the somethings, and also, on the other hand, since these negations are to each other as other somethings, joins them together of their own accord and, since each negation negates the other, equally separates them. This determinateness is *limit*.

3. *Being-for-other* is indeterminate, affirmative association of something with its other; in limit the *non-being-for-other* is emphasized, the qualitative negation of the other, which is thereby kept out of the something that is reflected into itself. We must see the development of this concept – a development that will rather look like confusion and contradiction. Contradiction immediately raises its head because limit, as an internally reflected negation of something, *ideally* holds in it the moments of something and other, and these, as distinct moments, are at the same time posited in the sphere of existence as *really, qualitatively, distinct*.

21.114

α. Something is therefore immediate, self-referring existence and at first it has a limit with respect to an other; limit is the non-being of the other, not of the something itself; in limit, something marks the boundary of its other. – But other is itself a something in general. The limit that something has with respect to an other is, therefore, also the limit of the other as a something; it is the limit of this something in virtue of which the something holds the first something as *its other* away from itself, or is a *non-being of that something*. The limit is thus not only the non-being of the other, but of

the one something just as of the other, and consequently of the *something* in general.

But the limit is equally, essentially, the non-being of the other; thus, through its limit, something at the same time *is*. In limiting, something is of course thereby reduced to being limited itself; but, as the ceasing of the other in it, its limit is at the same time itself only the being of the something; *this something is what it is by virtue of it, has its quality in it*. – This relation is the external appearance of the fact that limit is simple negation or the *first* negation, whereas the other is, at the same time, the negation of the negation, the in-itselfness of the something.

Something, as an immediate existence, is therefore the limit with respect to another something; but it has this limit *in it* and is something through the mediation of that limit, which is just as much its non-being. The limit is the mediation in virtue of which something and other each *both is and is not*.

β. Now in so far as something in its limit both *is* and *is not*, and these moments are an immediate, qualitative distinction, the non-existence and the existence of the something fall outside each other. Something has its existence *outside* its limit (or, as representation would also have it, *inside* it); in the same way the other, too, since it is something, has it outside it. The limit is the *middle point between* the two at which they leave off. They have existence *beyond* each other, *beyond their limit*; the limit, as the non-being of each, is the other of both.

– It is in accordance with this difference of the something from its limit that the *line* appears as line outside its limit, the point; the *plane* as plane outside the line; the *solid* as solid only outside its limiting plane. – This is the aspect of limit that first occurs to figurative representation (the self-external-being of the concept) and is also most commonly assumed in the context of spatial objects.

γ. But further, something as it is outside the limit, as the unlimited something, is only existence in general. As such, it is not distinguished from its other; it is only existence and, therefore, it and its other have the same determination; each is only something in general or each is other; and so both are *the same*. But this, their at first immediate existence, is now posited in them as limit: in it both are what they are, distinct from each other. But it is also equally their *common* distinguishedness, the unity and the distinguishedness of both, just like existence. This double identity of the two, existence and limit, contains this: that something has existence only in limit, and that, since limit and immediate existence are each at the same time the negative of each other, the something, which is now only

in its limit, equally separates itself from itself, points beyond itself to its non-being and declares it to be its being, and so it passes over into it. To apply this to the preceding example, the one determination is this: that something is what it is only in its limit. Therefore, the *point* is the limit of *line*, not because the latter just ceases at the point and has existence outside it; the *line* is the limit of *plane*, not because the plane just ceases at it; and the same goes for the *plane* as the limit of *solid*. Rather, at the point the line also *begins*; the point is its absolute beginning, and if the line is represented as unlimited on both its two sides, or, as is said, as extended to infinity, the point still constitutes its element, just as the line constitutes the element of the plane, and the plane that of the solid. These *limits* are the *principle* of that which they delimit; just as one, for instance, is as hundredth the limit, but also the element, of the whole hundred.

The other determination is the unrest of the something in its limit in which it is immanent, the *contradiction* that propels it beyond itself. Thus the point is this dialectic of itself becoming line; the line, the dialectic of becoming plane; the plane, of becoming total space. A second definition is given of line, plane, and whole space which has the line come to be through the *movement* of the point; the plane through the movement of the line, and so forth. This *movement* of the point, the line, and so forth, is however viewed as something accidental, or as movement only in figurative representation. In fact, however, this view is taken back by supposing that the determinations from which the line, and so forth, originate are their *elements* and *principles*, and these are, at the same time, nothing else but their limits; the coming to be is not considered as accidental or only as represented. That the point, the line, the plane, are *per se* self-contradictory beginnings which on their own repel themselves from themselves, and consequently that the point passes over from itself into the line through its concept, *moves in itself* and makes the line come to be, and so on – all this lies in the concept of the limit which is immanent in the something. The application itself, however, belongs to the treatment of space; as an indication of it here, we can say that the point is the totally abstract limit, but *in a determinate existence*; this existence is still taken in total abstraction, it is the so-called absolute, that is, abstract *space*, the absolutely continuous being-outside-one-another. Inasmuch as the limit is not abstract negation, but is rather *in this existence*, inasmuch as it is *spatial* determinateness, the point is spatial, is the contradiction of abstract negation and continuity and is, for that reason, the transition as it occurs and has already occurred into the line, and so forth. And so *there is* no point, just as there is no line or plane.

The something, posited with its immanent limit as the contradiction of itself by virtue of which it is directed and driven out and beyond itself, is the *finite*.

c. Finitude

Existence is determinate. Something has a quality, and in this quality it is not only determined but delimited; its quality is its limit and, affected by it, something remains affirmative, quiescent existence. But, so developed that the opposition of its existence and of the negation as the limit immanent to this existence is the very in-itselfness of the something, and this is thus only becoming in it, this negation constitutes the finitude of the something.

When we say of things that *they are finite*, we understand by this that they not only have a determinateness, that their quality is not only reality and existent determination, that they are not merely limited and as such still have existence outside their limit, but rather that non-being constitutes their nature, their being. Finite things *are*, but in their reference to themselves they refer to themselves *negatively* – in this very self-reference they propel themselves beyond themselves, beyond their being. They *are*, but the truth of this being is (as in Latin) their *finis*, their *end*.⁵⁴ The finite does not just alter, as the something in general does, but *perishes*, and its perishing is not just a mere possibility, as if it might be without perishing. Rather, the being as such of finite things is to have the germ of this transgression⁵⁵ in their in-itselfness: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death.

21.117

α. The immediacy of finitude

The thought of the finitude of things brings this mournful note with it because finitude is qualitative negation driven to the extreme, and in the simplicity of such a determination there *is* no longer left to things an affirmative being *distinct* from their determination as things destined to ruin.⁵⁶ Because of this qualitative simplicity of negation that has returned to the abstract opposition of nothing and perishing to being, finitude is the most obstinate of the categories of the understanding; negation in

⁵⁴ “. . . (as in Latin) their *finis*. . .” is my gloss. The Latin root of “finite” and “finitude” is *finis*, that is, “end.” This connection between “finite” and “end” is clear in the German, *endlich*, *Endlichkeit*, *Ende*, and Hegel plays on it. I have tried to bring out this wordplay, which in English implicates the Latin word.

⁵⁵ *Vergehen* has the meaning of both “offence” (as in “transgression”) and “passage of time.”

⁵⁶ *Bestimmung zum Untergange*. *Bestimmung* means both “determination” and “destiny” or “vocation.”

general, constitution, limit, are compatible with their other, with existence; even the abstract nothing, by itself, is given up as an abstraction; but finitude is negation *fixed in itself* and, as such, stands in stark contrast to its affirmative. The finite thus does indeed let itself be submitted to flux; this is precisely what it is, that it should come to an end, and this end is its only determination. Its refusal is rather to let itself be brought affirmatively to its affirmative, the infinite, to be associated with it; it is therefore inseparably posited with its nothing, and thereby cut off from any reconciliation with its other, the affirmative. The determination of finite things does not go past their *end*. The understanding persists in this sorrow of finitude, for it makes non-being the determination of things and, at the same time, this non-being *imperishable* and *absolute*. Their transitoriness would only pass away in their other, in the affirmative; their finitude would then be severed from them; but this finitude is their unalterable quality, that is, their quality which does not pass over into their other, that is, not into the affirmative; *and so finitude is eternal*.

This is a very important consideration. But that the finite is absolute is certainly not a standpoint that any philosophy or outlook, or the understanding, would want to endorse. The opposite is rather expressly present in the assertion of finitude: the finite is the restricted, the perishable, the finite is *only* the finite, not the imperishable; all this is immediately part and parcel of its determination and expression. But all depends on whether in one's view of *finitude* its *being* is insisted on, and the *transitoriness* thus persists, or whether the *transitoriness* and the *perishing* *perish*. The fact is that this perishing of the perishing does not happen on precisely the view that would make the *perishing* the *final* end of the finite. The official claim is that the finite is incompatible with the infinite and cannot be united with it; that the finite is absolutely opposed to the infinite. Being, absolute being, is ascribed to the infinite. The finite remains held fast over against it as its negative; incapable of union with the infinite, it remains absolute on its own side; from the affirmative, from the infinite, it would receive affirmation and thus it would perish; but a union with the infinite is precisely what is declared impossible. If the finite were not to persist over against the infinite but were to perish, its perishing, as just said, would then be the last of it – not its affirmative, which would be only a perishing of the perishing. However, if it is not to perish into the affirmative but its end is rather to be grasped as a *nothing*, then we are back at that first, abstract nothing that itself has long since passed away.

With this nothing, however, which is supposed to be *only* nothing but to which a reflective existence is nevertheless granted in thought, in

representation or in speech, the same contradiction occurs as we have just indicated in connection with the finite, except that in the nothing it just *occurs* but in the finite it is instead *expressed*. In the one case, the contradiction appears as subjective; in the other, the finite is said to *stand in perpetual opposition* to the infinite, in itself to *be* null, and to be *as* null in itself. This is now to be brought to consciousness. The development of the finite will show that, expressly as this contradiction, it collapses internally, but that, in this collapse, it actually resolves the contradiction; it will show that the finite is not just perishable, and that it perishes, but that the perishing, the nothing, is rather not the last of it; that the perishing rather perishes.

β. Restriction and the ought

This contradiction is indeed abstractly present by the very fact that the *something* is finite, or that the finite *is*. But *something* or being is no longer posited abstractly but reflected into itself, and developed as being-in-itself that has determination and constitution in it, or, more determinedly still, in such a way that it has a limit within it; and this limit, as constituting what is immanent to the something and the quality of its being-in-itself, is finitude. It is to be seen what moments are contained in this concept of the finite something.

Determination and constitution arose as *sides* for external reflection, but determination already contained otherness as belonging to the *in-itself* of something. On the one side, the externality of otherness is within the something's own inwardness; on the other side, it remains as otherness distinguished from it; it is still externality as such, but *in* the something. But further, since otherness is determined as *limit*, itself as negation of the negation, the otherness immanent to the something is posited as the connection of the two sides, and the unity of the something with itself (to which both determination and constitution belong) is its reference turned back upon itself, the reference to it of its implicitly existing determination that in it negates its immanent limit. The self-identical in-itself thus refers itself to itself as to its own non-being, but as negation of the negation, as negating that which at the same time retains existence in it, for it is the quality of its in-itselfness. Something's own limit, thus posited by it as a negative which is at the same time essential, is not only limit as such, but *restriction*. But restriction is not alone in being posited as negative; the negation cuts two ways, for that which it posits as negated is *limit*, and limit is in general what is common to something and other, and is also

the determinateness of the *in-itself* of determination as such. This in-itself, consequently, as negative reference to its limit (which is also distinguished from it), as negative reference to itself as restriction, is the *ought*.

In order for the limit that is in every something to be a restriction, the something must at the same time *transcend it* in itself – must refer to it from within *as to a non-existent*. The existence of something lies quietly indifferent, as it were, *alongside* its limit. But the something transcends its limit only in so far as it is the sublatedness of the limit, the negative in-itselfness over against it. And inasmuch as the limit is as restriction in the *determination* itself, the something thereby *transcends itself*.

The ought therefore contains the double determination: *once*, as a determination which has an in-itselfness over against negation; *and again*, as a non-being which, as restriction, is distinguished from the determination but is at the same time itself a determination existing in itself.⁵⁷

The finite has thus determined itself as connecting determination and limit; in this connection, the determination is the *ought* and the limit is the *restriction*. Thus the two are both moments of the finite, and therefore both themselves finite, the ought as well as the restriction. But only restriction is *posited* as the finite; the ought is restricted only in itself, and therefore only for us. It is restricted by virtue of its reference to the limit already immanent within it, though this restriction in it is shrouded in in-itselfness, for according to its determinate being, that is, according to its determinateness in contrast to restriction, it is posited as being-in-itself.

What ought to be *is*, and at the same time *is not*. If it *were*, it would not be what merely *ought to be*. The ought has therefore a restriction essentially. This restriction is not anything alien; *that which only* ought to be is *determination* now posited as it is in fact, namely as at the same time only a determinateness.

The being-in-itself of the something is thus reduced in its determination to the *ought* because the very thing that constitutes the something's in-itselfness is, in one and the same respect, as *non-being*; or again, because in the in-itselfness, in the negation of the negation, the said being-in-itself is as one negation (what negates) a unity with the other, and this other, as qualitatively other, is the limit by virtue of which that unity is as *reference*

⁵⁷ Hegel is making a deflationary move here. The “ought” is nothing special. It defines explicitly the true relation that obtains between any subject and its predicate. The subject is its predicate while at the same time being distinguished from it. The relation between the two is therefore always one of identity but at a distance. The predicate is what the subject is “destined” or “said” to be. It is important to keep in mind that *Bestimmung* in German means both, “determination” and “destiny” or “vocation.”

to it.⁵⁸ The restriction of the finite is not anything external, but the finite's own determination is rather also its restriction; and this restriction is both itself and the ought; it is that which is common to both, or rather that in which the two are identical.

But further, as "ought" the finite *transcends* its restriction; the same determinateness which is its negation is also sublated, and is thus its in-itself; its limit is also not its limit.

As *ought* something is thus *elevated above its restriction*, but conversely it has its *restriction* only as *ought*. The two are indivisible. Something has a restriction in so far as it has negation in its determination, and the determination is also the being sublated of the restriction.

Remark

The ought has of late played a major role in philosophy, especially in connection with morality but also in metaphysics in general, as the final and absolute concept of the identity of the in-itself or of *self-reference*, and of *determinateness* or the limit.

21.121

"*You can because you ought.*"⁵⁹ This expression, which is supposed to say a lot, is implied in the concept of the ought. For the ought is the transcendence of restriction; restriction is sublated in it, the in-itself of the ought is thus identical self-reference, and consequently the abstraction of "*being able.*" – But, conversely, "*you cannot, even though you ought*" is just as correct. For the restriction as restriction is equally implied in the ought; the one formalism of possibility has in it a reality, a qualitative otherness, that stands opposed to it, and the connection of each to the other is a contradiction, and thus a "cannot" or rather an impossibility.

In the ought the transcendence of finitude, infinity, begins. The ought is that which, in the subsequent development, in accordance with the said impossibility, will display itself as a progress to infinity.

Regarding the form of *restriction* and of the *ought*, two prejudices deserve more detailed criticism. First, *much* is commonly made of the restrictions of thought, of reason, and so forth, and the claim is made that it is *impossible*

⁵⁸ This is a very convoluted sentence. Hegel's point seems to be this. A subject is reflectively what it is by negating that its predicate (otherwise qualitatively other than it) is truly an other. The subject *is* that predicate as other; it negates the predicate as a would-be other (i.e. as a negative with respect to it). The subject is therefore reflectively what the predicate is qualitatively (i.e. immediately). It is what the predicate is, but at a distance as it were. Its self-identity (the negation of the negation that constitutes its internal being) is thus modified by carrying a reference to the would-be, qualitatively independent predicate. The latter is what the subject *ought* to be, what it is "destined" or "said" to be.

⁵⁹ Cf. A807/B835.

to transcend such restrictions. What is lost track of in this claim is that something is already transcended by the very fact of being determined as a restriction. For a determinateness, a limit, is determined as restriction only in opposition to its other in general, that is, in opposition to *that which is without its restriction*; the other of a restriction is precisely the *beyond* with respect to it. Stone, metal, do not transcend their restriction, for the simple reason that the restriction is not a restriction *for them*. However, with respect to such general propositions that are typical of the way the understanding thinks, as that it is impossible to transcend restriction, if thought will not apply itself to see what is implied in the concept, it can then be referred to actuality, where the propositions prove themselves to be completely unrealistic. Just because thought *ought* to be something higher than actuality, just because it *ought* to dwell in higher regions remote from it, and therefore be itself determined as an *ought*, it fails on the one hand to advance to the concept, and on the other hand it manages to be equally untrue both in its relation to actuality and to the concept. – Because a stone does not think, does not even feel, its determinateness is not a restriction *for it*, that is, it is not in it a negation for the sensation, the representation, the thought, and so on, which it does not have. But the stone too is as a something distinguished in its determination or its in-itself and existence, and to this extent it too transcends its restriction; the concept which the stone is in itself contains the identity with its other. If it is a base receptive to acids then it is oxidizable, neutralizable, and so on. In the process of oxidization, neutralization, and so on, its restriction to being only a base is sublated; the base transcends it; similarly, the acid transcends its restriction to being an acid, and in the acid just as in the caustic base the *ought, the imperative* to transcend their restriction, is so strong that it is only with violence that they can be kept fixed as acid and caustic base (as waterless, that is, purely non-neutral).

21.122

If, however, a concrete existence contains the concept not merely as abstract in-itselfness, but as a totality existing for itself, as instinct, life, sensation, representation, and so forth, it itself then brings about, by itself, this transcendence and this transcending. The plant transcends the restriction of being a seed, similarly, of being blossom, fruit, leaf; the seed becomes the developed plant, the blossom fades, and so forth. In the grip of hunger, thirst, and so forth, the sentient is the impulse to transcend this restriction, and it does transcend it. It feels *pain*, and to feel pain is the privilege of sentient nature. Pain is a negation within the sentient's self, and this negation is determined *as a restriction* in the sentient's feeling just because the sentient has a feeling of its *self*, and this self is the totality that transcends

the determinateness of the negation. If the sentient did not transcend it, it would not feel it as its negation and would have no pain. – But reason, thought, is not supposed to be able to transcend this restriction: reason, which is the *universal*, which is for itself the beyond of particularity *as such*, that is, of *all* particularity, only is the transcendence of restriction. – To be sure, not every transcending, not every transcendence beyond restriction, is a true liberation from it, a true affirmation; even the “ought” itself is this kind of imperfect transcending, and so abstraction in general. But the mention of a totally abstract universal is sufficient to counter the equally abstract pronouncement that restriction cannot be transcended, or, again, the mention of the infinite in general is sufficient to counter the pronouncement that the finite cannot be transcended.

We can recall in this context a seemingly ingenious notion of Leibniz: that if a magnet had consciousness, it would regard its pointing to the North as a determination of its will, a law of its freedom.⁶⁰ Rather, if the magnet did have consciousness and along with it a will and freedom, it would be a thinking being. Consequently, space would be for it a *universal* embracing *all* directions, and its *one* direction to the North thus a restriction rather of its freedom – just as being held fixed to one place is a restriction for a human being, but not for a plant.

The *ought*, for its part, is the transcending of restriction, but a *transcending* which is itself only *finite*. It therefore has its place and legitimacy in the field of finitude, where it holds in-itself fixed over against what is restricted, declaring it to be the norm and the essential relative to what is null. Duty is an *ought* directed against the particular will, against self-seeking desire and arbitrary interest; it is the ought held up before a will capable of isolating itself from the truth because of its instability. Those who hold the ought of morality so high as to believe that, by not recognizing it as the ultimate truth, morality itself would be destroyed; the brokers of reason whose understanding takes unceasing satisfaction in being able to confront everything that there is with an ought and consequently a would-be superior knowledge – who therefore are all the more resistant to being robbed of the ought – these do not see that, as regards the finitude of their sphere, the ought receives full recognition. – But in the actual order of things, reason and law are not in such a sad state of affairs that they only *ought* to be (only the abstraction of the in-itself stays at this); equally, the ought does not perpetuate itself nor, which is the same, is finitude absolute. The philosophy of Kant and Fichte holds out the *ought* as the resolution of

21.123

⁶⁰ Leibniz, *Theodicy* (1710), Part I, §50.

the contradictions of reason – though it is rather only a standpoint that remains fixed in finitude and therefore in contradiction.

γ. Transition of the finite into the infinite

The ought contains restriction explicitly, for itself, and restriction contains the ought. Their mutual connection is the finite itself, which contains them both in its in-itself. These moments of its determination are qualitatively opposed; restriction is determined as the negative of the ought, and the ought equally as the negative of restriction. The finite is thus in itself the contradiction of itself; it sublates itself, it goes away and ceases to be.⁶¹ But this, its result, the negative as such, is (α) its very *determination*; for it is the negative of the negative. So, in going away and ceasing to be, the finite has not ceased; it has only become momentarily an *other* finite which equally is, however, a going-away as a going-over into another finite, and so forth *to infinity*. But, (β) if we consider this result more closely, in its going-away and ceasing-to-be, in this negation of itself, the finite has attained its being-in-itself; in it, it has *rejoined itself*. Each of its moments contains precisely this result; the ought transcends the restriction, that is, it transcends itself; but its beyond, or its other, is only restriction itself. Restriction, for its part, immediately points beyond itself to its other, and this is the ought; but this ought is the same diremption of *in-itselfness* and *determinateness* as is restriction; it is the same thing; in going beyond itself, restriction thus equally rejoins itself. This *identity with itself*, the negation of negation, is affirmative being, is thus the other of the finite which is supposed to have the first negation for its determinateness; this other is *the infinite*.

21.124

C. INFINITY

The infinite in its simple concept can be regarded, first of all, as a fresh definition of the absolute; as self-reference devoid of determination, it is posited as *being* and *becoming*. The forms of *existence* have no place in the series of determinations that can be regarded as definitions of the absolute, since the forms of that sphere are immediately posited for themselves only as determinacies, as finite in general. But the infinite is accepted unqualifiedly as absolute, since it is explicitly determined as the negation

⁶¹ “It goes away or ceases to be” = *vergeht*. I am using both expressions to retain Hegel’s play on words in this whole passage.

of the finite; the restrictedness – to which being and becoming would somehow be susceptible even if they do not have it or exhibit it – is thereby both explicitly referred to and denied in it.

But, in fact, by just this negation the infinite is not already free from restrictedness and finitude. It is essential to distinguish the true concept of infinity from bad infinity, the infinite of reason from the infinite of the understanding. The latter is in fact a *finitized* infinite, and, as we shall now discover, in wanting to maintain the infinite pure and distant from the finite, the infinite is by that very fact only made finite.

The infinite

- (a) in *simple determination*, is the affirmative as negation of the finite;
- (b) but is thereby in *alternating determination* with the *infinite*, and is abstract, *one-sided infinite*;
- (c) is the self-sublation of this infinite and of the finite in *one process*. This is the *true infinite*.

21.125

a. *The infinite in general*

The infinite is the negation of negation, the affirmative, *being* that has reinstated itself out of restrictedness. The infinite *is*, in a more intense sense than the first immediate being; it is the true being; the elevation above restriction. At the mention of the infinite, soul and spirit *light up*, for in the infinite the spirit *is* at home, and not only abstractly; rather, it rises to itself, to the light of its thinking, its universality, its freedom.

What is first given with the concept of the infinite is this, that in its being-in-itself existence is determined as finite and transcends restriction. It is the very nature of the finite that it transcend itself, that it negate its negation and become infinite. Consequently, the infinite does not stand *above* the finite as something ready-made by itself, as if the finite stood fixed *outside* or *below* it. Nor is it *we* only, as a subjective reason, who transcend the finite into the infinite – as if, in saying that the infinite is a concept of reason and that through reason we elevate ourselves above things temporal, we did this without prejudice to the finite, without this elevation (which remains external to the finite) affecting it. In so far as the finite itself is being elevated to infinity, it is not at all an alien force that does this for it; it is rather its nature to refer itself to itself as restriction (both restriction as such and as ought) and to transcend this restriction, or rather, in this self-reference, to have negated the restriction and gone above and beyond it. It is not in the sublation of the finite in general that infinity in general comes to be, but the finite is rather just this, that through its nature it

comes to be itself the infinite. Infinity is its *affirmative determination*, its vocation, what it truly is in itself.

21.126 The finite has thus vanished into the infinite and what *is*, is only the *infinite*.

b. Alternating determination of finite and infinite

The infinite *is*; in this immediacy it is at the same time the *negation* of an *other*, of the finite. And so, as *existent* and at the same time as the *non-being* of an *other*, it has fallen back into the category of the something, of something determinate in general. More precisely: the infinite is the existence reflected into itself which results from the mediating sublation of determinateness in general and is consequently *posited* as existence distinct from its determinateness; therefore, it has fallen back into the category of something with a limit. In accordance with this determinateness, the finite stands over against the infinite as *real existence*; they thus *remain* outside each other, standing in qualitative *mutual reference*; the *immediate being* of the infinite resurrects the *being* of its negation, of the finite again, which seemed at first to have vanished into the infinite.

But the infinite and the finite are not in these referential categories only; the two sides are further determined in addition to being as mere *others* to each other. Namely, the finite is restriction posited as restriction; it is existence posited with the *determination* that it passes over into what is its *in-itself* and *becomes* infinite. Infinity is the nothing of the finite, the *in-itself* that the latter *ought to be*, but it is this at the same time as reflected within itself, as realized ought, as only affirmative self-referring being. In infinity we have the satisfaction that all determinateness, alteration, all restriction and the ought itself together with it, have vanished, are sublated, and the nothing of the finite is posited. As this negation of the finite is the being-in-itself determined which, as negation of negation, is in itself affirmative. Yet this affirmation is qualitatively *immediate* self-reference, *being*; and, because of this, the affirmative is led back to the category of being that has the finite confronting it as an *other*; its negative nature is posited as *existent* negation, and hence as first and immediate negation. The infinite is in this way burdened with the opposition to the finite, and this finite, as an other, remains a real existence even though in its being-in-itself, in the infinite, it is at the same time posited as sublated; this infinite is that which is not finite – a being in the determinateness of negation. Contrasted with the finite, with the series of existent determinacies, of realities, the infinite is

indeterminate emptiness, the beyond of the finite, whose being-in-itself is not in its existence (which is something determinate).

21.127

As thus posited over against the finite, the two connected by the qualitative mutual reference of *others*, the infinite is to be called the *bad infinite*, the infinite of the *understanding*, for which it counts as the highest, the absolute truth. The understanding believes that it has attained satisfaction in the reconciliation of truth while it is in fact entangled in unreconciled, unresolved, absolute contradictions. And it is these contradictions, into which it falls on every side whenever it embarks on the application and explication of these categories that belong to it, that must make it conscious of the fact.

This contradiction is present in the very fact that the infinite remains over against the finite, with the result that there are *two* determinacies. There are *two* worlds, one infinite and one finite, and in their connection the infinite is only the *limit* of the finite and thus only a determinate, *itself finite infinite*.

This contradiction develops its content into more explicit forms. – The finite is the real existence which persists as such even when it has gone over into its non-being, the infinite. As we have seen, this infinite has for its determinateness, over against the finite, only the first, immediate negation, just as the finite, as negated, has over against this negation only the meaning of an *other* and is, therefore, still a something. When, therefore, the understanding, elevating itself above this finite world, rises to what is the highest for it, to the infinite, the finite world remains for it as something on this side here, and, thus posited only *above* the finite, the infinite is *separated* from the finite and, for the same reason, the finite from the infinite: each is *placed in a different location*, the finite as existence here, and the infinite, although the *being-in-itself* of the finite, there as a beyond, at a nebulous, inaccessible distance *outside* which there stands, enduring, the finite.

As thus separated, they are just as much essentially *connected* with each other, through the very negation that divides them. This negation connecting them – these somethings reflected into themselves – is the common limit of each over against the other; and that, too, in such a way that each does not merely have this limit *in it* over against the other, but the negation is rather the *in-itselfness* of each; each thus has for itself, in its separation from the other, the limit in it. But the limit is the first negation; both are thus limited, finite, in themselves. Yet, as each affirmatively refers itself to itself, each is also the negation of its limit; each thus immediately repels the negation from itself as its non-being, and, qualitatively severed from it,

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posits it as an *other being* outside it: the finite posits its non-being as this infinite, and the infinite likewise the finite. It is readily conceded that the finite passes over into the infinite necessarily (that is, through its determination) and is thereby elevated to what is its in-itself, for while the finite is indeed determined as subsistent existence, it is at the same time *also* a null *in itself* and therefore destined to self-dissolution; whereas the infinite, although burdened with negation and limit, is equally also determined as the existent *in-itself*, so that this abstraction of self-referring affirmation is what constitutes its determination, and hence finite existence is not present in it. But it has been shown that the infinite itself attains affirmative being only *by the mediation* of negation, as negation of negation, and that when its affirmation thus attained is taken as just simple, qualitative being, the negation contained in it is demoted to simple immediate negation and, therefore, to determinateness and limit; and these, then, are excluded from the infinite as contradicting its in-itself; they are posited as not belonging to it but rather as opposed to its in-itself, as the finite. Since each is in it and through its determination the positing of its other, the two are *inseparable*. But this unity rests *hidden* in their qualitative *otherness*; it is their *inner* unity, one that lies *only at their base*.

The manner of the appearance of this unity has thereby been defined. The unity is posited in *existence* as a turning over or transition of the finite into the infinite, and vice-versa; so that the infinite only *emerges* in the finite, and the finite in the infinite, the other in the other; that is to say, each arises in the other independently and *immediately*, and their connection is only an external one.

The process of their transition has the following, detailed shape. We have the finite passing over into the infinite. This passing over appears as an external doing. In this emptiness beyond the finite, what arises? What is there of positive in it? On account of the inseparability of the infinite and the finite (or because this infinite, which stands apart, is itself restricted), the limit arises. The infinite has vanished and the other, the finite, has stepped in. But this stepping in of the finite appears as an event external to the infinite, and the new limit as something that does not arise out of the infinite itself but is likewise found given. And with this we are back at the previous determination, which has been sublated in vain. This new limit, however, is itself only something to be sublated or transcended. And so there arises again the emptiness, the nothing, in which we find again the said determination – and *so forth to infinity*.

We have before us the *alternating determination of the finite and the infinite*; the finite is finite only with reference to the ought or the infinite,

and the infinite is only infinite with reference to the finite. The two are inseparable and at the same time absolutely other with respect to each other; each has in it the other of itself; each is thus the unity of itself and its other, and, in its determinateness – *not to be* what itself and what its other is – it is existence.

This alternating determination of self-negating and of negating the negating is what passes as the *progress to infinity*, which is accepted in so many shapes and applications as an unsurpassable *ultimate* at which thought, having reached this “*and so on to infinity*,” has usually achieved its end. – This progress breaks out *wherever relative* determinations are pressed to the point of opposition, so that, though in inseparable unity, each is nevertheless attributed an independent existence over against the other. This progress is therefore the *contradiction* which is not resolved but is rather always pronounced simply as *present*.

What we have before us is an abstract transcending which remains incomplete because *the transcending itself* has not been *transcended*. Before us we have the infinite; of course, this infinite is transcended, for another limit is posited, but just because of that only a return is instead made back to the finite. This bad infinite is in itself the same as the perpetual *ought*; it is indeed the negation of the finite, but in truth it is unable to free itself from it; the finite constantly resurfaces in it as its other, since this infinite only is *with reference* to the finite, which is its other. The progress to infinity is therefore only repetitious monotony, the one and the same tedious *alternation* of this finite and infinite.

21.130

The infinity of the infinite progress remains burdened by the finite as such, is thereby restricted, and is itself *finite*. In fact, however, it is thereby posited as the unity of the finite and the infinite. Only, this unity is not reflected upon. Yet it alone rouses the finite in the infinite, and the infinite in the finite; it is, so to speak, the impulse driving the infinite progress. This progress is the *outside* of this unity at which representation remains fixated – fixated at that perennial repetition of one and the same alternation; at the empty unrest of a progression across the limit towards the infinite which, in this infinity, *finds* a new limit but is just as unable to halt at it as it is at the infinite. This infinite has the rigid determination of a *beyond* that cannot be attained, for the very reason that it *ought* not be attained, since the determinateness of the beyond, of an *existent* negation, has not been let go. In this determination, the infinite has the finite as a *this-side* over against it – a finite that is likewise unable to raise itself up to the infinite just because it has this determination of an *other*, that is, of an *existence* that perennially regenerates itself in that beyond precisely by being different from it.

c. *Affirmative infinity*

In this reciprocal determination of the finite and the infinite alternating back and forth as just indicated, the truth of these two is already implicitly *present* in itself, and all that is needed is to take up what is there. This back and forth movement constitutes the external realization of the concept in which the content of the latter is *posited*, but *externally*, as a falling out of the two; all that is needed is the comparing of these two different moments in which the *unity* is given which the concept itself gives. “Unity of the finite and the infinite” – as has often been already noted but must especially be kept in mind at this juncture – is the uneven expression for the unity as it is in truth; but also the removal of this uneven determination must be found in the externalization of the concept that lies ahead of us.

21.131

Taken in their first, only immediate determination, the infinite is the *transcending* of the *finite*; according to its determination, it is the negation of the finite; the finite, for its part, is only that which must be transcended, the negation in it of itself, and this is the infinite. *In each*, therefore, there is *the determinateness of the other*, whereas, according to the viewpoint of the infinite progression, the two should be mutually excluded and would have to follow one another only alternately; neither can be posited and grasped without the other, the infinite without the finite, the finite without the infinite. In *saying* what the infinite is, namely the negation of the *finite*, the finite itself is *said* also; it cannot be *avoided* in the determination of the infinite. One need only *know what is being said* in order to find the determination of the finite in the infinite. Regarding the finite, it is readily conceded that it is the null; this very nothingness is however the infinite from which it is inseparable. – Understood in this way, they may seem to be taken according to the way each *refers* to its *other*. Taken *without this connecting reference*, and thus joined only through an “and,” they subsist independently, each only an existent over against the other. We have to examine how they would be constituted in this way. The infinite, thus positioned, is *one of the two*; but, as *only* one of them, it is itself finite, it is not the whole but only one side; it has its limit in that which stands over against it; and so it is the *finite infinite*. We have before us only *two finites*. The finitude of the infinite, and therefore its unity with the finite, lies in the very fact that it is *separated* from the finite and placed, consequently, *on one side*. – The finite, for its part, removed from the infinite and positioned for itself, is *this self-reference* in which the relativity, its dependence and transitoriness, are removed; it is the same self-subsistence and self-affirmation which the infinite is presumed to be.

The two pathways of consideration, even though they seem at first to have each a different determinateness for their point of departure – the former inasmuch as it assumes it to be only the *reference* of infinite and finite to each other, of each to the other; and the latter their complete separation from each other – yield one and the same result. The infinite and the finite, taken together as *referring* to each other in a connection which is presumed external but is in fact essential to them (for without it, neither is what it is), each contains its other in its own determination, just as, when each is taken *for itself*, when looked at *on its terms*, each has the other present in it as its own moment.

21.132

This yields, then, the scandalous unity of the finite and the infinite – the unity which is itself the infinite that embraces both itself and the finite – the infinite, therefore, understood in a sense other than when the finite is separated from it and placed on the other side from it. Since they must now also be distinguished, each is within it, as just shown, itself the unity of both; there are thus two such unities. The common element, the unity of both determinacies, as such a unity, posits them at first as negated, for each is to be what it is in being distinguished; in their unity, therefore, they lose their qualitative nature – an important reflection for countering the incorrigible habit of representing the infinite and the finite, in their unity, as still holding on to the quality that they would have when taken apart from each other; of seeing in that unity, therefore, nothing except contradiction, and not also the resolution of the contradiction by the negation of the qualitative determinateness of each. And so is the unity of the infinite and the finite, at first simple and universal, falsified.

But further, since the two are now to be taken also as distinguished, the unity of the infinite which is itself both of these moments is determined differently in each. The infinite, determined as such, has in it the finitude which is distinct from it; in this unity, the infinite is the *in-itself* while the finite is only determinateness, the limit in the infinite. But such a limit is the absolute other of the infinite, its opposite. The infinite's determination, which is the in-itself as such, is corrupted by being saddled with a quality of this sort; the infinite is thus a *finitized infinite*. Likewise, since the finite is as such only the non-in-itself but equally has its opposite in it by virtue of the said unity, it is elevated above its worth and, so to speak, infinitely elevated; it is posited as the *infinitized finite*.

Likewise, just as the simple unity of infinite and finite was falsified before by the understanding, so too is the double unity. Here also this happens because the infinite is taken in one of the two unities not as negated but, rather, as the in-itself in which, therefore, determinateness and restriction

should not be posited, for they would debase and corrupt it. Conversely, the finite is equally held fixed as not negated, although null in itself; so that, in combination with the infinite, it is elevated to what it *is* not and is thereby infinitized notwithstanding its determination that has not vanished but is rather perpetuated.

21.133

The falsification that the understanding perpetrates with respect to the finite and the infinite, of holding their reciprocal reference fixed as qualitative differentiation, of maintaining that their determination is separate, indeed, absolutely separate, comes from forgetting what for the understanding itself is the concept of these moments. According to this concept, the unity of the finite and the infinite is not an external bringing together of them, nor an incongruous combination that goes against their nature, one in which inherently separate and opposed terms that exist independently and are consequently incompatible, would be knotted together. Rather, each is itself this unity, and this only as a *sublating* of itself in which neither would have an advantage over the other in in-itselfness and affirmative existence. As has earlier been shown, finitude is only as a transcending of itself; it is therefore within it that the infinite, the other of itself, is contained. Similarly, the infinite is only as the transcending of the finite; it therefore contains its other essentially, and it is thus within it that it is the other of itself. The finite is not sublated by the infinite as by a power present outside it; its infinity consists rather in sublating itself.

This sublating is not, consequently, alteration or otherness in general, not the sublating of *something*. That into which the finite is sublated is the infinite as the negating of finitude. But the latter has long since been only existence, determined as a *non-being*. It is only the *negation*, therefore, that in the negation sublates itself. Thus infinity is determined on its side as the negative of the finite and thereby of determinateness in general, as an empty beyond; its sublating of itself into the finite is a return from an empty flight, the *negation* of the beyond which is inherently a *negative*.

Present in both, therefore, is the same negation of negation. But this negation of negation is *in itself* self-reference, affirmation but as turning back to itself, that is, through the *mediation* that the negation of negation is.

21.134

These are the determinations that it is essential to bring to view; the second point, however, is that in the infinite progression they are also *posited*, and how they are posited therein, namely, not in their ultimate truth.

First, both are negated in that progression, the infinite as well as the finite; both are equally transcended. Second, they are also posited as distinct, one after the other, each positive for itself. We sort out these two determinations while comparing them, just as in the comparison (in an external comparing)

we have separated the two ways of considering them: the finite and the infinite as referring to one another, and each taken for itself. The infinite progression, however, says more than this. Also posited in it, though at first still only as transition and alternation, is the *connectedness* of the terms being *distinguished*. We now only need to see, in one simple reflection, what is in fact present in it.

In the first place, the negation of the finite and the infinite which is posited in the infinite progression can be taken as simple, and hence as mutual externality, only a following of one upon the other. Starting from the finite, the limit is thus transcended, the finite negated. We now have its beyond, the infinite, but in this the limit *rises up* again; so we have the transcending of the infinite. This twofold sublation is nonetheless partly only an external event and an alternating of moments in general, and partly still not posited as *one unity*; each of these moves beyond is an independent starting point, a fresh act, so that the two fall apart. – But, in addition, their *connection* is also present in the infinite progression. The *finite* comes *first*; *then* there is the transcending of it, and this negative, or this beyond of the finite, is the infinite; *third*, this negation is transcended in turn, a new limit comes up, a *finite* again. – This is the complete, self-closing movement that has arrived at that which made the beginning; what emerges is *the same* as that *from which the departure was made*, that is, the finite is restored; the latter has therefore *rejoined itself*, in *its beyond* has only *found itself again*.

The same is the case regarding the infinite. In the infinite, in the beyond of the limit, only a new limit arises which has the same fate, namely, that as finite it must be negated. Thus what is again at hand is the *same* infinite that just now disappeared in the new limit; by being sublated, by traversing the new limit, the infinite has not therefore advanced one jot further: it has distanced itself neither from the finite (for the finite is just this, to pass over into the infinite), nor from itself, for it has *arrived at itself*.

21.135

Thus the finite and the infinite are both this *movement* of each returning to itself through its negation; they are only as implicit *mediation*, and the affirmative of each contains the negative of each, and is the negation of the negation. – They are thus a *result* and, as such, not in the determination that they had at the *beginning*: neither is the finite an *existence* on its side nor the infinite an *existence* or a *being-in-itself* beyond that existence, that is, beyond existence in the determination of finitude. The understanding strongly resists the unity of the finite and the infinite only because it presupposes restriction and finitude to remain, like being-in-itself, *constants*. It thereby *overlooks* the negation of both which is in fact present in the infinite progression, just as it equally overlooks that the two occur in this

progression only as moments of a whole – that each emerges only through the mediation of its opposite but, essentially, equally by means of the sublation of its opposite.

If this immanent turning back has for the moment been reckoned to be just as much the turning back of the finite to itself and of the infinite to itself, noticeable in this very result is an error connected with the one-sidedness just criticized: the finite and then the infinite is each taken as the *starting point*, and only in this way *two* results ensue. But it is a matter of total indifference which is taken as the starting point and, with this, the distinction caused by the *duality* of results dissolves of itself. This is likewise posited in the line of the infinite progression, open-ended on both sides, wherein each of the moments recurs in equal alternation, and it is totally extraneous at which position the progression is arrested and taken as beginning. – The moments are distinguished in the progression but each is equally only moment of the other. Since both, the finite and the infinite, are themselves moments of the progress, they are *jointly the finite*, and, since they are equally jointly negated in it and in the result, this result as the negation of their joint finitude is called with truth the infinite. Their distinction is thus the *double meaning* which they both have. The finite has the double meaning, first, of being the finite *over against* the infinite which stands over against it, and, second, of being *at the same time* the finite and the infinite over against the infinite. Also the infinite has the double meaning of being *one* of the two moments (it is then the bad infinite) and of being the infinite in which the two moments, itself and its other, are only moments. Therefore, as in fact we now have it, the nature of the infinite is that it is the process in which it lowers itself to be only *one* of its determinations over against the finite and therefore itself only one of the finites, and elevates this distinction of itself and itself to be self-affirmation and, through this mediation, the *true infinite*.

This determination of the true infinite cannot be captured in the already criticized *formula* of a *unity* of the finite and the infinite; *unity* is abstract, motionless self-sameness, and the moments are likewise unmoved beings. But, like both its moments, the infinite is rather essentially only as *becoming*, though a becoming now *further determined* in its moments. Becoming has for its determinations, first, abstract being and nothing; as alteration, it has existence, something and other; now as infinite, it has finite and infinite, these two themselves as in becoming.

This infinite, as being-turned-back-unto-itself, as reference of itself to itself, is *being* – but not indeterminate, abstract being, for it is posited as negating the negation; consequently, it is also *existence* or

“*thereness*,”⁶² for it contains negation in general and consequently determinateness. It *is*, and *is there*, present, before us. Only the bad infinite is the *beyond*, since it is *only* the negation of the finite posited as *real* and, as such, it is abstract first negation; thus determined *only* as negative, it does not have the affirmation of *existence* in it; held fast only as something negative, it *ought not to be there*, it ought to be unattainable. However, to be thus unattainable is not its grandeur but rather its defect, which is at bottom the result of holding fast to the finite as such, *as existent*. It is the untrue which is the unattainable, and what must be recognized is that such an infinite is the untrue. – The image of the progression in infinity is the straight *line*; the infinite is only at the two limits of this line, and always only is where the latter (which is existence) is not but *transcends itself*, in its non-existence, that is, in the indeterminate. As true infinite, bent back upon itself, its image becomes the *circle*, the line that has reached itself, closed and wholly present, without *beginning* and *end*.

True infinity, thus taken in general as *existence* posited as *affirmative* in contrast to abstract negation, is *reality* in a higher sense than it was earlier as *simply* determined; it has now obtained a concrete content. It is not the finite which is the real, but rather the infinite. Thus reality is further determined as essence, concept, idea, and so forth. In connection with the more concrete, it is however superfluous to repeat such earlier and more abstract categories as reality, and to use them for determinations more concrete than they are by themselves. Such a repetition, as when it is said that essence, or that the concept, is real, has its origin in the fact that to uneducated thought the most abstract categories such as being, existence, reality, finitude, are the most familiar.

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The more immediate occasion, however, for recalling here the categories of reality is that the negation, against which reality is the affirmative, is here the negation of negation, and consequently itself posited over against that reality which finite existence is. – Negation is thus determined as ideality; the idealized^h is the finite as it is in the true infinite – as a determination, a content, a distinct but not *a subsistent existent*, a *moment* rather. Ideality has this more concrete signification which is not fully expressed through the negation of finite existence. – As regards reality and ideality, the opposition

^h The *ideal* [*das Ideale*] has a broader meaning (such as of the beautiful and its associations) than the *idealized* [*das Ideelle*]. The former does not belong here yet, and for this reason the expression *idealized* is being used. There is no such distinction made in language usage for “reality”; in German *reelle* and *reale* are used as roughly synonymous and no interest is served in nuancing the two in some sort of opposition.

⁶² I am glossing in “thereness” in order to retain Hegel’s subsequent play on words.

of finite and infinite is, however, so grasped that the finite assumes the value of “the real,” whereas the infinite that of “the idealized”; in the same way, further on, also the concept is regarded as an idealization, that is, as a *mere* idealization, in contrast to existence in general, which is regarded as “the real.” When contrasted in this way, it is of course of no use to have reserved for the said concrete determination of negation the distinctive expression of “idealization”; in that opposition of finite and infinite, we are back to the one-sidedness of the abstract negative characteristic of the bad infinite and still fixed in the affirmative existence of the finite.

Transition

Ideality can be called the *quality* of the infinite; but it is essentially the process of *becoming*, and hence a transition – like the transition of becoming into existence. We must now explicate this transition. This immanent turning back, as the sublating of finitude – that is, of finitude as such and equally of the negative finitude that only stands opposite to it, is only negative finitude – is *self-reference*, *being*. Since there is negation in this being, the latter is *existence*; but, further, since the negation is essentially negation of the negation, self-referring negation, it is the existence that carries the name of *being-for-itself*.

Remark 1

21.138

The infinite – in the usual sense of the bad infinite – and the *progression to infinity*, such as the ought, are the expression of a *contradiction* that pretends to be itself a *solution* and an *ultimate*. This infinite is a first elevation of sense representation above the finite to thought, but to a thought which, for content, has only a nothing, that is, a non-existent *explicitly* posited as such: it is a flight beyond restrictions that fails to gather itself together within and is unable to bring the negative back to the positive. This *unfulfilled reflection* has before it both the determinations of the true infinite (namely the *opposition* of the finite and the infinite, and the *unity* of the finite and the infinite) but fails to bring the *two thoughts together*; the thought of one unavoidably brings the other along, but this reflection lets them only *alternate*. The spectacle of this alternation, this infinite progression, occurs wherever one remains fixated on the contradiction of the *unity* of two determinations and of their *opposition*. The finite is the sublating of itself; it holds its negation, the infinity, in itself: *unity* of the two. It is the movement *beyond* the finite into the infinite as the beyond of the finite: *separation* of the two. But over and beyond the infinite there is another finite; the beyond, the infinite, holds finitude: *unity* of the two. But this

finite is also a negative of the infinite: *separation* of the two, and so forth. – Thus, in the relation of causality, cause and effect are inseparable; a cause that would have no effect is not a cause, just as an effect that had no cause would no longer be effect. This relation yields, therefore, the infinite progression of *causes* and *effects*; something is determined as cause, but, as something finite (and it is finite just because of its separation from the effect), it has itself a cause, that is, it is also effect; consequently, the *same thing* that was determined as cause is also determined as effect (unity of cause and effect); what is now determined as effect has in turn a cause, that is, the cause is to be *separated* from its effect and to be posited as a different something; this new cause is however itself only an effect (*unity* of cause and effect); it has an other for its cause; separation of the two determinations, and so forth, into *infinity*.

We can thus restate the progression in this more appropriate form. The claim is made that the finite and the infinite are one unity. This is a false claim that needs correction by its opposite: the two are absolutely different and opposed. This claim is in turn to be corrected to the effect that the two are inseparable; that in the one determination there lies the other by virtue of the claim to unity; and so forth to infinity. – It is easy enough to see into the nature of the infinite: one must recognize that the infinite progression, the developed infinity of the understanding, is constituted by the *alternation* of the two determinations, of the *unity* and the *separation* of the two moments; and then further recognize that this unity and this separation are inseparable.

The resolution of this contradiction is not the acknowledgment of the *equal correctness*, and of the equal incorrectness, of both claims – this would only be another shape of the still abiding contradiction – but the *ideality* of both, in the sense that in their distinction, as reciprocal negations, they are only moments. That monotonous alternation of the infinite progression is in fact the negation of both their *unity* and their *separation*. What was demonstrated above is just as much present in it *de facto*: namely, that the finite, over and beyond itself, falls into the infinite, but that, over and beyond this infinite, it equally finds itself born anew; hence, that it rejoins itself there, as is also the case for the infinite – so that this same negation of negation results in *affirmation*, a result that thereby proves itself to be their truth and point of origin. In this being which is thus the *ideality* of the distinct moments, the contradiction has not vanished abstractly,⁶³ but is resolved and reconciled, and the thoughts, while left intact, are

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⁶³ i.e. by abstracting from the differences that give rise to the contradiction.

also *brought together*. Here we have, in a graphic example, the nature of speculative thought displayed in its determining feature: it consists solely in grasping the opposed moments in their unity. Inasmuch as each moment shows, as a matter of fact, that it has its opposite in it, and that in this opposite it rejoins itself, the affirmative truth is this internally self-moving unity, the grasping together of both thoughts, their infinity – the reference to oneself which is not immediate but infinite.

The essence of philosophy has often been located by those already adept in the things of thought in the task of answering the question: *How does the infinite go forth out of itself and come to finitude?* – This, as opinion would have it, escapes *conceptual comprehension*. In the course of this exposition, the infinite at whose concept we have arrived will *further determine* itself, and the desideratum – *how* the infinite (if one can so express oneself) *comes to finitude* – will be manifested in it in the full manifold of forms. Here we are considering this question only in its immediacy and in view of the just mentioned sense which the infinite usually carries.

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It is above all on the answer to this question that *whether there is a philosophy* is taken to depend, and people believe, while still professing willingness to let the matter rest on it, that they also possess in the question itself a sort of puzzle, an invincible talisman, that firmly secures them against the answer, and consequently against philosophy and the attainment of it. In order to understand *questions*, a certain education is required also in other subject matters, and this is all the more the case for things philosophical if more of an answer is to be had than that the question is an idle one. – It is fair to expect in these questions, as is normally done, that the point at issue would not depend on words but would rather be made intelligible through some form or other of expression. Figurative expressions of sense representation that are used in the question regarding the infinite, like “going forth” and suchlike, arouse the suspicion that the question stemmed from the terrain of vulgar representation, and that the answer is also expected to be in representations current in everyday life and in the shape of a sensuous simile.

Take being in general, instead of the infinite. The *determining of it*, its having a negation or finitude in it, seems easier to comprehend. Being is indeed the indeterminate, but it is not immediately said in it that it is the opposite of anything determinate. The infinite, on the contrary, contains this note expressly; it is the *non-finite*. The unity of the finite and the infinite thus appears excluded from the start; incomplete reflection is most stubbornly opposed to this unity for precisely this reason.

But it has been shown, and it is immediately evident without expanding further on the determination of the finite and the infinite, that the infinite,

in the sense in which it is taken by that incomplete reflection, namely as standing opposite the finite, has its other in it precisely because it stands opposed to it, and is therefore already limited and itself finite. It is the bad infinite. The answer to the question, “how does the infinite become finite?” is therefore this: *There is not an infinite which is infinite beforehand, and only afterwards does it find it necessary to become finite, to go forth into finitude*; the infinite is rather for itself just as much finite as infinite. Inasmuch as the question assumes that the infinite is by itself on the one side, and that the finite which has gone forth from it (or from wherever it might have come) into the divide is truly real as thus separated from the infinite, one should say rather that it is this divide which is *conceptually incomprehensible*. Neither such a finite nor such an infinite has truth; that which has no truth, however, cannot be conceptually grasped. Yet it must be granted that they are conceptually comprehensible. To consider them even as they are in representation with the determination of each implicit in the other; to have a simple insight into this inseparability which is theirs, means that we comprehend them conceptually. *This inseparability is their concept*. – In the self-subsistence of that infinite and finite, the question sets up a false content instead; it presupposes a false connection between them. For this reason, the question is not to be answered, but the false presuppositions contained in it, in effect the question itself, are rather to be denied. By thus questioning the truth of such finite and infinite, the standpoint is altered, and this change will turn the embarrassment which the question was supposed to cause back on the question itself. To the reflection from which the question originated, our own *question* is something *new*, for that reflecting lacks the speculative interest that would lead it to ascertain for its own sake, and before it draws connections between determinations, whether such determinations are anything true as presupposed. To the extent, however, that the untruth of that abstract infinite is recognized, and of the finite which is equally supposed to stand unmoved on its side, there is this to be said of the procession of the finite out of the infinite: the infinite goes *out of itself* into the finite because, in the way it is grasped as abstract unity, it has no truth in it, no standing; and, conversely, the finite goes *forth* into the infinite for the same reason. Or it is rather to be said that the infinite proceeded to finitude from all eternity; that, just as much as pure *being*, it absolutely *is* not by itself alone, without having its other *in it*.

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The question how the infinite proceeds to the finite can harbor a further presupposition still, namely that the infinite includes the finite *within itself*, and consequently that it is the unity of itself and its other, so that the

difficulty has to do essentially with the *separating*, for this is in opposition to the presupposed unity. On this presupposition, the opposition insisted upon only assumes a different form; the *unity* and the *distinguishing* are separated from each other and held isolated. If, however, the unity is not taken abstractly and indeterminately, but rather, as in the presupposition, as the determinate unity of the *finite* and the *infinite*, the distinguishing of these two is also present in it. And this distinguishing is not one that would also let them go loose, each subsisting separately, but it rather leaves them in the unity as *idealized*. This *unity* of the infinite and the finite, and the *distinguishing* of them, are inseparable, in the same way as the finite and the infinite.

Remark 2

The claim that the *finite is an idealization* defines *idealism*. The idealism of philosophy consists in nothing else than in the recognition that the finite is not truly an existent. Every philosophy is essentially idealism or at least has idealism for its principle, and the question then is only how far this principle is carried out. This applies to philosophy just as much as to religion, for religion also, no less than philosophy, will not admit finitude as a true being, an ultimate, an absolute, or as something non-positing, uncreated, eternal. The opposition between idealistic and realistic philosophy is therefore without meaning. A philosophy that attributes to finite existence, as such, true, ultimate, absolute being, does not deserve the name of philosophy. The principles of ancient as well as more recent philosophies – whether “water,” “matter,” or “atoms” – are universals, idealizations, not things as given immediately, that is, in sensuous singularity. Not even the “water” of Thales is that, for, although also empirical water, it is besides that the *in-itself* or *essence* of all other things, and these things do not stand on their own, self-grounded, but are *posited* on the basis of an other, of “water,” that is, they are idealized. In thus calling the principle or the universal an *idealization* as we have just done (and the concept, the idea, spirit, deserve the name even more), and in saying then that the singular things of the senses are *idealizations* in principle, or in their concept, and even more so

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when sublated in the spirit, we must note, in passing, the same double-sidedness that transpired in the infinite, namely that an idealization is on the one hand something concrete, a true existent, but, on the other hand, that its moments are no less idealizations, sublated in it; in fact, however, there is only one concrete whole from which the moments are inseparable.

By an idealization is normally meant the form of *representation*. Whatever is in any of my representations, whether in the concept, the idea,

the imagination, and so forth, goes by the name of *idealization*, so that the “idealized” stands in general also for imaginary constructs – for representations that are not only distinguished from anything real but should essentially *not* be taken as real. In point of fact, spirit is above all the true *idealist*; in spirit, even as spirit senses and represents but still more as it thinks and conceptualizes, the content is not *real existence*, as so called; in the simplicity of the I, any such external being is only sublated, it is *for me*, it is in me *idealized*. This subjective idealism, whether it is the unconscious idealism of consciousness in general or is consciously declared and installed as principle, extends only to the *form* of representation according to which a content is mine. In the systematized idealism of subjectivity, this form is declared to be the only true form, one that excludes the form of the objectivity or reality of that content, of its *external existence*. Such an idealism is formal, since it does not take into consideration the *content* of representation or thought, and therefore does not go past its finitude. Nothing is lost by this idealism, both because the reality of this finite content (the existence filled with finitude) is retained, and because, if one abstracts from it, *in itself* nothing of much consequence is to be made of it. Nor is anything gained by it, for the same reason that nothing is lost, since the “I” remains representation, spirit still filled with the same content of finitude. The opposition of the forms of subjectivity and objectivity is of course itself one of finitudes; but the *content*, as taken up in sensation, intuition, or also in the more abstract element of representation and thought, contains such finitudes in full, and these, by the exclusion of that one mode of finitude alone (of the form of subjective and objective), are still not done away with, and even less have they fallen off on their own.