

CHAPTER I

BEING

A. BEING

Being, pure being, without any further determination. In its indeterminate immediacy it is equal only to itself. It is also not unequal relatively to an other; it has no diversity within itself nor any with a reference outwards. It would not be held fast in its purity if it contained any determination or content which could be distinguished in it or by which it could be distinguished from an other. 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 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.

B. NOTHING

Nothing, pure nothing: it is simply equally with itself, complete emptiness, absence of all determination and content—undifferentiatedness in itself. In so far as intuiting or thinking can be mentioned here, it counts as a distinction whether something or nothing is intuited or thought. To intuit or think nothing has, therefore, a meaning; both are distinguished and thus nothing is (exists) in our intuiting or thinking; or rather it is empty intuition and thought itself, and the same empty intuition or thought as pure being. Nothing is, therefore, the same determination, or rather absence of determination, and thus altogether the same as, pure being.

C. BECOMING

I. UNITY OF BEING AND NOTHING

Pure being and pure nothing are, therefore, the same. What is the truth is neither being nor nothing, but that being—does not pass

over but has passed over—into nothing, and nothing into being. But it is equally true that they are not undistinguished from each other, that, on the contrary, they are not the same, that they are absolutely distinct, and yet that they are inseparable and inseparable and that each immediately vanishes in its opposite. Their truth is, therefore, this movement of the immediate vanishing of the one in the other: *becoming*, a movement in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has equally immediately resolved itself.

*Remark 1: The Opposition of Being and Nothing in Ordinary**Thinking*

Nothing is usually opposed to something; but the being of something is already determinate and is distinguished from another something; and so therefore the nothing which is opposed to the something is also the nothing of a particular something, a determinate nothing. Here, however, nothing is to be taken in its indeterminate simplicity. Should it be held more correct to oppose to being, non-being instead of nothing, there would be no objection to this so far as the result is concerned, for in non-being the relation to being is contained: both being and its negation are enunciated in a single term, nothing, as it is in becoming. But we are concerned first of all not with the form of opposition (with the form, that is, also of relation) but with the abstract, immediate negation: nothing, purely on its own account, negation devoid of any relations—what could also be expressed if one so wished merely by 'not'.

It was the Eleatics, above all Parmenides, who first enunciated the simple thought of pure being as the absolute and sole truth: only being is, and nothing absolutely is not, and in the surviving fragments of Parmenides this is enunciated with the pure enthusiasm of thought which has for the first time apprehended itself in its absolute abstraction. As we know, in the oriental systems, principally in Buddhism, nothing, the void, is the absolute principle. Against that simple and one-sided abstraction the deep-thinking Heraclitus brought forward the higher, total concept of becoming and said: being as little is, as nothing is, or, all flows, which means, all is a becoming. The popular, especially oriental proverbs, that all that exists has the germ of death in its very birth, that death, on the other hand, is the entrance into new life, express at

in the following manner that a beginning of the world, or of anything, is impossible:

It is impossible for anything to begin, either in so far as it is, or in so far as it is not; for in so far as it is, it is not just beginning, and in so far as it is not, then also it does not begin. If the world, or anything, is supposed to have begun, then it must have begun in nothing, but in nothing—or nothing—is no beginning; for a beginning includes within itself a being, but nothing does not contain any being. Nothing is only nothing. In a ground, a cause, and so on, if nothing is so determined, there is contained an affirmation, a being. For the same reason, too, something cannot cease to be; for then being would have to contain nothing, but being is only being, not the contrary of itself.

It is obvious that in this proof nothing is brought forward against becoming, or beginning and ceasing, against this *unity* of being and nothing, except an assertoric denial of them and an ascription of truth to being and nothing, each in separation from the other. Nevertheless this dialectic is at least more consistent than ordinary reflective thought which accepts as perfect truth that being and nothing only *are* in separation from each other, yet on the other hand acknowledges beginning and ceasing to be equally genuine determinations; but in these it does in fact assume the unseparatedness of being and nothing.

With the absolute separateness of being from nothing presupposed, then of course—as we so often hear—beginning or becoming is something *incomprehensible*; for a presupposition is made which annuls the beginning or the becoming which yet is *again* admitted, and this contradiction thus posed and at the same time made impossible of solution, is called *incomprehensible*.

The foregoing dialectic is the same, too, as that which understanding employs the notion of *infinitesimal* magnitudes given by higher analysis. A more detailed treatment of this notion will be given later. These magnitudes have been defined as such that they *are* in their vanishing, not *before* their vanishing, for then they *are* finite magnitudes, or *after* their vanishing, for then they are nothing. Against this pure notion it is objected and reiterated that such magnitudes are *either* something or nothing; that there is no *intermediate state* between being and non-being ('state' is here an unsuitable, barbarous expression). Here too, the absolute separation of being and nothing is assumed. But against this it

has been shown that being and nothing are, in fact, the same, or to use the same language as that just quoted, that *there is nothing which is not an intermediate state between being and nothing*. It is to the adoption of the said determination, which understanding opposes, that mathematics owes its most brilliant successes.

This style of reasoning which makes and clings to the false presupposition of the absolute separateness of being and non-being is to be named not dialectic but sophistry. For sophistry is an argument proceeding from a baseless presupposition which is uncritically and unthinkingly adopted; but we call dialectic the higher movement of reason in which such seemingly utterly separate terms pass over into each other spontaneously, through that which they are, a movement in which the presupposition sublates itself. It is the dialectical immanent nature of being and nothing themselves to manifest their unity, that is, becoming, as their truth.

2. MOMENTS OF BECOMING: COMING-TO-BE AND CEASING-TO-BE

Becoming is the unseparatedness of being and nothing, not the unity which abstracts from being and nothing; but as the unity of *being* and *nothing* it is this *determinate* unity in which there is both being and nothing. But in so far as being and nothing, each unseparated from its other, *is*, each *is not*. They *are* therefore in this unity but only as vanishing, sublated moments. They sink from their initially imagined *self-subsistence* to the status of *moments*, which are still *distinct* but at the same time are sublated.

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

Becoming is in this way in a double determination. In one of them, *nothing* is immediate, that is, the determination starts from nothing which relates itself to being, or in other words changes into it; in the other, *being* is immediate, that is, the determination

starts from being which changes into nothing: the former is coming-to-be and the latter is ceasing-to-be.

Both are the same, *becoming*, and although they differ so in direction they interpenetrate and paralyse each other. The one is *ceasing-to-be*: being passes over into nothing, but nothing is equally the opposite of itself, transition into being, coming-to-be. This coming-to-be is the other direction: nothing passes over into being, but being equally sublates itself and is rather transition into nothing, is ceasing-to-be. They are not reciprocally sublated—the one does not sublata the other externally—but each sublates itself in itself and is in its own self the opposite of itself.

3. SUBLATION OF BECOMING

The resultant equilibrium of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be is in the first place *becoming* itself. But this equally settles into a stable unity. Being and nothing are in this unity only as vanishing moments; yet becoming as such is only through their distinguishedness. Their vanishing, therefore, is the vanishing of becoming or the vanishing of the vanishing itself. Becoming is an unstable unrest which settles into a stable result.

This could also be expressed thus: becoming is the vanishing of being in nothing and of nothing in being and the vanishing of being and nothing generally; but at the same time it rests on the distinction between them. It is therefore inherently self-contradictory, because the determinations it unites within itself are opposed to each other; but such a union destroys itself.

This result is the vanishedness of becoming, but it is not *nothing*: as such it would only be a relapse into one of the already sublated determinations, not the resultant of *nothing and being*. It is the unity of being and nothing which has settled into a stable oneness. But this stable oneness is being, yet no longer as a determination on its own but as a determination of the whole.

Becoming, as this transition into the unity of being and nothing, a unity which is in the form of being or has the form of the one-sided *immediate* unity of these moments, is *determinate being*.

Remark: The Expression 'To Sublate'

To sublata, and the *sublated* (that which exists ideally as a moment), constitute one of the most important notions in philosophy. It is

a fundamental determination which repeatedly occurs throughout the whole of philosophy, the meaning of which is to be clearly grasped and especially distinguished from *nothing*. What is sublated is not thereby reduced to nothing. Nothing is *immediate*; it is a non-being but as a *result* which had its origin in a being. It still has, therefore, *in itself* the *determinateness from which it originates*.

'*To sublata*' has a twofold meaning in the language: on the one hand it means to preserve, to maintain, and equally it also means to cause to cease, to put an end to. Even 'to preserve' includes a negative element, namely, that something is removed from its immediacy and so from an existence which is open to external influences, in order to preserve it. Thus what is sublated is at the same time preserved; it has only lost its immediacy but is not on that account annihilated. The two definitions of 'to sublata' which we have given can be quoted as two dictionary meanings of this word. But it is certainly remarkable to find that a language has come to use one and the same word for two opposite meanings. It is a delight to speculative thought to find in the language words which have in themselves a speculative meaning; the German language has a number of such. The double meaning of the Latin *tollere* (which has become famous through the Ciceronian pun: *tollendum est Octavianum*) does not go so far; its affirmative determination signifies only a lifting-up. Something is sublated only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite; in this more particular signification 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 on account of the sameness of their effect, in spite of the contrast otherwise between something real, such as a weight, and something ideal, such as a mere spatial determination, a line.¹ We shall often have occasion to notice that the technical language of philosophy employs Latin terms for reflected determinations, either because the mother tongue has no words for them or if it has, as here, because its expression calls to mind more what is immediate, whereas the foreign language suggests more what is reflected.

The more precise meaning and expression which being and nothing receive, now that they are *moments*, is to be ascertained

¹ See *Encycl.* 3rd edition, Section 261, Remark.