

*First subdivision of the Logic:
The doctrine of being*

§ 84

Being is the concept only as it is *in itself*. Its determinations have *being*, i.e. in their difference they are *others* opposite one another, and their further determination (the form of the dialectical) is a *process of passing over into an other*. This progressive determination is at once a matter of *setting forth* and thereby unfolding the concept, as it is *in itself*, and at the same time the process of being *entering into itself*, a deepening of it within itself. The explication of the concept in the sphere of being becomes the totality of being, precisely to the extent that the immediacy of being or the form of being as such is sublated in the process.

§ 85

Being itself as well as the subsequent determinations, not only those of being but also the logical determinations in general, can be regarded as the definitions of the absolute, as *metaphysical definitions of God*. More specifically, only the first simple determination within a given sphere, and then the third, which is the return from a difference to the simple relation to itself, can always be regarded in this way. For, to define God metaphysically means to express his nature in *thoughts* as such. But logic comprises all thoughts as they are while still in the form of thoughts. By contrast, the *second* determinations, making up a given sphere in its *difference* [*Differenz*], are the definitions of the *finite*. But if the form of definitions were used, this would entail envisaging a representational substratum. For even *the absolute*, what is supposed to express God in the sense and in the form of thought, remains merely an *intended* thought, i.e. a substratum that as such is indeterminate, relative to its predicate as the determinate and actual expression in thought. Because the thought, the basic matter solely at issue here, is contained only in the predicate, the form of a proposition, like that

subject, is something completely superfluous (cf. § 31 and the chapter on the judgment below [§§ 166 *et seq.*]).

Addition. Each sphere of the logical idea proves to be a totality of determinations and a presentation of the absolute, and so too does being, which includes within itself the three stages of *quality*, *quantity*, and *measure*. *Quality* is, to begin with, the determinacy that is identical with being in the sense that something ceases to be what it is when it loses its quality. By contrast, *quantity* is the determinacy that is external to being and indifferent in relation to it. Thus, for instance, a house remains what it is, whether it is bigger or smaller, and red remains red, be it brighter or darker. The third stage of being, *measure*: is the unity of the first two, qualitative quantity. All things have their measure: that is, they are quantitatively determined, and their being either this big or bigger is indifferent to them. At the same time, however, this indifference has its limits, and if those limits are overstepped by an additional more or less, things cease to be what they were. From measure there then results the progression to the second main sphere of the idea, namely *essence*.

The three forms of being mentioned here are also the poorest, that is to say, the most abstract, just because they are the first. The immediate sensory consciousness, insofar as its behaviour involves thinking, is chiefly limited to the abstract determinations of quality and quantity. This sensory consciousness is usually regarded as the most concrete and thus also the richest. It is so, however, only in terms of its material, whereas it is in fact the poorest and most abstract consciousness with respect to the content of its thoughts.

A. QUALITY

a. *Being*

§ 86

Pure being constitutes the beginning, because it is pure thought as well as the undetermined, simple immediate, and the first beginning cannot be anything mediated and further determined.

All the doubts and reminders that might be raised against beginning the science with abstract, empty *being* take care of themselves through the simple consciousness of what is implied by the nature of a beginning. Being can be determined as 'I = I', as the *absolute indifference* or *identity*, etc. In the need to begin with something absolutely *certain*, i.e. the certainty of oneself, or with a definition or intuition of the *absolutely true*, these and other similar forms can be regarded as what must be the first. However, insofar as *mediation* is

already present within each of these forms, they are not truly the first. Mediation means to have gone from a first to a second and to emerge from something differentiated [*Hervorgehen aus Unterschiedenen*]. If 'I = I' or even the intellectual intuition is genuinely taken as simply the first, then in this pure immediacy it is nothing else but *being*, just as, conversely, pure being, insofar as it is no longer this abstract being, but being that contains mediation within itself, is pure thinking or intuiting.

When *being* is expressed as a predicate of the absolute, this provides the first definition of the latter: *the absolute is being*. This is (in the thought) the absolutely first, most abstract, and most impoverished definition. It is the definition of the *Eleatics*, but at the same time also the familiar one that *God is the sum total [Inbegriff] of all realities*. The point is that one is supposed to abstract from the limitedness inherent in every reality, so that God is nothing but the *real* in all reality, the *supremely real*. Insofar as reality already contains a reflection, this idea is expressed more immediately in what Jacobi says about the God of Spinoza, namely that he is the *principium of being in all existence*.

Addition 1. When beginning with thinking, we have nothing but thought in the sheer absence of any determination of it [*in seiner reinen Bestimmungslosigkeit*], since for a determination one and an other are required. In the beginning, however, we have as yet no other. The indeterminate [*Bestimmungslose*], as we have it here, is the immediate, not the mediated absence of determination, not the sublation of all determinacy, but the immediacy of the absence of determination, the absence of determination prior to all determinacy, the indeterminate as the very first. But this is what we call 'being'. It is not to be sensed, intuited, or represented; instead it is the pure thought, and as such it constitutes the beginning. Essence, too, is something indeterminate, but the indeterminate that, having gone through the mediation, contains within itself the determinacy as already sublated.

Addition 2. We find the various stages of the logical idea in the history of philosophy, in the shape of philosophical systems that have successively emerged, each of which has a particular definition of the absolute as its foundation. Now just as the unfolding of the logical idea proves to be a progression from the abstract to the concrete, so, too, the earliest systems in the history of philosophy are the most abstract and thus at the same time also the most impoverished. The relationship of the earlier to the later philosophical systems is, generally speaking, the same as the relationship of the earlier to the later stages of the logical idea and, to be sure, in such a way that the later ones contain within them the earlier ones as sublated. This is the true meaning of the refutation of one philosophical system by another, and more specifically of the earlier by the later system, a common occurrence in the history of philosophy that is so often misunderstood.

When the refutation of a philosophy is discussed, this tends at first to be taken merely in an abstractly negative sense, such that the refuted philosophy has no validity whatsoever anymore, that it has been discarded and done away with. If this were so, the study of the history of philosophy would have to be regarded as an altogether sad business, since study of it teaches how all philosophical systems that have appeared over time have been refuted. However, just as one must admit that all philosophies have been refuted, it must also be maintained that no philosophy has ever been refuted or is even capable of being refuted. The latter is the case in two connections, on the one hand, inasmuch as every philosophy worthy of the name has the idea as such for its content, and on the other, inasmuch as each philosophical system has to be regarded as the presentation of a particular moment, or a particular stage in the process of the development of the idea. Hence, refuting a philosophy merely means that its limitation has been transcended and its particular principle downgraded to an ideal moment. Accordingly, as far as its essential content is concerned, the history of philosophy deals not with the past, but with what is eternal and absolutely present, and its result must be compared not to a gallery of errors of the human spirit, but rather to a pantheon of divine figures [*Göttergestalten*]. These divine figures are the various stages of the idea as they emerged successively in the dialectical development. Now it is left to the history of philosophy to demonstrate in greater detail the extent to which the unfolding of its contents that takes place in it agrees with the dialectical unfolding of the pure, logical Idea, on the one hand, and diverges from it, on the other. All that needs to be mentioned here is that the beginning of the logic is the same as the beginning of the history of philosophy proper. We find this beginning in the Eleatic philosophy, and more specifically in that of Parmenides who construes the absolute as being when he says that ‘only being is, and nothing is not’. This is to be regarded as the proper beginning of philosophy because philosophy is, generally speaking, a process of knowing by way of thinking [*denkendes Erkennen*], but here for the first time pure thinking has been taken hold of and become an object [*gegenständlich*] for itself.

Human beings have thought from the beginning, to be sure, since they distinguish themselves from animals only through thinking. And yet it took thousands of years before it came to grasping thought in its purity and at the same time as absolutely objective. The Eleatics are famous for being bold thinkers. However, this abstract admiration is often accompanied by the remark that these philosophers nonetheless went too far by recognizing being alone as the true and denying the truth of everything else that forms the object of our consciousness. Now it is indeed perfectly correct to say that one must not stop at mere being. Still, it is thoughtless to regard the remaining contents of our consciousness as existing so to speak *alongside* and *outside* of being or as something that is there merely *in addition* to it. By contrast, the true relationship here is that being as such is not something fixed and ultimate but, rather, that it changes over dialectically into its opposite, which, likewise taken immediately, is *nothing*. Thus it remains true in the end that being is the first pure thought, and that whatever else may be made the beginning (whether the ‘ $I = I$ ’, the absolute indifference, or God himself),

it is at first only something represented and not something thought, and that in terms of its thought contents it is only being after all.

§ 87

Now this pure being is a *pure abstraction* and thus the *absolutely negative* which, when likewise taken immediately, is *nothing*.

1. The second definition of the absolute, namely that it is *nothing*, followed from this. This conclusion is, indeed, entailed by saying that the thing-in-itself is the undetermined, utterly devoid of form and therefore of content. So, too, if it is said that God *is simply* the *supreme being* and nothing else, then he is being declared, as such, to be the very same negativity. The *nothing* that *Buddhists* make the principle of everything and the ultimate end and goal of everything is the same abstraction. – 2. When the opposition is expressed in this immediate way as one of *being* and *nothing*, it seems all too evident that it is null and void for one not to try to fix [upon some determinate sense of] being and to save it from this transition. In this respect, thinking the matter over is bound to fall prey to looking for a fixed determination for being through which it would be differentiated from nothing. For instance, one may take it to be what persists in all change, the infinitely determinable *matter* and so forth, or again, without thinking it through, to be any given *individual* concrete existence [*einzelne Existenz*], the next best sensory or spiritual entity. However, none of these further and more concrete determinations leave being as *pure being*, as it is here immediately in the beginning. It is *nothing* only in and because of this pure indeterminacy, something *inexpressible*; its difference from nothing is a mere *opinion* [*eine bloße Meinung*]. – We are concerned here exclusively with the consciousness of these beginnings, namely that they are nothing but these empty abstractions and that each of them is as empty as the other. The *drive* to find in being or in both a fixed meaning is the very *necessity* that expands [*weiterführt*] being and nothing and gives them a true, i.e. concrete meaning. This development is the logical elaboration and the progression presented in what follows. The process of *thinking them over* that *finds* deeper determinations for them is the logical thinking by means of which these determinations produce themselves, not in a contingent but in

a necessary manner. – Each subsequent meaning they receive is therefore to be regarded only as a *more specific determination* and a *truer definition of the absolute*. Such a definition will then no longer be an empty abstraction like being and nothing, but rather something concrete in which both being and nothing are moments. – The highest form of nothingness for itself would be *freedom*, but freedom is the negativity that deepens itself within itself to the point of the utmost intensity and is itself affirmation, and absolute affirmation at that.

Addition. Being and nothing are at first only *supposed* to be distinguished, i.e. their difference is at first only *in itself*, but not yet *posited*. If we talk about a difference at all, then we have *two* and in each case a determination not to be found in the one applies to the other. But being is absolutely devoid of all determination, and nothing is the very same lack of determination. The difference between these two is therefore only intended – the totally abstract difference that is at the same time no difference. In all other cases of distinguishing we always also have something common that subsumes the distinct items under it. For instance, when we speak of two different genera, then the genus is what is common to both. Similarly, we say there are natural and spiritual essences. Here, the essence is something that belongs to both. In the case of being and nothing, however, the difference is bottomless, and precisely for that reason there is none, for both determinations represent the same bottomlessness. Suppose one wanted to say, for instance, that both are after all thoughts, and hence thought is common to both. One would then overlook the fact that being is not a specific, determinate thought but rather the as yet entirely undetermined thought, and for that very reason indistinguishable from nothing. – Again, being may also be represented as absolutely rich and nothing as absolutely poor. But when we regard the entire world and say of it that everything is and nothing further, we leave all determinateness aside and instead of absolute fullness we only retain absolute emptiness. The same comment can be made about its application to the definition of God as mere being. Standing over and against this definition with equal justification is the Buddhist definition that God is nothingness, with its implication that a human being becomes God through self-annihilation.

§ 88

Conversely, *nothing*, as this immediate, self-same [category], is likewise *the same as being*. The truth of being as well as of nothing is therefore the *unity* of both; this unity is *becoming*.

1. The proposition '*Being and nothing are the same*' appears to be such a paradoxical proposition for the *representation* or the understanding that one perhaps believes that it is not meant seriously. And indeed it is one of the hardest thoughts that thinking imposes upon itself, for

being and nothing are the opposite in its complete *immediacy*, that is to say, without there already being *posited* in one of them a determination that would contain its relation to the other. And yet, they *do contain* this determination, as has been demonstrated in the previous section, namely, the determination that is the same in both. The deduction of their *unity* is thus entirely *analytical*, just as in general the whole progression in philosophizing (insofar as it is a methodical, i.e. a *necessary* progression) is nothing other than merely the *positing* of what is already contained in a concept. – But as correct as the unity of being and nothing is, so it is *also* correct that *they are absolutely different*, i.e. that the one is *not* what the other is. However, since at this point the difference has not yet become determinate (for being and nothing are still what is immediate), how it bears on them is something *that cannot be said*, it is something merely *meant* [*die bloße Meinung*].

2. It does not require a great deal of wit to ridicule the proposition that being and nothing are the same, or rather to bring up absurdities with the false assurance that they are the consequences and applications of it; for example, that according to that proposition it would be the same whether my house, my assets, the air we breathe, this city, the sun, right, spirit, God *are* or *not*. For one thing, in examples such as these, *particular purposes* or the *utility* something has for me are surreptitiously introduced, and it is asked whether it makes no difference *to me*, if the useful thing exists or not. Philosophy is indeed just the doctrine that is meant to liberate man from an infinite number of finite purposes and goals, and to make him indifferent to them such that it is indeed all the same to him whether such things are or not. But generally speaking, as soon as we are talking about some *contents*, a connection is thereby posited with *other* concretely existing things, purposes, etc. that are *presupposed* as valid, and it is then made dependent on *such presuppositions*, whether the being or not-being of a *determinate content* is *the same* or *not*. A difference *full of content* is surreptitiously substituted for the empty difference between being and nothing. – But for another thing, purposes that are in themselves essential, absolute concrete existences [*absolute Existenzen*] and ideas are placed under the determination of being or not-being. Such concrete objects are something quite different from mere *beings* or *not-beings*; poor abstractions such as being and nothing (which are the poorest of all just because they are the determinations only of the beginning) are completely inadequate to the nature of those objects; a genuine content has long since transcended these abstractions themselves and their opposition. – In general, if something concrete is surreptitiously substituted for being and nothing, the usual

thing happens to this thoughtlessness, namely it entertains and talks about something quite different from what is at issue. And what is at issue here is merely abstract being and nothing.

3. It can easily be said that one does not *comprehend* the unity of being and nothing. The concept of it, however, was stated in the preceding sections, and it is nothing over and above what has been stated. Comprehending it means nothing other than apprehending this. But by 'comprehending', something broader than the concept proper is understood. A more manifold, richer consciousness, a representation is demanded, with the result that a concept of this sort is put forward as a concrete case with which thinking in its ordinary routine would be more familiar. To the extent that the inability to comprehend expresses only that one is unaccustomed to holding onto abstract thoughts without any sensory input and to grasping speculative sentences, there is nothing further to be said than this, namely that philosophical knowledge [*Wissen*] is indeed of a different sort from the kind of knowledge one is accustomed to in ordinary life, as it also is from what reigns in other sciences. If, however, the inability to comprehend means only that one is unable to *represent* this unity of being and nothing to oneself, then this is in fact so little the case that to the contrary everybody possesses infinitely many representations of this unity. That one does not possess such representations can mean only that one fails to recognize the concept under discussion in any of those representations and that one does not know that they are examples of it. The example that comes most readily to mind is that of *becoming*. Everybody has a representation of becoming and will equally admit that it is *one* representation; further, that when one analyses it the determination of *being*, but also that of its absolute other, *nothing*, is contained therein; furthermore, that these two determinations exist undivided in this *one* representation, so that becoming is thereby the unity of being and nothing. – Another example equally ready to hand is that of the *beginning*. The basic matter *is not yet* in its beginning, but the beginning is not merely its *nothing* either; rather *being* is already contained therein. The beginning is itself also a becoming, but it already expresses the relation to the further progression. – If one wanted to follow the usual procedure of the sciences, one might start the Logic with the representation of the beginning thought in its purity, i.e. with the beginning qua beginning, and to analyse this representation. Perhaps one would then more easily accept as the result of this analysis that being and nothing show themselves as undivided in a single thought [*in Einem ungetrennt*].

4. In addition, we must further note that the expressions 'Being and nothing are *the same*' or '*the unity* of being and nothing' and similarly all other such *unities* (e.g. that of subject and object [*Objekt*], and so on) are rightly objectionable. The awkwardness and incorrectness lies in the fact that the *unity* is emphasized, and while the difference [*Verschiedenheit*] is indeed contained in it (because the unity posited is one of being and nothing, for instance), this difference is not simultaneously stated and acknowledged. Instead, it seems that one is merely abstracting illegitimately from it and not taking it into consideration. Indeed, a speculative determination cannot properly be expressed in the form of such a proposition: unity is supposed to be articulated *in* the difference that is simultaneously *present* and *posited*. As their unity, *becoming* is the true expression of the result of being and nothing. It is not only the *unity* of being and nothing, but the *unrest* in itself – the unity that as relation to itself is not merely immobile, but is within itself against itself on account of the difference of being and nothing contained in it. – *Existence* [*Dasein*] is, by contrast, this *unity*, or becoming in this form of unity; this is why existence is *one-sided* and *finite*. It is as if the opposition had disappeared. It is contained in the unity only *in itself*, but not *posited* in the unity.
5. Standing in contrast to the proposition that being is the transitioning into nothing and nothing the transitioning into being (this being the principle of *becoming*) is the proposition that '*Nothing comes from nothing*' or 'something can only come from something', i.e. the proposition of the eternity of matter, pantheism. The ancients made the simple reflection that the proposition 'something comes from something' or 'nothing comes from nothing' does indeed sublimate becoming. For that out of which something comes to be and that which comes to be are one and the same. There is nothing here but a proposition of the identity of the abstract understanding. It must strike one as curious, however, to see the propositions 'nothing comes from nothing' or 'something comes only from something' put forward quite naïvely even in our times with neither any awareness that they are the foundation of pantheism, nor any familiarity with the fact that the ancients considered these propositions quite exhaustively.

Addition. Becoming is the first concrete thought and thus the first concept, whereas being and nothing are empty abstractions. When we talk about the concept of being, the latter can consist only in becoming, since as being it is the empty nothing and as such the empty being. In being, then, we have nothing and in it being. This being, however, that persists in being with itself in nothing is

becoming. In the unity of becoming, the difference [*Unterschied*] must not be left out, for without it one would return to abstract being. Becoming is merely the positedness [*das Gesetzsein*] of what being truly is.

One very often hears the claim that thinking is opposed to being. In the face of such an affirmation, however, it should first be asked what we are to understand by being. When we take up being as it is determined by reflection, the only thing we can say about it is that it is the absolutely identical and affirmative. If we then consider thinking, it cannot escape us that at the very least it is likewise absolutely identical to itself. To both being and thinking, then, the same determination applies. This identity of being and thinking must, however, not be taken in a concrete sense, and hence one is not to say that a stone that has being is the same as a thinking human being. Something concrete is quite different from the abstract determination as such. But in the case of being, there is no talk of anything concrete, for being is precisely what is entirely abstract. Accordingly, the question concerning the being of God who is in himself infinitely concrete, is also of little interest.

As the first concrete determination of thought, becoming is also at the same time the first true determination of thought. In the history of philosophy, it is the system of Heraclitus that corresponds to this stage of the logical Idea. When Heraclitus says 'Everything is in flux' (πάντα ῥεῖ), becoming is thereby pronounced to be the fundamental determination of all there is, whereas the Eleatics by contrast, as mentioned earlier, construed being alone – rigid being, devoid of any process – as true. With reference to the principle of the Eleatics Democritus later comments: 'Being is no more than not-being' (οὐδὲν μᾶλλον τὸ ὄν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος ἐστί). He thereby expresses the negativity of abstract being and its identity, posited in becoming, with a nothing that is equally untenable in its abstraction. – At the same time we have here an example of the true refutation of one philosophical system by another, a refutation that consists precisely in exhibiting the dialectic of the principle of the refuted philosophy and in downgrading this principle to an ideal moment in a higher, more concrete form of the idea. – But furthermore, becoming, too, is in and for itself as yet a supremely impoverished determination that has to further deepen and fulfil itself in itself. We have such a deepening of becoming within itself in, for instance, *life*. The latter is a becoming, but its concept is not exhausted by this. We find becoming in an even higher form in *spirit*. Spirit is likewise a becoming, but a more intensive, richer one than the merely logical becoming. The moments whose unity is spirit are not the mere abstractions of being and nothing, but the system of the logical idea and nature.

b. Existence

§ 89

The being in becoming, as one with nothing, and the nothing that is likewise one with being are only vanishing [moments]. Due to its inner