

DIETER HENRICH

BEGINNING AND METHOD OF (THE) LOGIC¹

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A commentary on Hegel's *Logic*² that could be compared with the works of Cornford, Ross, Vaihinger, or Paton remains as yet unwritten. Even Hegel's own followers [*Hegels eigene Schule*] undertook no attempt to analyze, in their specificity, the derivations of the work's speculative thought-determinations [*spekulativen Gedankenbestimmungen*]. In a manner that still prevails today, the Hegelian school limited itself to the path of grasping a view of the whole [*den Gang des Ganzen ins Auge zu fassen*], seeking to execute variations on Hegel's theses and to make them easier to understand, by referring backwards and forwards in the text [*durch Rückverweise und Vorblicke*]. Alternative interpretations of difficult passages, between which one could make a reasoned decision, were nowhere developed. Two observations follow from this: on the one hand, that the scope of such an *interpretative* endeavor is extremely broad, based as it is solely upon the impressions of the individual reader [*einem solche Verfahren der Impression des Verstehenden*]; on the other hand, that the arguments of its *critics* cannot find a sufficiently definite point of departure, and are therefore forced, like its interpreters, to address only the system as a whole [*sich... allein dem Ganzen des Systems zuzuwenden*]. The interpretation and the critique of Hegel can hardly be brought into a fruitful relationship in this manner.

The only exception on this uneven balance sheet is the debate over the beginning of the *Science of Logic* and the development of its first three categories. Within Hegel's own lifetime, his followers [*Schüler*] came into a dispute with his opponents [*Gegnern*] over the question of the meaning of the strange formulation [*Sinn der fremdlichen Rede*] that being [*Sein*], as indeterminate immediacy [*unbestimmte Unmittelbarkeit*], must equally be thought of as nothing [*Nichts*], and that both, insofar as each vanishes into its opposite [*jeweils in ihrem Gegenteil verschwinden*], have their truth in the thought of becoming [*Werden*].

It appears, at first, that the difficulties of understanding this beginning are minor when compared to those arising from later deductions, especially those of the logic of the determinations of reflection [*Logik der Reflexionsbestimmungen*]. These latter seem to be in much greater need of commentary, because they place much higher

demands on the faculty of abstraction. Anyone who has understood the determinations of reflection may well be inclined to the opinion [*Meinung*] that the logic of the beginning is elementary, and barely problematic in the formal sense. To such a reader, the fixation of interest on this beginning will seem the sign of a lack of familiarity with Hegel's logic, and of an archaic, merely developmental stage of its interpretation.

This appearance is not unjustified. However, it does not correspond to the problematic of logic in its entire scope. It is true that the logic of reflection, because of the peculiar and intricate interconnection [*eigentümlichen Verschränkung*] of all of its determinations, poses great difficulty to interpretation—Hegel himself called it the most difficult part of the logic.³ But its beginning contains difficulties of a quite different and in a certain sense opposite kind. These difficulties result precisely from this unmediated transition [*unvermittelten Übergang*] from being to nothing, and from the lapidary brevity with which this transition is enacted [*vollzogen*]. It is not easy to properly grasp the nature of this transition, nor to understand the means [*Mittel*] by which Hegel grounded [*begründet*] his reasoning. Only because of the beginning's difficulty was it possible for such a remarkable number of apparently plausible objections to be presented, by which Hegel's conservative followers were placed in no slight degree of embarrassment [*Verlegenheit*].

Whatever their own reasons may have been, the singular interest shown by the Hegelian school for this first chapter of the *Logic* is justified not only on the basis of its particular structure, but moreover its exceptional methodological significance [*ausgezeichnete methodische Bedeutung*]. That is, whereas the logic of reflection [*Reflexionslogik*] is susceptible to immanent interpretation [*immanente Deutung*], the logic of pure being can only be understood if one considers several lessons [*Lehrstücke*] from an entirely different context. The interpretation of this beginning can only be achieved by looking at the overall context [*Gesamtzusammenhang*], and the method of development of pure thought-determinations, and not by restricting itself to the well-known thesis of the retroactive explanation [*rückläufigen Begründung*] of the logic's beginning from the perspective of its conclusion. The following paper demonstrates in which sense this is the case.

This must be done in two ways. The first of them deals with the different forms of critique that have been made of Hegel's doctrine [*Lehre*] of the unity of being and nothing [*Einheit von Sein und Nichts*]. In so doing, we prepare the way for the second, which tries to precisely determine the meaning [*Sinn*] of that doctrine, and the arguments upon which Hegel established it [*Begründung gegeben*].⁴

1. Critique of the beginning

One has to distinguish between two basic forms of critique of the beginning of the logic. The first purports to adopt Hegel's own standpoint [*Standpunkt*] and to show that no progression [*Fortschritt*] of thought is possible from this point, particularly not to the unity of being and nothing. The goal of this line of critique, finally, is to

prove that the speculative dialectic is not a tenable method. The second thinks that, for the sake of the logical consistency of the system [*um der Konsequenz des Systems*], the precise shape [*Gestalt*] that Hegel gave to the dialectic of the beginning must be given up [*preisgeben*].⁵ This latter view is shared by almost all the students and successors of Hegel, albeit for different and often opposing reasons. We will call it the positive critique (B), distinguishing it from the negative critique of the speculative method's opponents (A).

A. The negative critique was elaborated by [Adolf] Trendelenburg and Eduard von Hartmann in particular.⁶ The former's *Logical Investigations*, published as early as 1840, proved very effective despite its few convincing arguments.⁷ Openly or discreetly, they were taken into account by most of the disciples of Hegel and, as regards the critique of the logic of being, they were universally recognized, with the sole exception of Michelet. But Trendelenburg developed only one of the three objections that can be brought forward against Hegel's doctrine of being and nothing from this point of view. The subsequent objections proceed in the following manner:

If we assume, with Hegel, that the notion of indeterminate immediacy must be the beginning of the logic, it can not be understood how this must be thought of as the passing over of being and nothing into one another. For if we assume that being and nothing are really distinguishable from one another, then they are either (1) *two aspects*, in one and the same thought-determination, of "indeterminate immediacy," in which they can be distinguished, and *from* which they must at the same time be distinguished, or (2) *two different thoughts* which share by the characteristic of being indeterminate and immediate, but which must remain distinguished from each other. If, on the other hand, we assume that being and nothing can *not* be distinguished from one another, then (3) both are merely different names for a single thing, which is to be understood as an indeterminate immediacy.—In none of the three cases can a transition from being to nothing or from nothing into being be asserted.

In Hegel's sense, these objections can only be countered with the concession which they themselves make: namely, that in the context of a speculative logic, thought must begin with the first and simplest [*erste und einfachste*], and that this thought must be that of indeterminate immediacy.

1. The first objection states that being and nothing are actually mutually opposed [*einander entgegengesetzte*] aspects of a single indeterminate immediacy, which is [*ist*] insofar as it is posited as such [*überhaupt gesetzt ist*], and which is nothing [*ist Nichts*] insofar as it is posited without any further determination [*ohne jede weiterer Bestimmung*]. But if that were the case, this indeterminate immediacy would not be able to be what Hegel says it must: the beginning [*Anfang*]. It would not be immediate, but rather posited, namely as form (even without any content) or as a thing (even without any property). Indeterminate immediacy would then be a reflected [*reflektierte*] determination, and consequently could not be properly defined as an

originary [*anfängliche*] determination.⁸ But being and nothing are *not* to be thought of as moments of a determined reflection. If we intend to think nothing [*meinen wir Nichts*], we do not mean emptiness of content [*Leersein von Gehalt*] such that form could still be, for in this case it would precisely not be nothing [*somit gerade nicht Nichts*]. If we intend to think being, we do not mean something indispensable for thought [*Nichtwegdenkbares*] before any content, which can be sublated, for in this case being would only be there [*Sein nur dort wäre*] to the extent that the nothing of its contentless emptiness [*Nichts seiner Leere*] was *also* thought.

This is why Hegel believes that being and nothing do not have the opposite of themselves as moments of reflection. Instead, they must transition into one another [*ineinander übergehen*], without any substance. The thought of being is supposed to contain the *whole* indeterminate immediacy. And so long as it is thought of as nothing, it is equally thought of as *whole*. Therefore, one cannot say that being is closer determined as nothing, or that being crosses over into its *opposite*, which is nothing; because being and nothing are not opposed to each other. They are the same [*dasselbe*], and they are just as much different, but absolutely different, meaning that they are without any relation [*Beziehung*] to one another. If such a relation were to be demonstrated [*aufzuweisen*], then not only would they not be determinations of indeterminate immediacy [*keine Bestimmungen der unbestimmten Unmittelbarkeit*], they would not even themselves be immediate determinations at all: on the contrary, each would be mediated by its other. Therefore, either being and nothing are something other than aspects of indeterminate immediacy, or this immediacy cannot serve as the beginning of the logic, and can no more be thought of as indeterminate as being and nothing can be thought of as immediate.

2. The second objection asserts that “indeterminate immediacy” is the generic concept [*Oberbegriff*] of both being and nothing, which remain distinguishable from one another. But here, too, one is compelled to take away the immediate character both from this generic concept, as well as from being and nothing, to determine them as opposed to one another, and thus to mediate them. This objection can therefore be countered by the same response that Hegel offers to the first; it is therefore not necessary to go into it in any more detail.

3. The third objection already by which the first two objections are to be countered. According to this thought, at the beginning of the logic an affirmation and a negation—both without any relation [*beziehungslose*—are differentiated from one another. The objection states that this is only difference between mere *words* [*bloßen Worten*], the meaning of which is one and the same, namely indeterminate immediacy. Being and nothing differ as *flatūs vocis*,⁹ but in their meaning [*was sie meinen*] the two are identical [*miteinander zu identifizieren*]. According to this objection, the beginning of the logic achieves nothing more than this identification, and therefore does not give rise to any progression in thought.

Hegel would have been able to turn this critique against the critics themselves. For it is a form of begging the question [*petitio principii*] to argue that this “indeter-

minate immediacy” can itself be thought of in its entirety, without the use of such conceptual determinations as unrelated [*beziehungslose*] being and nothing. The notion of “indeterminate immediacy” already points to the fact that this concept must be defined by an affirmative and by a negative moment. The logic had attempted to show that this can only be done by means of the thoughts of “being” and “nothing.” If we do not try to show in what *other* way the rhetoric [*Rede*] of indeterminate immediacy receives a well-defined meaning, we use a mere word [*ein bloßes Wort*] which only gives a vague sense [*Ahnung*] of a thought, without it having in fact been thought in itself [*ohne ihn selbst gedacht zu haben*]. We thereby name only one word with the words “being” and “nothing.” In this case it is not surprising if they remain nothing but mere words for us.

It could be demonstrated that these objections, together with their refutation, are the only ones it is possible to make at a fundamental level. Here, however, it is only a question of revising the principle underlying them. The objections all want to distinguish between the thought of indeterminate immediacy and the opposition being/nothing, and therefore, first of all, separate them from one another in order to relate them, as an aspect of the thing and as the thing itself [*Sache selbst*]; as a concept and as a case of its application; as word and as meaning. And they are all disproved, simultaneously, if it is shown that this thought loses the character of immediacy, and thus all well-defined character. The justification of the logic of being can therefore only take place with regard to its place in the *Science of Logic*: whoever changes the structure of its dialectic must, of necessity, take away its position as beginning.

The refutation of these objections can thus be taken as the first step toward the proof of a proposition which will be presupposed as a *thesis* in the following considerations: that the logic of pure being can only be explained, *via negationis*, in terms of its differentiation [*Unterscheidung*] from the logic of reflection.

B. The followers of Hegel had no adequate idea [*Vorstellung*] of such a method of justification [*Begründungsverfahren*]. It is therefore not surprising that they either discovered the objections themselves, or that they considered them irrefutable after they had been brought forward by opponents. All speculative logics—of which the first appeared in 1826 and the last in 1876—have two things in common with respect to their relation to Hegel’s logic of being: they are, without exception, convinced that it is with the thought of “being” [*mit dem Gedanken “Sein”*] that the beginning of logic must be made. Similarly without exception, they depart from Hegel in the manner in which they unfold the dialectic of the beginning. In the majority of cases, this is done with great care, bearing in mind the previous critiques. Changes to the logic of being were often justified by the necessity of giving logical science a different meaning from Hegel’s, and of denying it the character of being the science of the Absolute itself. This is the case in speculative theism, and subsequent theories of Ulrici and Rosenkranz, who were already preparing the way for Neo-Kantianism. But defenders of Hegel, such as Michelet, also found themselves inclined to reinterpret—or to change the meaning of [*umzudeuten*]

ing. Given their quiet, tacit [*stillschweigend*] approach, and the fact that they were often cloaked in the apparent intention [*Meinung*] of merely interpreting Hegel's text, these arguments were particularly unpersuasive.

All these attempts—those of the reformers and those of the orthodox—are exposed to the same response to the objections of the opponents: they cause the first category of the logic to lose the character of immediacy. They differ from each other only by the way in which they bring about this mediation. If we ignore their peculiarities and focus only their method, four approaches to the Hegelian reinterpretation of the logic of being arise:

1. The first of them is found in Werder, Ulrici, and Karl Philipp Fischer.¹⁰ They argue, in agreement, that the beginning of the logic cannot be a mere lowly determination [*arme Bestimmung*] but only the principle of the whole. Hegel had this principle in mind when he spoke of the unity of being and nothing. Thus Ulrici says that being as the beginning is that which is “indispensable” [*Unwegdenkbares*]; however, this is not an abstract being, but *is* only by means of its unity with nothing. For the thought of nothing shows first of all that in being there is a “determination by itself” [*Bestimmung durch sich*], and thus necessity [*Notwendigkeit*]. For the thought of nothing [*Gedanke des Nichts*] is also the negation of itself. If there is nothing [*Wenn Nichts ist*], then that is not the determinateness [*nicht jene Bestimmtheit*] that we think when we intend to think nothing [*wenn wir Nichts meinen*]. Thus, it is not at all nothing [*schlechthin nicht Nichts*], but rather being, which thereby proves itself to be *causa sui*.

Werder, in a similar way, holds being to be the positing of itself; that is, as the negation of all that is not being. And Karl Philipp Fischer is of the opinion that only being as absolute *possibility* of being [*Sein als absolutem Seinkönnen*] makes the transition to becoming, while the transition of abstract being into nothing is said to be irretrievable vanishing [*unwiederbringliches Vergehen sei*].

It is clear that, in this conception, Hegel's own idea of logic, as a theory that reaches its principle only at its end, is inverted into its opposite [*in ihr Gegenteil verkehrt ist*]. This new conception cannot, however, be substantiated in text of the logic; it cannot take the beginning and the first transition as immediate. Rather it must assert that, in being, the opposite of itself is posited. But this is precisely the definition of a determination's being mediated [*Vermitteltsein einer Bestimmung*].

2. The second form of interpretation was developed by Hinrichs and by Kuno Fischer.¹¹ According to this line of interpretation, the dialectic of being results from the difference in which a thought-determination is to be conceived, such that nothing is thought at the same time. According to Kuno Fischer, being, which is a thought, presupposes the difference between being thought [*Gedachtsein*] and thinking [*Denken*]. But at the same time, it should be absolutely indeterminate, undifferentiated thought. Thus it also includes the sublation of precisely that difference, which is the condition of its thinkability [*Voraussetzung seiner Denkbarkeit*]. Being must therefore be both affirmed and denied.

However, this interpretation cannot be carried through, any more than the first, without changing the meaning [*Bedeutung*] and systematic position [*systematische Stellung*] of the logic from the ground up [*von Grund auf*]. If the logic wants to develop the thought-determinations for itself, and each one out of the other [*für sich und auseinander*], then reflection on their being thought [*Gedachtsein*] cannot be regarded as the driving force of their progression [*Movens ihres Fortschrittes*]. This, on the contrary, is the viewpoint of *phenomenological* dialectic. If this phenomenological viewpoint is introduced into the theory of thought-determinations—that is, into logic—then one is already well on the way toward neo-Kantianism has already been made. It may well be that such a step is inevitable. But it certainly cannot furnish an interpretation of the beginning of a logic which still calls itself speculative.¹²

3., 4. The two remaining interpretations are subject to the same objections as have been put forward against the first and second. The third gives rise to the logical systems of Immanuel Hermann Fichte, Rosenkranz, and Michelet.¹³ They grasp the concept of being as an abstraction from all beings [*Seienden*], which they therefore think with the help of ontological difference [*ontologischen Differenz*]. Johann Eduard Erdmann and Christian Hermann Weiße make use of a fourth possibility of interpretation.¹⁴ They take the being of the beginning [*das Sein des Anfangs*] as the copula in judgment [*die Copula im Urteil*].

It is not difficult to show that in these cases too, the concept of supposedly *indeterminate* immediacy is in fact being taken as a reflected determination; namely, as *determined* in opposition to determinate being, or as a concrete unity of subject and predicate. Moreover, the concept of can only be completely defined from the point of a further relationship to the subjective act of thought. Fichte, Weiße, and Rosenkranz prove themselves to be the more important of these successors, in openly confessing this fact, and not shying away from its consequences: a transformation [*Veränderung*], also, of the idea of logic itself. The result of this review of the critique and interpretation of the beginning of the logic can therefore be expressed in the form of an alternative: either one succeeds in interpreting the structure of the beginning of the logic, as distinct from the logic of reflective thought-determinations, and a concept of indeterminate immediacy can be developed; or, reflective moments [*reflektierte Momente*] must be presupposed from the beginning. In the latter case, it is impossible to hold to the idea of logic as a science of pure thought; for in such a science, it was necessary to give a first and absolutely simple determination of ground [*eine erste und schlechthin einfache Grundbestimmung geben*].

Having shown that the successors and critics of Hegel—whether avowedly or merely in practice—took the standpoint of the second of these alternatives, our next task must be to interpret the beginning of the logic, with the help of the guidelines for interpretation established in our theses and in the first of the two alternatives.¹⁵

2. Structure of the beginning

At the beginning of the section on being, in the first chapter of the logic of being, “pure being” is characterized in a series of turns of phrase [*Reihe von Wendungen*] before its unity with nothing is asserted. Some of these phrases have an unmistakably negative character, and evidently serve only to keep away any further determination from the purity of being. If one disregards these, two expressions [*Ausdrücke*] remain through which the concept “being” as such appears to be thought: “indeterminate immediacy” and “identity only with itself” [*Gleichheit nur mit sich*]. These also, in the whole of the logic, designate what is meant by “being.” If there is any way to translate [*übersetzen*] “pure being” into other conceptual determinations [*Begriffsbestimmungen*], then it must be sought in these turns of phrase. If we analyze them, however, we see that what they have in common is the structure of the *via negationis*: in them, a category of reflection [*Kategorie der Reflexion*] is qualified by a determination in which that same reflective character [*Reflexionscharakter*] is supposed to be sublated.

Thus *immediacy* is the negation of mediation, and as such is itself mediated and determined by this concept.¹⁶ Indeterminate immediacy is thus an expression that obscures [*verstellt*] the origin of the thought of immediacy in the logic of reflection, and is inverted into its opposite [*in sein Gegenteil verkehrt*]. Hegel can only mean to show, with this expression, that being is to be conceived differently from the immediacy of essence [*Unmittelbarkeit des Wesens*]. And he clarifies this expressly [*ausdrücklich*]: “Simple immediacy is itself an expression of reflection [*Reflexionsausdruck*]; it refers to the distinction from what is mediated. The *true* expression of this simple immediacy is therefore pure being.”¹⁷

The same applies to the expression *equality with itself* [*Gleichheit mit sich*]. Equality, too, is a determination of reflection, which is developed as one of the modes of difference [*Modi von Verschiedenheit*] in the logic of essence.¹⁸ Here, equality and inequality appear as perspectives on the relation of that which is differentiated [*Gesichtspunkte der Beziehung von Verschiedenem aufeinander*]. Equality can thus only be explained by relation to another, which is itself differentiated. In the second expression at the entrance of the logic of being, however, this essential determination of equality is negated, a negation which Hegel himself implies by speaking of an equality *only* with itself [*Gleichheit nur mit sich*].

Thus only these two determinations, by which the thought “being” is to be expressed in some other way, turn out to be negated reflections. They serve only to clarify the thought that is intended [*gemeint*] by “being,” thereby referring to the fact that it is entirely free of structures of reflection. This occurs because, in this reference, the meaning of the categories of being are inverted and sublated [*verkehrt und aufhebt*]. No other method of explaining the thought of being is available to Hegel.

If, however, the nature of “pure being” can only be brought into view *via negationis*, the beginning of the logic cannot be adequately understood on its own. If one were restricted only to it, one would, inevitably, demand a more detailed definition. This

can be attempted in many ways, albeit within the limits arising from the system of objections in our first path. Hegel was fully aware of this connection. He immediately declares his hand, warning against false interpretations and objections to the beginning until after the study of the logic of reflection is secured: “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.”¹⁹ “This restriction to the simple allows free play to the arbitrariness of thought which will not itself remain simple but brings in its own reflections on the subject. Having good right to occupy itself at first only with the principle and therefore not to let itself be involved in anything else, this industrious thoroughness in fact does the very opposite, for it does bring in the “else,” that is, other categories besides just the principle, extra presuppositions and prejudices.”²⁰

It is particularly important to protect the beginning from such reflections. For, on the one hand, it must be characterized by reflexive expressions, but on the other hand, according to Hegel’s own words, it is “*something unanalyzable* [*ein Nichtanalyzierbares*], taken in its simple, unfilled [*unerfüllten*] immediacy.”²¹

At the same time, he admits that the transition from being to nothing and from nothing into being is not susceptible to any further analysis, and must itself be taken in pure immediacy. “The mode of the connecting reference cannot be further determined without the connected sides being at the same time also further determined.”²² Hegel describes this state of affairs with images: nothing emerges from being; it does not pass into it, but rather has already passed into it [*es geht nicht in es über, sondern ist schon in es übergegangen*].

This transition would, therefore, not be understood in the sense intended by Hegel, if we were to try to interpret it in the following way: We first think of the indeterminate immediacy of pure being. We then notice that we have thought of a completely empty immediacy, and now we designate it as nothing, with regard to its emptiness. The model of this interpretation is the relation of form and content, and thus a structure of reflection. If one wants to construct such a model from the beginning of the logic at all, this is the least appropriate one. For in the form of pure immediacy, Hegel wants to think the unity of position and negation, of relation to itself and relation to other things—the idea [*Idee*] of absolute negativity. Nothing is not the empty form in immediacy, and being is not the form of emptiness. Moreover, nothing can under no circumstances be considered as the negation of being. It is immediate negation, as being is immediate position [*Gesetztsein*]. Formulated in the language of reflection, the beginning of logic, in which at first something is posited, signifies the simple indeterminacy of what is immediate, and then this proposition proves to be the negation, but the pure undefined negation in the form of nothing. It is only with the help of this thought that we can establish the order

in which being is a first, and nothing the second, way of thinking undefined immediacy. Their transition into one another must take place in the same immediacy which is proper to them; that is, without any reflection on form and content, nor any opposition of being and nothing over against one another.

This realization—that it is only this model that can mediate access to the scientific intention toward proof animating Hegel’s logic of being [*Beweisabsicht in Hegels Seinslogik*—does not, however, replace an actual proof [*Beweis*] that would make intelligible the fact that the immediate transition of two things, which are at first distinct [*zweier zunächst Unterscheidbarer*], into one another actually takes place [*wirklich erfolgt*]. But this proof, too, Hegel can only give *via negationis*. In order to give it, he required two procedures.

The first of them gives rise to new misunderstandings. Whereas, in the chapter on being, no reason is given for its transition into nothing, in the preliminary overview [the “General Division of Being”]²³ this transition had been grounded in the categories of reflection: first of all, being is without quality and indeterminate. This character of indeterminateness, however, belongs to it only in contrast to the determinate, so that it nonetheless turns out to have been grasped as determined.

But this procedure has the same meaning [*gleichen Sinn*] that is also associated with the expressions of the concept of pure being: the procedure points to a necessity which anticipates, in an immediate shape [*unmittelbarer Gestalt*], a transition which is itself reflected, and which, therefore, precisely cannot be properly characterized as immediate [*Unmittelbarkeit gerade nicht zukommt*]. In the introductory section to the beginning of the logic, Hegel recognizes a further reason for the consideration given to the conclusion and result [*Ergebnis*] of the *Phenomenology*.²⁴ The logical dialectic itself, however, can only be understood if its beginning is taken in complete immediacy.

The second procedure consists in an invitation [*Aufforderung*—to attempt to differentiate between being and nothing in a different way. Hegel refers to the claim that we can grasp the thought of nothing just as well as that of being, as if it was a fact. He seeks to show that every attempt to think otherwise than the way demanded by the beginning of the logic necessarily brings in the interference of reflective determinations, and thus misses the true nature of pure being and pure nothing. This method is best developed in Hegel’s review in the Berlin *Jahrbuch* of 1829.²⁵

Hegel’s method at the beginning of the logic is therefore the opposite of a construction. It has one sole purpose: to make evident the connection [*Zusammenhang*] between thoughts; this connection, despite its speculative nature, eludes all construction. If the logic would indicate this connection without taking into account the difficulties of understanding, this could only be done with the simple utterance of the words “being” and “nothing.” Hegel himself once considered whether a procedure [*Verfahren*] could be used, in logic, in which all anticipation of not-yet deduced determinations would be omitted. With respect to the emptiness and simplicity of the beginning, however, he recognized it as too abstract and therefore useless.²⁶ But

what logic can do as a discipline of science, beyond the simple saying of the beginning, is no more than to refute the objections [*Einwürfe zu entkräften*] to the simple enforcement [*Vollzug*] of this “unanalyzable” thought. Nowhere is the demand for pure thinking, which is observation by nature [*das die Natur des Zusehens hat*], as indispensable as it is here. Hegel always had the clearest sense of the difficulty that lay in wait at this beginning of logic: that the only evidence that can be adduced for it must itself be in the form of pure, simple thought—evidence which, moreover, can only be held in mind by one with an overview of all the connections of the system as a whole. This difficulty makes it impossible to refute objections by direct reason, and is therefore a source of irreversible ambiguity. There is, however, no way to avoid it. For this reason, Hegel never questioned the correctness of his presentation [*Darstellung*] of the logic of being *via negationis*.

It is well known that the new edition of the first volume of the *Logic* [1832] was Hegel’s last published work, and that these are therefore the last words written in his hand. Hegel thought that, almost twenty years after their first appearance, it was necessary to rework almost all essential parts of the logic of being. It is interesting to note, however, that the logic of pure being was the *only one* adopted without any change in this new edition. We certainly know that Hegel himself was acquainted with at least some of the objections to his doctrine [*Lehrstück*].²⁷ Not only did he fail to acknowledge these objections, he did not see any need to improve upon the text of the first edition in response to them.

He did, however, thoroughly rework the Remarks [*Anmerkungen*] appended to the main text. Comparing the two versions, it becomes clear that Hegel was convinced of the impossibility of securing [*abzusichern*] the text itself against the objections to it.²⁸ In the second edition, in contrast to the first, he refrained from countering these objections one by one. Instead, he emphasized the difference between the logic of being and the determinations of reflection even more clearly than before.

In this context, it is particularly interesting to note one change that does affect the transition from being to nothing. In the first edition²⁹

Hegel had remarked that the progress of thought [*Gang des Gedankens*] from Parmenides to Heraklitos³⁰ had come about through the latter’s reflection that the former’s concept of pure being is identical with nothing [*dessen reines Sein gleich Nichts ist*]. But Hegel later, in his *History of Philosophy*, brought this progression under a different rule than that of the logic’s originary thought-determinations [*anfängliche Gedankenbestimmungen*], and thereby came into contradiction with his own interpretation of Presocratic philosophy.³¹ In the second edition of the *Logic*, Hegel retained the Remarks reflecting upon the determinate character of immediacy; he erased, however, his relationship to Parmenides.³² In his place he put the philosopher of reflection [*Reflexionsphilosoph*], Jacobi, who had sought to establish the validity of pure immediacy against the Kantian synthesis; however, Jacobi’s is not that originary immediacy [*anfängliche Unmittelbarkeit*] of Parmenides, but rather one which can only be imagined as a product of abstract reflection. Hegel wants to

prove, contra Jacobi, that the result of his abstractions is not an indeterminate immediacy, but is rather determined through the negation of what is abstracted [*durch die Negation dessen bestimmt ist, von dem abstrahiert wird*]. Its abstract immediacy is thus also a negative [*ein Negatives*].

This proof, which can be reached via the method of the dialectic of reflection [*Mitteln der Reflexionsdialektik*], must be distinguished from the dialectic of pure being itself, by which the path [*Weg*] of Presocratic philosophy was defined. In Hegel's *History of Philosophy*, Heraklitos is said to succeed Parmenides, but not because the former reflected upon the determinateness and emptiness of the Eleatics' concept of pure being. Rather, Hegel argues, Heraklitos saw that this pure being could in no way be distinguished from the unthought of nothing [*Ungedanke des Nichts*], which the Eleatics had wanted simply to banish [*verbannen*] from all thought.³³

Heraklitos thus thought the first concrete thought, and did so with the immediacy which Hegel also invokes as the beginning of his own logic, in the transition from pure being to nothing: the thought of indeterminate immediacy, first taken as pure being, can only be thought of as reflectionless identity with itself [*reflexionslose Gleichheit mit sich*] if it is also, on the contrary [*statt dessen*], grasped just as much as nothing [*ebenso sehr als Nichts gefaßt*]. Any attempt to further determine the nature of this relationship would of necessity corrupt and dissipate its originary character [*ihr anfänglicher Charakter zerstört*].

The result of this analysis of the beginning in our two paths has a series of consequences for the interpretation of logic in its overall context. These can only be stated in the form of theses:

1. The science of logic [*Die Wissenschaft der Logik*] must be distinguished from the process of logical thought determinations. This process takes the form of a unidirectional [*einsinnige*] development. The science of it is, however, a mode of the actuality of spirit [*Geist*]. In many cases, it can only be developed in a retroactive manner and with a view to the whole. We need a methodology of these conceptions, which would have the character of a "metalogic." One of their most important achievements would be a comparison of the second with the first edition of the *Logic*, which latter should have been re-issued long ago.
2. The immediacy of the initial determinations is, indeed, worked up into more complex structures which are more transparent to reflection. However, it is never abolished as the beginning of the whole, and can never be adequately interpreted by those subsequent structures. The conclusion of the system must, on the contrary, justify the insight into the necessity of the beginning in inexorable immediacy.
3. Neither is it permissible, therefore, to look for the *Logic's* "real" center [*>eigentliches< Zentrum*] and the motor of its process in any of its later chapters—neither in the doctrine of reflection, nor in that of judgment

[*Urteil*] or of syllogism [*Schluß*].

4. The attempt to formalize logic in these contexts may be especially difficult—if not impossible—to achieve.

5. There is no way of substituting, in logic, for a reference to the evidence that being and nothing are conceivable, and yet indistinguishable, some other argument which would not require the *via negationis* for its justification. In this evidence, the groundless, original unity of the negative with itself is experienced. It is, therefore, one of the foundations of any possible certainty of the absoluteness of spirit.³⁴

But whoever is able to think being and nothing in their immediacy—and yet differently from that indistinguishable unity [*jener ununterscheidbaren Einheit*—will have thereby only responded to a demand [*Aufforderung*] that Hegel himself repeatedly expressed anew [*immer wieder aufs Neue ausgesprochen*]. If we could achieve this, we would prove Hegel successful in having thought back [*zurückzudenken*] to a ground of logic, without having had to go beyond logic itself. Hegel's followers made such an attempt. It must be acknowledged that it was justified, even if it failed in every way. From the reasons for this failure we, too, still have much to learn.

Notes

1. Original: 'Anfang und Methode der Logik,' in *Hegel im Kontext*, revised edition (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971 [1967]), pp.73-94. The author's bibliographical notice (p.209) explains that the paper was first delivered as a lecture to the Heidelberger Hegeltage in 1962, and first published in 1963 in *Hegelstudien*, Beiheft 1, ed. H.-G. Gadamer (Hamburg: Meiner) pp.19-35. The dates of publication (and republication) are particularly significant given the paper's claim that "nothing truly new has been added" to the commentary on Hegel's logic since the nineteenth century (see n.4, below). Given the extreme interpretative difficulties posed, not only by the nuances of Hegel's own terminology, but furthermore by Henrich's detailed treatment of it, we have included more interpolations of original German terms than would normally be necessary. We hope the infelicities of style thereby produced are outweighed by the clarity added. Translators' footnotes are denoted by [Trans.]; all others are Henrich's, except that where possible we have added references to English translations of the German texts cited. In the case of the nineteenth-century scholarship on the *Logic*, this is tellingly impossible due to the complete lack of translation of these works - evidence of the *Vergessenheit* into which Henrich characterizes these important studies as having passed (see, again, n.4 below). Sincere thanks for assistance in producing this translation are due to Isabell Dahms, Dieter Henrich, Daniel Leblanc and André Möller; to Nick Stang for providing the situation and the impetus for it, in the form of a seminar on Hegel's *Science of Logic* at the University of Toronto Philosophy Department, Fall term 2017; and to the Centre for Comparative Literature at UofT for support both financial and moral. [Trans.]

2. We have followed Henrich's select italicizations of the title of Hegel's book, (*The Science of) Logic*; references to "Logik" (without italics) are rendered simply as "(the) logic," as

context demands. Evidently, this includes the title of Henrich's paper itself, some of whose ambiguity of reference we have tried to capture. [Trans.]

3. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, §114; *Encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences in basic outline. Part 1, Science of logic*, trans. Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) §114, p.176.

4. In the following, initial contribution to a commentary on the logic (which has yet to be written in its entirety), only the literature of the nineteenth century is considered. This restriction is justified not only by the fact that this literature is today largely forgotten. Moreover, it had already developed so completely the elementary forms of the objections to Hegel that, since then, nothing truly new has been added to them.

5. A perhaps telling ambiguity presents itself here: *preisgeben* can mean both to give up, in the sense of surrender or abandonment, and to deliver up (e.g. the secret of something), in the sense of elucidation. In this context, the two meanings seem opposed: either interpretation seeks to elucidate the specific shape of Hegel's opening dialectic, or it accepts that this shape must be abandoned. The latter is the intended meaning here: see (B), below, in which the positive interpreters of the logic's opening are characterized as "depart[ing] from Hegel in the manner [that is, the shape] in which they unfold the dialectic of the beginning." Like other ambiguities, however, this one remains suggestive of the centrality of such interpretative decisions in any reading of (the) logic. [Trans.]

6. A. Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Berlin: Bethge Verlag, 1840), Book A, p.31 ff. E. V. Hartmann, *Die dialektische Methode* (Berlin: Duncker, 1868; 2nd ed. Bad Sachsa, Südharz: Haacke, 1910) p.78 (in both editions).

7. On Trendelenburg's response to the "identity crisis" in German philosophy after Hegel, including the significance of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, see Chapter 1, Part 2 ("Trendelenburg's *Philosophia Perennis*") in Frederick C. Beiser, *After Hegel: German Philosophy, 1840–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) p.19 ff. On Eduard von Hartmann's—uniquely, *not* neo-Kantian—response to Hegel, see Part 6 of that same chapter ('Eduard von Hartmann's Metaphysics of the Sciences'), in Beiser, p.45 ff. [Trans.]

8. The German adjective *anfänglich*, denoting initial, something which begins or has the character of (a) beginning, has no precise, single English correlate: both "initial" and "original" fail to capture the active, decisive—even arguably performative—nature of the beginning of (the) logic, and of beginning as such. The distinction is important to bear in mind: the *Anfang* is precisely not the *Ursprung* (a much-beloved concept of the Romantics, from which Hegel largely kept his distance), in the sense that the former involves a decision [*Entschluss*—an act—whereas the passive, pre- and over-determined objectivity (including, of course, an object located in deep obscurity, even fantasy) of the latter is attested to by the fact that *Ursprung* cannot take an active, verbal form without the help of an auxiliary. This is particularly important in the context of the *Logic*'s preoccupation with the proper beginning of science, which as Henrich notes is methodologically and epistemologically (because logically) foundational to Hegel's whole system; see in particular the last of the *Logic*'s many, near-interminable introductions, "With what must the beginning of science be made?," the verbal form here accentuating even further the *making* [*machen*] involved in beginning—the construction and performance of an act, the taking and making of a decision. Interestingly, the grammatical situation is asymmetrically inverted in English: while one can be said to originate, to locate or constitute something original or originary, and to act originally or even originarily, the verb "begin" has no cor-

responding adjectival or adverbial forms. Given this lack, we have been forced to slip back from beginning to origin, but have chosen to translate *anfänglich* as “originary,” in order to highlight this decisive, performative aspect of *anfangen* and *Anfang*, beyond the mere, opaque denotation of *Ursprung*. Cf Frank Ruda & Rebecca Comay, *The Dash—the Other Side of Absolute Knowing* (Cambridge / London: MIT University Press, 2018), on the centrality of decision to Hegel’s “philosophy of *Entschluss*, of resolve,” (p.108), particularly the Epilogue (pp.107-112) which cites a poem written by the young Hegel called “*Entschluss*” (1801). Ruda, in his chapter “Hegel’s First Words” (pp.87-105), makes extensive reference to Henrich’s “*Anfang und Methode der Logik*.” [Trans.]

9. Latin, literally “the breath of the voice”—Henrich is referring to the doctrine of medieval nominalists such as Roscellinus, which held that universals are merely words or “voices” (*voce*s), and have no other ontological status as “things” (*res*). Wilfrid Sellars has noted of this doctrine—“often regarded as nonsensical”—that it nonetheless has a (so to speak) “sound core” in the proto-Wittgensteinian “conception of predicates as auxiliary symbols.” See Wilfrid Sellars, ‘Reply to Quine’ in *Essays in Philosophy and Its History* (New York: Springer, 2012 [1974]), p.159. In this context, we are inevitably reminded of Hegel’s demonstration, in the Sense Certainty chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), that even the flattest, “simplest” and most apparently immediate of utterances – “this,” “here” or “now”—always entail reference to a universal *beyond* the supposedly “immediate” (and therefore in fact mediated) “certainty” of sense perception. [Trans.]

10. K. Werder, *Logik. Als Kommentar und Ergänzung zu Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik* (Berlin, 1841) p.41. H. Ulrici, *Ober Prinzip und Methode der Hegelschen Philosophie* (Halle, 1841) p. 83 ff. K. P. Fischer, *Spekulative Charakteristik und Kritik des Hegelschen Systems*, (Erlangen, 1845). K. P. Fischer, *Grundzüge des Systems der Philosophie* (Erlangen, 1848), Book 1, p.59.

11. H. F. W. Hinrichs, *Grundlinien der Philosophie der Logik* (Halle, 1826). K. Fischer, *Logik und Metaphysik oder Wissenschaftslehre* (Stuttgart, 1852; 2nd edn, 1865), p.21 ff.

12. Here we must make reference to the interpretation of Bertrando Spaventa, which emerged from a combination of the ideas of K. Fischer and those of Werder, and to which Italian Actualism, especially that of Gentile, directly returns. Spaventa recognizes with K. Fischer that Trendelenburg’s objections can only be overcome if one understands the beginning of the logic from the notion of thinking. (‘Le prime categorie della logica di Hegel,’ in the *Atti della Accademia delle scienze morale di Napoli*, [1864], and others in: *Scritti filosofici*, ed. Gentile [Napoli, 1900]. I am very grateful to J. vd Meulen for alerting me to Spaventa.) Spaventa argues against, K. Fischer, that thinking must not only be understood, in the logic of being, as the act in which being is thought. Thought, moreover, takes itself for its own object. For this reason, nothing emerges as the power of the negative, to duplicate and to intervene (*prevaricare e geminare*), which dwells in potential in all thought. Spaventa justifies this interpretation with reference to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Only with the concepts reached by the former’s conclusion, he argues, can the *Logic* be interpreted. Spaventa’s attempt at a revision of Hegelian dialectics (see above, p. 215, among others) avoids the path toward Neo-Kantianism, onto which K. Fischer is forced by necessity. Spaventa maintains the absolute character of the logical determinations and understands, with Werder, the beginning of logic as the interpretation of the “*originalità*” of the pure idea. In contrast to Werder, however, Spaventa understands this beginning as at the same time a process of thought. Insofar as it is implicitly asserted that the unity of being and nothing forms the unity of immediacy and mediation in the idea

of absolute negativity, one must agree with Spaventa (see below). Nevertheless, he did not really contribute to an *interpretation* of the beginning of the *Logic*. For he demands that the dialectic of being be interpreted directly from the concept of absolute knowledge. Thus logic is wholly reduced to an explication of the result of the *Phenomenology*, abandoning its independence as the first science of the absolute, and in direct contradiction of Hegel's explanations, according to which the *Phenomenology* is the condition of the possibility of logic as science, but does not enter into the factual path of the development of the object of this science. Spaventa's theses represent the first of a long series of attempts to conceive the *Phenomenology* as the core of the system. Consequently, an interpretation of the *Logic* could not emerge from them.

13. I. H. Fichte, *Grundzüge zum System der Philosophie*, Bd. 2 (Heidelberg, 1836) p.58 ff. K. Rosenkranz, *Die Wissenschaft der logischen Idee* Bd. 1 (Königsberg, 1858) p.121. C. L. Michelet, *Das System der Philosophie*, Book 1 (Berlin, 1876) p.45 ff.

14. J. E. Erdmann, *Grundriß der Logik und Metaphysik* (Halle, 1841). C. H. Weiße, *Grundzüge der Metaphysik* (Hamburg, 1835) p.111.

15. That is, respectively, the strong distinction between the thought-determinations of being and those of reflection; and the immanent development of the concept of indeterminate immediacy. [Trans.]

16. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, ed. G. Lasson (Leipzig: Meiner, 1951), Part 2, v.1, p.3 ff; *The science of logic*, trans. G. Di Giovanni, (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p. 7. Future references to *Wissenschaft der Logik* / *The science of logic* are to these editions, with page numbers (and part/volume numbers where relevant) for the German edition, followed by those from the English (the Cambridge is a single-volume edition), separated by a semi-colon. [Trans.]

17. *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Part 1, p. 55; *The Science of Logic*, p. 47 (Henrich's emphasis).

18. *The Science of Logic*, p.34 & ff; p.29 & ff.

19. *The Science of Logic*, p.80; p.70.

20. *The Science of Logic*, p.21; p.21.

21. *The Science of Logic*, p.60; p.52 (Henrich's emphasis).

22. *The Science of Logic*, p.90; p.78.

23. *The Science of Logic*, p.66; p.56; see also p.85; pp.73-4.

24. *The Science of Logic*, p.53; p. 45.

25. Hegel, *Berliner Schriften*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner) 1956, p.330 ff. Unfortunately, no English translation of this important text yet exists. [Trans.]

26. *Wissenschaft der Logik*, v.1, p.19; p. 20.

27. See Hegel's review of 1829 (n.25 above). In the notes to their translation of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, editors T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting and H.S. Harris note that "[i]n the 1829 *Jahrbuch für Wissenschaftliche Kritik* Hegel promised a comprehensive review of five polemics against his philosophy. Actually he reviewed only the first two of them." *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze* (Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett, 1991) p.310n1. [Trans.]

28. For a contemporary perspective on the relationship of the remarks to the main text of the logic, cf Jean-Luc Nancy, “Of a Text to be Marked Again,” pp.23-46, and “Remark,” pp.47-9, in *The Speculative Remark: One of Hegel’s Bon-mots*, trans. Céline Surprenant (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001 [1973]). [Trans.]

29. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (Nürnberg, 1812) p.33; *The science of logic*, p.45 (“With what must the beginning of science be made?”).

30. We follow Anne Carson’s spelling, which incidentally is closer to the German [*Heraklit*], as well as to the Greek, than the traditional English rendering “Heraclitus” [Trans.].

31. Hegel, *Werke*, ed. H. Glockner, Bd. 17 [*Vorlesung über die Geschichte der Philosophie*] (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1965) p.306 ff. & 343 ff. *Lectures on the history of philosophy*, v.1 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1892), p.249 ff. [“2. Parmenides”] & p.278 ff. [“D. Heraclitus”].

32. *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Part 1, v.1, p.81 ff; p.70.

33. Οὐδέν μαλλον τό ὄν τοῦ μή ὄντος εἶναι. Hegel, *Werke*, ed. H. Glockner, Bd. 17, p.348; *Lectures on the history of philosophy* (cited in n.31 above), v.1, p.282. See also *Berliner Schriften* (review of 1829, cited in n.25 above), p.359. Here Henrich cites an ambiguous - and for us, untraceable - parenthetical reference in Hegel’s lecture on Heraklitos, in the History of Philosophy course: “1. Das allgemeine Princip. Dieser tühne Geist hat zuerst das tiefe Wort gesagt: ‘Das Seyn ist nicht mehr als das Nichtsein,’ *es ist ebenso wenig;**” (Hegel’s bolding, our italics). The asterisks refer to a footnote giving the references as “*Arist. Metaph. IV, 7..* [and] (Metaph. I, 4: Οὐδέν μαλλον τό ὄν τοῦ μή ὄντος εἶναι [the line cited by Henrich].” While we have not be able to locate the latter citation in Aristotle, it is clearly cited by Hegel as the source of “es [Seyn] ist ebenso wenig [als Nichtsein].” The entire phrase from the lecture - “This bold spirit first spoke the profound word: ‘Being is no more than non-being,’ *it is just as little* [as non-being]”—is reminiscent of Hegel’s claim in the opening of the *Logik*, at the end of “A. Seyn”—“Das Seyne... ist in der That Nichts, and *nicht mehr noch weniger* als Nichts” (“Being... is in fact nothing, and *neither more nor less* than nothing”). (*Wissenschaft der Logik*, p.69; *The science of logic*, p.59, Hegel’s bolding, our italics). The phrase singled out by Henrich here, albeit left in a nigh-unsearchable Greek, is entirely missing from Haldane’s 1892 translation of the *Lectures* (still the only one available in English), which cites *Metaphysics* IV.7, but not I.4, and nor therefore the punning *Wendung* attributed to this elusive passage of Aristotle. And yet, lest we despair entirely at the wandering-away of of Heraklitean wisdom, we can see it wending its way into our own century, having wound up (albeit perhaps slightly wounded, maimed or transfigured) in the title of Slavoj Žižek’s magisterial *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012). [Trans.]

34. From this thesis two consequences arise for any possible interpretation of Hegel, which should be noted: 1. Hegel’s thought cannot be interpreted sufficiently by itself—neither from the unsurpassability of the beginning [*Unüberholbarkeit des Anfangs*], nor from the movement that emanates from it, but only by considering both simultaneously. It is a philosophy neither of origin nor of emancipation [*weder Ursprungs- noch Emanzipationsphilosophie*].—2. At every stage of the system’s unfolding, the immediacy of the beginning remains present, insofar as both the mediation, and the modes of that mediation, are determinate and distinct from one another. The immediacy of the beginning’s transition differs from the concept of the system not only in degree, but also in kind, of mediation.

An interpretation of logic, and above all of *Realphilosophie* must, above all, be an interpretation of its modes of mediation [*Vermittlungsweisen*]. The final and most difficult task is to make intelligible the interrelationships of these modes of mediation.