

METAPHYSICS, THE ABSOLUTE AND THE HOMONIMY OF THE NEGATIVE. PROLEGOMENA FOR A SPECULATIVE LOGIC.* PART I

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ABSTRACT. Our paper addresses eight main and traditional issues of Philosophy: the issue of speculative logic; the issue of the fundamental premises of existence and thinking — which engages on the path of absolute ontological reduction; the issue of absolute Nothingness revealed as the ultimate result of the previous reduction; the issue of the realness and effectiveness of Nothingness; the issue of ontological Difference; the issue of the consistency and apodicticity of metaphysics; the issue of the nature of the Absolute; and the issue of the Ontological Argument. The results that we gained at the end of our work show that the ontological Ground is the Absolute and that the Absolute is the transcendent instance of immediate identity of irreducible opposites. This instance is consistent with the traditional claims of philosophical and theological metaphysics and it supports the Ontological Argument through the overcoming of the formal logic principles.

Key words: *speculative logic, theological metaphysics, Hegelianism, Ontological Argument, undetermined immediateness*

0.0 Preamble. Truth and premises

Any search for the truth sets out from premises located outside its discourse or the search itself. (Cusanus, 2008b, p. 41-49) These premises are usually understood as being logical, and then the seeker will look for them in the field of logic or through its

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instruments. (Dumitriu, 1975, p. 6) But logic itself also starts out with premises, and one can already find in them, either in passing or assumed, a few concepts often believed to be self-understood. (Hegel, 1966, p. 25-29, 396-401; Priest, 2002/2007, p. 37-41). The principle of identity, to which any of the other three principles are reducible, already presupposes a synthesis or a continuum described in its formulation: an object **A** possesses a fundamentally unchanged state in which it coincides with itself — $A \equiv A$ sau $A = A$. In this case, truth would already appear to have been found, as one would no longer have to search for the meaning of identity beyond itself, any other concept being itself inscribed in meaning through the coincidence already described by identity. Therefore, it would no longer appear necessary to search for premises beyond itself. — But when one tries to explain what **A** is and why it is in a particular way, and not another,¹ the presupposition one has just assumed is immediately contradicted: explaining **A** would actually mean looking for its premises beyond itself, thus describing it in terms alien to itself when in fact these alien terms would have to be identical to **A** in order to be able to describe it.²

Moreover, one observes that **A**'s identity is given only if there is a synthesis between **A** and itself, therefore being an intermediation or, in Hegel's words, something reflected.³ However, identity is understood as the state in which there is only one

¹ Certainly, the source that requires no other outside search or that cannot be and should not be substantiated by something alien to it is the one designated through the term *Pure being*. However, before referring to it, we would like to make a few more general clarifications regarding the metaphysical discourse. And, essentially speaking, we will see that what has been developed concerning identity in itself is also reflected in the concept of Pure being. (Biard et al., 1981, p. 9-10; Hegel, 1966, p. 63-72, 75-85, 430-437).

² Based on this, one notes that the logical operation of *defining* is extremely paradoxical.

³ This idea had already been suggested by Heraclitus [see Hyppolitos: **Refutationes IX**, 9, 103, Porphyrios: **Questiones Homericae**, to The Ilyad XIV, 200 (Banu, 1979, p. 357, 363; Guthrie, 1962/1999a, p. 290-300)] and actually explored by Plato in *Parmenides* through the logic of henology and the halving of the One [*Parmenides*, 139c-139e (Plato, 1989, p. 101-102)]. The One cannot even be identical to itself, because this identity would presuppose the transformation of the One into something else, hence its halving.

Because when something becomes identical with something, it does not also become one. [139d].

This conception was also examined by the sceptic school of thought (Empiricus, 1965, p. 79-82), then by neoplatonism (Damascius, 2006, p. 59-95, R1, 5-R15, 10/W. I, 1-21; Plotin, 2005, p. 549-553, 581-589); traces of this analysis of identity mediation and, respectively, non-mediation, can also be found in Christianity in the development of Trinitarian dogmatics concerning the Divine nature and the paternal Hypostasis (Alexandrinul, 1982, p. 314, 348; Atanasie the Great, 1987, p. 168-175; Gregory of Nazianzen, 1991, p. 236, 245-261; Gregory of Nyssa, 1998, p. 381, 435; Maximus the Confessor, 1983, p. 170-178; Palamas G. S., 1977, p. 326-328; the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers, 1979, p. 342; Basil the Great, 2001, p. 87-93), but also in the writings of St.

element. Yet $A \equiv A$ nonetheless considers A as something doubled, multiplied, in order to be able to express it as something singular and unified. If one tried to explain identity in terms of pure non-mediation in which, in fact, no synthesis of multiples would be given through which A or any other term would be given as established, one would immediately reach the conclusion that such non-mediation results in the imminent suppression of A and any other term. In other words, through such reduction, one would be faced with naught, or pure nothingness (Hegel, 1966, p. 55-57, 63-67, 72-85, 393-409).

It is not necessary to outline here the other considerations regarding the principle of non-contradiction, for instance, because it is already founded on terms that are mutually exclusive and thus already constitute elements as such. This would only imply a re-engagement with and increase in the number of difficulties one would encounter in analysing the principle of identity, where – at first sight – the evident premise of any meaningful discourse runs into its opposite from the very start.⁴

Dionysius the Areopagite (Areopagite, 1996, p. 159-160, 161, 174-175). The analytic concept of non-mediation then passes into the Rhineland mysticism which already differentiates between *Gottheit* and *Gott* (Eckhart, 2009, p. 30-32, 36), then into the speculative theology that precisely highlights the transcendence point between opposites (Cusanus, 2008b, p. 41-43, 51-56, 61-65, 185-191), and it is further reprised by German idealism in Fichte's works (Fichte, 1995, p. 123, 188-193), then by Hegel and Schelling (Schelling, 1858, p. 162; Schelling, 2007, p. 20-24). Hegel already stated in the **Preface** to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel, 2000a, p. 39):

In virtue, further, of the fact that subsistence on the part of what exists is self-identity or pure abstraction, it is the abstraction of itself from itself, in other words, is itself its own want of identity with itself and dissolution – its own proper inwardness and retraction into self – its process of becoming.

In fact, the entire Preface of Hegel's work could be quoted in support of this idea. These ideas would later be proved in the *Science of Logic* (Hegel, 1966, p. 397-398). Heidegger revisits this topic in his writings when he speaks about the problem of truth in terms of "original openness" and that of identity in terms of "original closeness" (Heidegger, 1957/1969, p. 23-41).

In Asian metaphysics, the principles of such a conception can be found in Taoism (Zi, 1999, p. 21-25) and, in the most radical version, in Nagarjuna's militant Buddhism (Nagarjuna, 2009, p. 39-43, v. 026-042; Nagarjuna, no year, p. 23-25, 26-28, v. 1, 3).

⁴ Here we anticipate the issue of the difference between sophism and speculation. Aristotle recognised three types of thinkers: the philosopher, the dialectician and the sophist (Aristotel, 2007, p. 151-153, IV, 2, 1004b; Cornea, 2010, p. 57). The first was linked to the real and accepted the plurality of existences, such as the passing of the Principle in its determined occurrences. The second accepted only rational (determined) premises and conclusions, that is why he had difficulties in reaching actual knowledge and only managed to attempt knowledge. The third provided only an appearance of knowledge, because he started out from the premise of

A rigorous discourse either dominates its premises, or it is capable of explicating them, or at least of anticipating their ramifications so that it cannot be caught unawares by them in a false stance. This is the reason why Hegel opens his introduction to the Science of Logic with the pretence of a discourse starting from zero premises (Hegel, 1966, p. 49-57), not in the sense that he found himself in the position where the starting point of the discourse would completely escape him, but in the sense that the initial concepts, the truly irreducible ones, are the starting points of the discourse and are from the very beginning engaged in their own development or speculative self-differentiation (Hegel, 1966, p. 49-57). Thus, none of the primary concepts of the *initium* can be transcribed or reduced to other concepts contained in them anymore, i.e., from which these would be composed.

Starting a discourse with zero premises means bringing forth a discussion concerning the following concepts (Hegel, 1966, p. 66-67): non-mediation, mediation, non-beginning, beginning, undifferentiated, differentiated, being, nothingness, identity, alterity, absolute, determined, infinite, finite, one, multiple.⁵

omnipresent opposition in the entire existence and its principles. The sophists were, in fact, those for whom the path to speculative knowledge would be open if they had respected and carried out the premises and conclusions they had initially claimed to assume. Considering that, however, the issue of negative knowledge was not yet formulated in its own terms and that this was not even possible at the time, the only ones who could have obtained effective knowledge were the naturalists, and the only ones who were able to obtain the metaphysical knowledge closest to speculative knowledge were the dialecticians.

⁵ These pairs of concepts are not categories of the intellect, although they can be found in relationship to them. The categories are pure ideal forms of the apodictically reflected psychological faculty – the intellect – while the operating reflection in these pairs also reveals a relationship with the ontological content per se of the principles invoked. Despite the Kantian difference between the objects of intuition (ontic phenomena) and objects of the intellect (ideal concepts) (Kant, 1998, p. 254-258) – where, for instance, the numerical identity of an intellectual object cannot be identical with the numerical plurality of ontic objects with similar properties that would put them in the same category and even though the repeated occurrences of the intellectual object in our psyche does also suggest such analogies, at least – we would be forced to concede that both concepts and phenomena correspond to primary, irreducible principle with common manifestation and structuring characteristics, principles that can be expressed through the conceptual pairs enumerated above. If one raised the Kantian objection that *thing-in-itself* is impossible to know, that it is something we cannot comprehend, therefore an alterity in relation to the intellect of the determined subject, a “something else” in relation to the “something” of the intellect, then one would analytically and directly postulate the very concepts through which the thing-in-itself is given in its supra-phenomenal retraction: something, something else, non-mediation, mediation, undifferentiated, differentiated, being, nothingness, identity, otherness, one, multiple. The caveat that should be respected hereafter, however, is the one of being aware of the implications of discourse regarding a supra-phenomenal horizon – for example, it can no longer be explained through the lens of formal logic.

However, before proceeding, we need to clarify a few of the possible objections that could be raised against these preliminary considerations.

0.1 Criticist objections

The Kantian objection towards any speculative unity between intuition and thought, i.e., towards speculative thinking itself, is most evident in the difference it highlights between contradictory relationships in reality compared to the one in thought. Thus, Kant identifies four types of transcendental reflection concepts (Kant, 1998, p. 254-258) – identity and diversity, concordance and discordance, interiority and exteriority, matter and form – that would regulate in general the modes of topological relations, i.e., of ultimate cognitive effectiveness, between intellect's schematism and sensibility. Thus, he examines several types of amphibolies through which transcendental appearances are created – among them, the difference between sensitive singularity and intelligible universality/generality; but the most discernible is the one he employs to refer to the difference between the opposition of ideal elements versus the opposition of real elements.

Kant argues that two forces oppose each other in the reality of being or existence, one of them suppresses the other or they mutually suppress each other and they disappear from existence ($A - B = 0$ is the Kantian formula), sometimes causing destruction also within the environment in which they act. Conversely, he claims, in thinking, the opposition between two concepts do not lead to their actual ontological destruction in the mind of the one who conceives them or to the destruction of the mind itself (Kant, 1998, p. 261-262). This is why Kant also rejects the ontological argument, because he considers that a Principle of absolute Totality must unify in itself the real contradiction of all objects and all real forces, a contradictory reunion that would undermine God himself through His very substance which would then be absolutely composed and absolutely self-contradicting. Consequently, Kant postulates such an Instance only as a “transcendental ideal” — *Prototypon transcendentale* (Kant, 1998, p. 444-451) — that has no other reality except, at most, a possible mass (meaning, only infinitely possible) of mutually opposed, even contradictory predicates (Kant, 1998, p. 444-451),⁶ therefore a mass of possibilities.

⁶ See also p. 457-458. On p. 458, after Kant had previously tried to demonstrate that any concept referring to something indeterminate always has only one determined object, he explicitly stated that **existence, thus being** (symptomatically, Kant does not distinguish between them), **is always only determined, thus possible**.

Starting with the first chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel demonstrates that not only sensibility itself is permeated by universality and generality, and that it makes no sense without an intelligible investment, but that, moreover (selective summary):

1. empirical objects themselves, even in a “resting state” are contradictory or antinomical units in themselves. Any real empirical object, being a unity of multiples, is therefore a unity in opposition; thus, a contradiction. — Such is the famous example Hegel provides in the second chapter of *Phenomenology...*, concerning the grain of salt that is, simultaneously, singular, i.e., an exclusive unit, then an indifferently differentiating universality and, at the same time, a multiple of properties. All these modes speculatively cross into one another, complete with their attributes and content. (Hegel, 2000a, p. 73 & sqq.)

2. thought is nothing more than movement and contradictory unity of opposites. Moreover, discerning contradictory empirical units (as has been shown) is only possible through the contradictory units at the intellect level, natural occurrences of the Spirit’s antinomical unity.

3. the Spirit (and therefore, the intellect) does not succumb because of the intelligible implosion of the contradictions implicit in its structures (but also explicit), as it contains in itself **the absolute life of a transfigured negative** (*Aufhebung*). For the same reason, if the antinomical units of real elements contained within empirical objects do not succumb under the pressure of this internal multiplicity, it is because the same spiritual unifying principle also underlies that foundation of objects in the real realm (even though it is given in different modes than the ones of the subject’s world). Consequently, in the world of the Spirit, all these oppositions and the destruction of these oppositions are real, but the world of the Spirit is stronger, because it is capable to overcome the haemorrhagic and external negative of the physical world through its own transfigured negativity.

4. in matters of morality, Hegel (Hegel, 1996, p. 115-158, §105-§141) showed that the oppositions between concepts lead to the individual’s immoral, asocial or criminal behaviour.

5. conceptual oppositions and their speculative transposition in the real determine the history of humankind and the phenomenology of its Spirit.

Additionally, we could argue, against Kant (Kant, 1998, p. 444-451), that there are clear cases in which oppositions between concepts lead to the real, ontological destruction of the structures of the spirit, in the case of psychological pathologies. Those who are mentally ill or alienated exhibit precisely the ruinous, catastrophic result of the collapse of inner spiritual coherence following contradictions stemming from the blockage of unconscious significant.

0.2 Given, reduction and Nothingness

A discourse that starts from zero premises is the one seeking the very absolute passage from non-mediation to mediation; from non-beginning to beginning; from undifferentiated to differentiated; from being to nothingness, or from nothingness to being; from identity to alterity; from one to multiple. The very act of “setting out” on this endeavour or of initiating a concept is from the outset engaged in the original beginning itself, thus making the discourse about the Beginning be effectively and singularly inscribed in its very Beginning (Hegel, 1966, p. 49-59; Hegel, 2000a, p. 22-27; Schelling, 2007, p. 46-48, 141-144, 193-195), so that thought itself ends up being caught in its own reduction and in its very noetic discourse of suppressing representation and articulating the concept of its own apodicticity (Biard et al., 1981, p. 23-25; Gauthier, 1969, p. 16-17, 19; Opiela, 1983, p. 17-39; Souche-Dagues, 1986, p. 53-71). In other words, the distance between discourse and object, is erased in a non-mediated manner. The consequence of this fact can only be the aim of an initial unity between the one uttering the discourse and the ultimate object of that discourse.⁷ This is why any metaphysics operating with ultimate concepts reveals itself as bearing effectiveness.

This is not a simple unfolding of ideas in a void without a real referential – as Rudolf Carnap believed (Carnap 1959). This would be, then, a direct consequence of the positivist presupposition according to which a significant content is always dependent on an empirical goal (“observational propositions”), and the logical structure is always purely formal (without problematizing the source and the effective substantiality of these syntactic forms). In other words, the entire speech is reduced to the referentiality to “something given” which is expressed in determinable, manifest, observable qualities or objects and which, as “given”, is considered the fix, irreducible point of referentiality.⁸ In such a perspective, one completely ignores the ontological

⁷ It has been argued that the Parmenidean identity between thought and being is an existential and ethical one (Cornea, 2010, p. 46-54). Undoubtedly, the ontological identity between the subject and the object analytically leads to certain consequences for each subject. But the problem has to do more with singularizing the subject and the effective possibility of genuinely continuing to refer to the subject and object under the circumstances of such a unity without a difference, as the Eleatic School postulates.

⁸ Popper’s famous positivist criterion of “falsifiability” (Popper, 1973/1981, p. 111-122) is incapable of legitimating here the positivist option in any way – this, as any foundational optional, is also metaphysics, despite its anti-metaphysical methodological precautions. The incapacity is unequivocally evident in the attitude of the option itself. — Positivism demands that super-sensitive or non-empirical elements be subject to empirically verifiable rules. In other words, it denies them from the very start, before one can bring proof of what one

equivocation (not only one referring to meaning) that underlies any apprehension of what is “given”, even when one speaks from a scientific perspective. This is so for the simple reason that, when one refers to “the given”, one will always be surprised to learn that what one believed at a certain point to be “given” is but another occurrence of a reducible determination. Otherwise said, the problem of what is “given”, as the ultimate reference of any discursivity, essentially overlaps over the problem of the discourse starting from zero premises.

Consequently, the discourse that starts from zero premises actually starts from the absolute “given”. But this absolute “given” can only be apprehended following a phenomenological, and even ontological reduction,⁹ through which everything that can be de-composed, i.e., everything that can be put under negation, (either by containing it, or by being limited by it – which ultimately proves to be the same thing) is negated by not being the authentic “given”, because the

claims: that the entire Real only consists of determinable, observable, manifest objects that can be empirically measured and that super-sensitive elements do not exist. Otherwise said, the empiricist-positivist methodology consists of a banal *petitio principia* sophism: it already presupposed what would have to be priorly demonstrated, namely that empirical elements are the only ones that exist. This sophistic tactic is superficially masked, from a methodological perspective, through the arbitrary and purely circular imperative of only considering that which is empirical. — One can also observe the monistic nature of positivism. Any demonstration starts from a concept of alterity that is at least possible: “something that can be different than what is *given*”. But, positivist empiricism from the very start supports methodological, rationally scientific doubt, dogmatically and exclusivistically refusing its own alterity. (Trif H. M., 2011).

⁹ The ontological reduction will not be real, namely it will be impossible for ourselves to genuinely cancel the ontological consistency (or even the ontic consistency, in another sense) of things. We are only considering the mental experiment through which such a reduction is achieved precisely based on the subject’s transcendental structure that adheres to the Real, and thus to Being, through intelligible mediation. The objection concerning the difference between the content of mental processes and the effective content of elements contained in an experience cannot have any effectiveness here. First, because we do not know a type of experiment other than the mystical one, through which such an experience is given; here, laboratory instruments are just as useless as our senses whose perception they try to deepen. Second, because, essentially, the contemplative rationality coincides with the speculative one as far as the essence to which they refer is concerned. Yet there is a difference in aim: the contemplative one refers to the unmediated living of the essence, while the speculative one, to the intelligible reflection of the essence. — (Cusanus, 2008a, p. 85-113, 213-241; Eckhart, 2004, p. 106-110; Hegel, 1966, p. 57-60; König, 1999; Maximus the Confessor, 1999, p. 169, 212-213, I, 8-9, II, 2-5; **Phaidon**, 79d, Plato, 1983, p. 84; **The Republic**, 479a-513e, Plato, 1986, p. 274-312; **Parmenides**, 132a-134d, Plato, 1989, p. 90-95; **Philebos**, 58d, Plato, 1993, p. 83; Plotin, 2003, p. 143-147, I.III (20). [3.]-[6.]; Thomas Aquinas, 2016, p. 66-79, 335-342; Underhill, 1930/1995, p. 49-54, 166-206).

“given” cannot be only a result. The “given” is simultaneously its own premise and its own result, because nothing is given beyond itself but its very self, since it cannot be obtained from something else. In other words, the “given” can no longer be negated because any attempt to negate it leads to itself as well; moreover, it actually *presupposes* it. This means that the “given” and the absolute negation of reduction coincide.

The absolute negation concretely leads to the concept of nothingness or void that apparently represents the touchstone of any authentic metaphysical thinking.

We have not reached these conclusions accidentally. They have become evident not only due to the fact that this concept represents a bone of contention where any materialist-positivist conception has previously faltered (Carnap, 1959, p. 69-73) (with drastic consequences for this thinking), but also in light of the previous consideration, where we have shown the incidence of total negation when we consider an absolute ontological and phenomenological reduction through which the “given”, on the one hand, coincides with the negation; on the other hand, the clearly rational and apodictic result of such an absolute reduction can only be the absolute suppression of everything and anything – i.e., nothingness.

One possible objection against this type of endeavour is the one according to which, when one achieves not only the phenomenological, but also the ontological reduction of any determination, one ends up abstractly possessing **two fundamental elements** (Octavian, 2003, p. 16-17): *what it is*, i.e., that “quantum” of ontological positivity or presence or “substance” or singularity or “fullness” that represents the fundamental aim or goal of both intuition and noetic intentionality; respectively, *what it is not*, i.e. that meontological gap (Cornea, 2010, p. 19-20) that in fact absolutely and exclusively separates this determined and singular “quantum” from everything it is not, including from the point of view of the ontological rift between the determined occurrence of the “quantum” in relation to any possible, actual, material or ideal principle that would preordain or dominate its actualization.

Yet, by retaining only one element – the **nothingness, gap, rift, absence, negation** – one would commit a tacit and unjustified elimination of the other element – the **being, presence, unity, affirmation** – that can prove to be not only equally important, but, in truth, even more important than that of the gap, rift, absence, negation and nothingness.¹⁰ However, the problem lies in the fact that

¹⁰ As can be seen, since here we are somewhat referring to principles in their irreducible ontological foundation, our position is that all these concepts immediately susceptible of homonymy (“gap”, “rift”, “absence”, “negation”, “void”, “nothingness”) overlap in the same concept and both retain and manifest here the same primary and fundamental referent: that of the simultaneous ontological void, suppression, suspension, collapse or destruction, although to suppress, suspend, collapse, destroy or void are verbs with an abundant plurality

one would set out from a model of thinking based on *representation*. And, if one is not careful, one would run the risk of not being able to escape a type of thinking based on *representation*.

The *representation* is that type of dianoetic activity consisting of determined and discourse images unfolding against a universe of “given” discourse apparently and unconsciously, therefore uncritically, assumed; this results in a confusion between the appearance of things and their essence, as well as in the proliferation of the formal separation between subject and object (Forster, 1989, p. 4-7, 117-147; Franks, 2008, p. 53-57, 59-62, 69-73; Hegel, 2000b, p. 311-362). Upon reaching this point, which needs to be irreducible and provide the certainty of the fact that one has escaped representation and that the authentic conceptual endeavour can be anchored, one also has the legitimacy of speaking about the non-mediation of the “quantum” of presence or being, more precisely, about its actuality principle. Until this point, the “quantum” itself must be reduced or deconstructed. And this deconstructive endeavour is, actually, the very metaphysical discourse, respectively, the very “advance” or, if one wishes, the “return” to the *initium* point: the absolute Beginning, from zero premises. This means reaching the point in which representation dies and the life of the concept begins. Here, the Hegelian statement that Being and Nothingness prove to be identical reveals its whole truth and, simultaneously, its entire homonymy (Schelling, 2007, p. 194-197). It is only from this point forward that one has the possibility of authentically discussing about Being. Until this point, one would have to “mourn Being”,¹¹ namely “advance” in the potentially lethal (but palingenetic) territory of noetic nothingness.¹²

of contextualisations. Any context implies an occurrence. Yet, the metaphysical discourse does not refer to an abstract unity or unilaterality, but to the **condition of total possibility** of any occurrence, which means that the meanings of these verbs become here absolutely synonymous in all their occurrences, based on a super-foundation or super-occurrence that dominates and enables referential multiplicity even in the **different modes** of actualization of this principle of Negation in “abstract” metaphysics itself. Because, as we can see, Nothingness too, or the meontological principle “is given in several ways” in its very principle of possibility which, however, absolutely transcendently unifies them.

¹¹ The psychoanalytical condition of any transfer (inner release) is being released not only from the object relation, but also from the *habitus* of phallic jouissance. This is why the “mourning” of the object of this jouissance must also be assumed.

¹² This noetic nothingness is not only intentionally and significantly, but also ontologically different from the nothingness of representation – the latter being a genuine discussion about insignificant things, namely small talk – The mystical explication concerning noetic nothingness (“preserving the mind in hell”) is impeccably done in the soteriology of the Pious Silouan the Athonite (Silouan the Athonite, 1991/2001, p. 81-84).

In the same key, our endeavour can no longer be a properly phenomenological one.¹³ Phenomenology starts from a derived study in which one considers the result to be already “given” in what counts as unmediated, sensitive presence (empirical too, but not essentially empirical): the ontic manifest as such, the *phenomenon*. This direction cannot be directly and unequivocally followed by a philosophy that aims for effectiveness and wishes to clarify its guiding principles.¹⁴ The results of the phenomenology initiated by the Husserlian tradition are notable and impressive (especially through their pairing with the results of Lacanian psychoanalysis), yet they have a markedly subjectivist topic in their transcendental foundation, that is why the revelation of irreducibility and, therefore, the ultimate orientation of conception is much more difficult and ambiguous.¹⁵ Moreover, our present endeavour is engaged in an anabatic research of the Principle, while phenomenology is concerned with a catabatic research of the Principle’s actualization in individualities (Ciomoş, 2008, p. 14).

The premise we assume in the present study can be called “Parmenidean” if we wish to emphasise the unity between thinking and being it postulates from the very beginning. But the premises of Eleatic ancient philosophy are not postulated here unmediated, because genuine unity, as we will demonstrate, is transcendent, thus eschatologically divided or negated, rather than immediate and intuitively-phenomenologically pure, as in Parmenides. In contemporary thinking, this agreement or this overlapping between thinking and being is no longer given in a non-mediated,

¹³ We are referring here to the tradition initiated by Franz Brentano (Brentano, 1862/2003) and whose intelligible architecture was so profoundly marked by Edmund Husserl (Husserl, 1994a; Husserl, 1994b; Husserl, 2006; Rollinger, 1999). This was later transformed by Martin Heidegger (Heidegger, 1984/1994; Heidegger, 1986/2003), after having been inaugurated by René Descartes and problematized by Immanuel Kant.

The last Heidegger was able to demonstrate the limits of the original concept of “given”, but unfortunately he did not carry through the consequences of this analysis. That is why his position was unfair to Hegel, as Hegel’s philosophy appeared to Heidegger as very distorted when it was not a paradoxical and unexpected reprisal *à rebours* of some Hegelian results, considering that Hegel’s *Phenomenology* actually touches upon and investigates the irreducible point of philosophical Beginning. One of the reasons why we subscribe to Hegel’s position is that Hegel started out from a fundamentally sceptical conception in which the *negative* was considered in its essence together with the relations it implies and it is then taken to its ultimate consequences.

¹⁴ Hegel drew attention to this circular request; before setting out to complete the endeavour of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he wanted to clarify both the sense of his vision and a few of the fundamental concepts with which he would speculatively engage in the **Preface** and **Introduction** to his work.

¹⁵ The analytical “phenomenology” conceptualised by Bertrand Russell (Russell, 1912/2004) is only one of the superficial detours that phenomenological thinking can take.

but only in a mediated way, i.e., through the negative.¹⁶ This already implies investigating the issue of the negative and its real;¹⁷ it is only afterwards that the endeavour of ontological metaphysics can start. Therefore, what is the negative and what is it like?

1.0 The Real and the homonymy of Absence. The Eleatic objection

The problem of the meontology from the historical *initium* of metaphysical thinking itself ecumenically confronts us with serious objections that appear insurmountable.¹⁸ From the start, the Eleates recuse any referential possibility to Nothingness: indeed, as it initially appears, Nothingness means the absolute lack or absence of anything; therefore, how could “this” enter the discourse in any way? (“Parmenides. Fragments”, 5, 25-30, Simpl., *Phys.*, 116, 25; 117, 2 (after B 2), fr. 8, 1 and following., Parmenides, 1998, p. 121-123). How can anything that cannot be a referent become a referent? How can anything that is completely absent become the object of a discourse? Adi Śankarāchārya, alongside the Vedānta tradition and the vast majority of Āstika orientations, essentially argues the same thing (Śankarāchārya, 2001, p. 97, 100, 123, 156-157, XVI: 15, 31-32, XVII: 69, XVIII: 144-148). However, through its unilateral insistence of the absolute transcendence of Brahman-Ātman, Śankarāchārya’s doctrine often seems to lead, more or less consciously or intentionally, to a meontological postulation of this transcendence.

More recently, even a relativist-monistic metaphysical orientation such as empiricist-positivism rejects any possible referentiality to Nothingness (and, evidently, to metaphysics). Although, in the case of positivism, its fundamental premise is not ontological, but ontic, it claims to recuse any logical entity that cannot justify its content through being founded on the “quantum” of being or of determined presence of the sensitive world (Carnap, 1959, p. 71).

¹⁶ This result appeared in the circumstances of the spirit established by the Judeo-Christian revolution through which the very essence of the phenomenon and determination is raised to the status of absolute foundation. — See, in this respect our article in which we have tried to briefly outline this idea (Trif H. , 2014).

¹⁷ By anticipating, we can mention here the shortcircuit that thinking presupposes when it actually detects the Real that supports and surrounds it and that also contains in itself the Unreal – as it is shown by the paradoxes and antinomies encountered in foundational thinking. This position is described in the following statement:

Whatever the nature of an object might be, first of all the object must exist.
(Octavian, 2003, p. 15)

¹⁸ In his book, Andrei Cornea made an ample demonstration of the way in which the various Greek schools of thought related to the issue of Unbeing and of their collective types of attitudes regarding Nothingness. The attitudes concerning the Unbeing in Greek philosophy apparently amount to three (p. 19-26): ontological, anti-meontological and meontological.

First, one must distinguish between “secondary unbeing” and absolute Unbeing. A “secondary unbeing” is nothing more than the absence of one or several determined elements or beings – it is, therefore, a determined absence that keeps the horizon of appearance open; in other words, one speaks about a potential unbeing. On the other hand, in the case of absolute Unbeing, the absence of anything and everything is preeminent. We will discuss below the relationship between these two types of nothingness and we will demonstrate that “secondary unbeing” is essentially reducible to absolute Unbeing.

Thus, the absolute Unbeing or Nothingness is what needs to be considered here. — When metaphysical thinking was applied to concepts implying a superlative level of abstraction and indicating as referents elements that cannot actually be found in reality (unless, at most, as remote similitudes or analogies with those in the sensitive reality), this kind of thinking was immediately accused of the impropriety of *hypostatisation*, i.e., of the sin of *representation* that tries to transform its object into something substantial which exists on its own, with a positive and effectively ontological content, although it is nothing more than a subjective psychological projection of an image later on expressed through empty language games that disregard a series of grammar syntax and formal logic rules. Objections of this kind are no exception in the issue of Nothingness or Unbeing. (Carnap, 1959, p. 71).

We are told that Nothingness does not exist and thus, it cannot be introduced into language and representation as an entity. It is pure void, pure unassignable non-intuitive absence; a mere non-existence about which one can say absolutely nothing, since it is in no way part of the order to discernible phenomena or even of concepts that could claim even an imaginary referent. By definition, Nothingness is the absolute non-referent. Most people have nothing to say about it or think absolutely nothing of it and pay no attention to it. At best, when it is included in language as an adverb, it is only used to indicate a neutral and absolutely negligible absence of something determined and it is accompanied para- or infra-intuitively by an equally indifferent or perplexed shrug.

If one pays closer attention to this matter, however, it does not seem quite so trivial. The question that arises in this case is simple: if we claim that a certain object does not exist, ***then is this absence real or not?***¹⁹ If one should tell

¹⁹ The first antecedent of these consideration in European philosophy can be found in the Greek sophists, respectively Gorgias (Cornea, 2010, p. 60-61; Guthrie, 1969/1999b, p. 161). The old sophist was the first to argue that, inasmuch as the non-existent is non-existent, it is given as non-existent, therefore it exists as non-existent. But Gorgias’s meaning is still determinative, because it emphasises the concept of **existence** which he differentiates from the concept of **non-existence**, thus the concept of **non-existent** seems to be ascribed to determined, i.e.,

us that here we fall once more into the error of hypostatisation, we would reply, in all seriousness, that there is nothing hypostatising in considering that the lack or absence of something presents itself with non-sensible evidence as being something very *real*, but *very much outside reality*. (Hegel, 1966, p. 83-84).

If we were to reduce everything to reality as such as would argue that this reality alone is the sensitive, perceptual and manifest horizon of the phenomenally determined world, one would no longer be able to understand how the distinction among things, or their absence, can be possible. The unreal nature of absence itself would mean the omnipresence of everything. Because this absence is not only the space emptied of the presence of that which has disappeared, but also the unmediated and un-assignable rift between existing things in themselves or between existing and future or past things, as well as the ontologically un-assignable place of falsity and error.²⁰ In order to pass from one thing to another, one would need a caesura, an absolute discontinuity at the limit between the two. If one tried to argue that this caesura is not absolute, but relative, one would have to reply that relative discontinuity would imply that things would not have a decisive ontological border and they would continuously, absolutely and undistinctively pass from one to the other – i.e., they would have already done so. In simpler terms, one would not be able to delimitate one thing from another, to tell one thing apart from another, because the difference would be non-existent. A relative border would be a pure appearance, and appearances are impossible in an absolutely homogenous ontological horizon, namely where the difference presupposed by appearance or illusion itself is impossible. Attempting a determined difference (“an illusion, an appearance”) in a purely homogenous discourse already presupposes the difference, thus its non-homogeneity; inside or towards whatever point we might move, one already notes

potential absence. But here too it is quite evident that the very determined absence of a thing must be real, otherwise the thing would be present. Moreover, however, Gorgias does not respect his own speculative conclusion which he formulated only to completely undermine any meaning of being and existence and to prove that nothing would exist in a real and effective way, as he himself admits... the “absurdity” of claiming that what is non-existent “should both exist and not exist at the same time” — When it suits him, depending on what he subjectively envisaged, the sophist is content with “respecting” the law of non-contradiction, although his basic thesis is that there is no criterion (Guthrie, 1969/1999b, p. 159-160), and thus no principle of non-contradiction. This is why the solution that should have been evident (the speculative one) is immediately rejected (Guthrie, 1969/1999b, p. 160-161). — Ultimately, sophists do not respect their own premises and results, namely they do not take their own thoughts seriously.

²⁰ As Plato demonstrates in **The Sophist, 236b-241e**, where he shows that non-being exists (Plato, 1989, p. 339-347).

that the point could be identified because it has separated, it has differentiated itself from the background. In other words, in order to have a determined difference, this cannot be substantiated unless it is the prior condition of an undetermined or absolute Difference.

— From here derives the sophistic, self-contradictory ambiguity of positivism or materialism: on the one hand, it claims that world and things are determined or determinable and measurable, so that there are differences and ontological caesuras among them. On the other, it claims that the ontological differences that help distinguish among things by marking their boundaries are not real, are not irreducible in the essence that underpins them. Therefore, no transcendence would be given, because only determined ontic differences, not an absolute ontological Difference as well, would exist. Yet, in order to have “only determined differences”, the things for which these differences would be given and the discursive universe in which they are supposed to operate, ***all things should be a priori absolutely determined. i.e., differentiated.*** —

The uneffectiveness of absence that only Nothingness or Void could bestow would mean the absolute pantopia of Being, as the entire existence would be merged into and pervaded by Being, and the multiple could no longer even be an illusion. Because illusion itself would be impossible,²¹ since any difference is absolutely absent, and illusion is nothing more than precisely *a real and irreducible difference, i.e., between fact and appearance.*

As can be also seen above, our noetic discourse was deconstructive from the very start and we have precisely indicated the need to overcome the state of representation through the sceptical stance. Therefore, the revelation of the meontologically terminus point, Nothingness, could be achieved precisely so as to eliminate hypostatisation, i.e., *representation*, from our reference system. Thus, this terminus point in which we find a form of “concreteness” or “substantiality” in the very final point of the horizon or possibility and actuality of deconstructing representation, no longer falls under *representation*. This does not occur because we proclaim it, but due to the coincidence between the nullifying action of

²¹ This consequence absolutely annuls the entire Hindu scenario of how the determined world appeared in relation to Brahman through a pretended game of illusion, i.e., through the ontological accident of error or through the veil of universal ignorance, Māyā. No duality or difference could ever be obtained, under any form (forms are impossible “there”) from the pure and absolute self-transparency of the acausal and a-causing Principle of absolute non-division.

deconstruction and its principle of possibility/actuality. If this coincidence would not occur, then we might be rightfully accused of representation or hypostatisation.²²

Moreover, without the reality of difference, thinking itself would be impossible. Parmenides, Lycophron and Antisthenes had already noted that any pairing between subject and predicate in a judgment led to the alteration of the “unmediated” identity presupposed by the concept of these terms. (Blaga, 1998, p. 40-41; Vlăduțescu, 1994, p. 132-135). The one of the subject is united in judgment with the multiple of the predicate. If the difference is not given, then the alterity between concepts, respectively between subject and predicate, should not be either. Thus judgment should not be possible alongside its copula, “is”, which, as point of establishment and simultaneous passing of determinations, represents the schematic image of the unity and ontological difference among multiples. At any rate, Lycophron wanted to eliminate it in order to eradicate the antinomy of judgment (Vlăduțescu, 1994, p. 132-135), as Aristotle too points out by quoting Lycophron’s fragments (Lycophron) (in *Phys. I (A.) 2. 185 b 25*, Banu, 1984, p. 525).

On the other hand, if we see with our own eyes and perceive with our own senses and think with our own minds the entire multiple of the world in which movement is real, in which destruction, change, transformation, suffering, birth, death, growth, decrease are evident realities, it becomes evident that all these distinctions cannot be given in the absence of the very reality of Unbeing. And if one were to repeat the objection that all these distinctions are merely the product of ignorance and illusion, the objection would turn against itself: how can ignorance and illusion exist where pure and absolute self-transparency, and unerring truth are given as counterparts?

If one is to examine scientifically the world of elementary microparticles, one observes a myriad of distinctions, namely differences. Even if one considers subatomic elements that are capable of physical ubiquity or, simultaneously, of a double nature — undulating and corpuscular —, these elements are nonetheless marked by delimitations in their most evident aspects, thus: the photon is not an electron, the electron is neither a proton nor a positron, the quark is not a lepton, the up quark is different from the down quark, the charm quark is different from

²² This is the error that Russell’s logic fell into when he transformed the *intension* of concepts in *extensional elements*, which resulted in the elimination of the difference between the signifier and the signified (or, in Frege’s terms, between sign and concept). This is because Russell only conceives the consideration of a logical object under the guise of objectification, which is why he solves philosophical problems at the level of syntactic amphibolies of formal logic. (Russell, 1947, p. 857-861).

the strange quark, the top quark is different from the bottom quark²³ etc. — At any rate, the opinion according to which science, within science, using the experimental and theoretical tools of science, would be able to find an absolute foundation, an ultimate level of reality in which differences would be erased or overlapped absolutely, is but the product of a transcendental illusion that confounds the objects of knowledge registries. Any object that is detectable or comprehensible through formal and natural, i.e., circumscribed and determined, cognitive registers will be a natural and formal, i.e., determined object. All that measuring instruments or formal intellect are capable of discerning represents, by definition, determined elements, ontically disjunct from the field of their perception and from the real or possible multiplicity that frames them or relates them one way or another. It is impossible to discern something informal and supernatural with the help of the natural and formal cognitive apparatus unless that element is already given as naturally differentiated, namely, phenomenally manifest – hence, formed as a result of an ontic differentiation and, then, of a phenomenologically fundamental one.

Thus, not only the distinction, but also the unity among things would also be suppressed. Because in a supposed unity lacking any sort of division, the only real subsisting element would be that of absolutely unmediated singularity. Yet, absolute singularity absolutely unmediated means precisely pure isolation and thus, reduction to Nothingness, as Hegel observed through speculative implication (Hegel, 2000a, p. 63-71). If a certain form of multiple would be given in such a singularity through *reductio ad absurdum*, every element or moment in the multiple would be immersed in absolutely inter-elementary isolation, in pure heterogeneity, in the equally unmediated ways in which it would suppress itself (Hegel, 2000a, p. 63-71). — In other words, the unreality of Unbeing (or the absolute absence of absolute absence) would lead precisely to the absolute suppression of any subsistence, thus to the collapse of the ontological horizon in the Nothingness which it would aim to avoid.

²³ The changes between the elementary states of microparticles (for instance, the division of a neutron outside the atomic nucleus into a proton, electron or antineutrino electron, or when an electron decreases to a lower level of energy and emits a photon) can have results through which some microparticles might change their nature by undergoing changes in mass, electrical charge, etc. However, the difference between them, as long as it is maintained, remains real and their interactions and behaviour differ according to state. The fact that those particular changes do not occur in any conditions is a further argument in favour of the reality of difference that separates them and, last but not least, unites them. The claim that only the illusion of difference would underpin such a diversity of states, properties and interactions is contradicted by the nature and exemplary effectiveness, therefore by the **reality** of this “illusion” itself.

Only the reality of Nothingness (in terms of a subject's intentionality, only assuming it) provides the possibility of achieving the genuine transcendence of the true unity of Being, as one will see below.

Finally, in order to glimpse the apodicticity of the Nothingness concept, we will have to briefly undertake a mental experiment concerning the evolution of the phenomenological and ontological reduction of multiplicity and determinations.

1.1 The transcendental appearance of ontological relativism

We have argued above that, for rigorous thinking, an exhaustion of the determining reduction can only lead to the annulment of any "quantic" presence and to the pure suppression of the entire existence in Nothingness. In other words, only Nothingness can reveal itself as a foundation in a reduction that starts from determination and representation, if its result is rigorously pursued.

Any determined element is marked by ontological negation both externally and in its interiority. Externally, it is clear that it is different from other things. Internally, its external limit also marks the properties of its content that can only be a few, rather than an infinity (since it is exclusively marked externally) and that can have a limited subsistence (for the same reasons). For, once a thing is marked by an external boundary, distinguishing it from other things would be included, at least implicitly, in the definition of its own content.²⁴

Negation means privation or absence.²⁵ As such, any determination of a thing will mirror not only a positive content element in that thing, but also an absence, an ontological gap. That is why, the truth long affirmed by idealism and many religious traditions is reconfirmed here too: any determined or limited thing

²⁴ We can argue that the intelligible definition is the one which, after deciding on the defining properties of an object, will represent its essence and therefore, its external circumscribing. But these considerations fall outside the scope of the present work.

²⁵ This concept is already present in the works of the Holy Fathers of the Christian Church where they speak about the Divine Being – see, for instance, **His among Saints, Our Father, Maximus the Confessor. The Two Hundred Counts of Knowledge of God and the Iconomy of the Son of God I**, 1.-10. (Maximus the Confessor, 1999, p. 166-170) and Saint John of Damascus (Saint John of Damascus, 2004, p. 10-12, 14-15). But the one who imposed this concept in metaphysics is Benedict Spinoza in his famous **Letter 50. Spinoza to Jelles 2 June 1674 (To the most worthy and judicious Jarig Jelles, from B.d.S.)** (Spinoza, 2002, p. 892). *In the same sense did* Yithzak Y. Melamed and Hegel (Hegel, 1966, p. 95, 529; Melamed, 2012, p. 175-176). This idea is also implicitly expressed in *Etics, Definition 6. Explanation* (Spinoza, 1957, p. 40; Spinoza, 2002, p. 217).

is mortal and, thus, deconstructible or reducible²⁶ (be it ideally, or ideally and really). This being the case, the entire determined reality that can be perceived by our human thoughts and senses is eliminated in a phenomenological or ontological reduction endeavour, because the legitimate aim of this endeavour is the understanding of the origin and totality of things.

Reduction, regardless of whether it is achieved progressively, on levels, or is achieved exhaustively and without mediation,²⁷ will have the same result:

²⁶ We anticipate here the problem of determined being who, although deconstructible, is not, however, mortal. Theology and metaphysics would quickly point out the species of actually determined infinite that does have a beginning but does not have an end. This is true. But this absence of an end limit does not imply the absolute of the determined infinite which is specifically circumscribed, that is why it could never achieve an immutable, irreducible unity of Being, especially considering that the genus of determined infinite also includes the potential infinite, the opposite of the actually determined one. Moreover, ultimately, for human beings, despite their circumscription, the horizon of immutability is open, just as the participating horizon of the Increate is open for creatures, as the Christian tradition postulates.

²⁷ The reduction method is mathematically analogous as early as Archimedes and Euclid, who observed the possibility of translating certain geometric values into other geometric values through the *method of exhaustion* (decomposing and simplifying an irregular geometric shape or one with an unknown surface into simple smaller polynomials which could be used to introduce the respective figure in an already known or accessible calculus formula). We mention this method here because it presents a significant analogy with the speculative method of reducing concepts to their essence. This latter method aims precisely at detailing the content of a concept or of a representation through which one would simultaneously observe the opposing or diverse aspects of the content of the respective representation or concept. This is when the unity of the noetic object is achieved and exhausted, therefore, it becomes open towards its own actual infinity. — This is the understanding of exhaustive reduction from an ontological perspective. The determinations are analysed and thus reduced to their basic components to the point where these components can no longer be reduced, because reducing them would mean presupposing them. This result would directly lead to an efficient comprehension of the ontological horizon: one can theorize the actual infinite or totality. — Certainly, there are also differences between the two approaches, the metaphysical and the mathematical one. Mathematics operates with formally finite determined objects. Metaphysics operates not only with ideal objects, but also with objects that are open in the infinite or undetermination horizon. The method of mathematical exhaustion leads to an always partial division of the irregular figure, because there is always some small part that cannot be divided but that, on account of its size, is negligible. On the other hand, metaphysics can afford to generalise concepts precisely because the ideal exhaustion does not require to conform with sensibility when it comes to abstracting and “shortcircuiting” or instantaneously achieving the intended multiplicity.

Nothingness or Unbeing. However, the progressive reduction can claim the illusion that it could delay its meontological terminus point, because it would apparently be endless in the perpetual, infinite regression of levels on the infinite ladder of Being.

This type of objection is in solidarity with ontological models that try to avoid postulating any form of ontological Totality or metaphysical Absolute in order to theorise the essence of the world under the concept of an irreducible relativism. The cosmological postulates of the “eternal world”, “the eternity of world becoming”, the causality that determines an infinity of elements and ontological levels, or that of a circular (Priest, 2002/2007, p. 62), therefore infinite recurrence of the ontological foundation of a series of determined elements – all these images or representations of the... “absolute” ontic relativism (we can already discern also the ontological oxymoron, not just the linguistic one), regardless of whether they were conceived in the old mythologies or in the hypotheses of modern scientific cosmology, take exception to any form of ontological Difference, namely of absolute reduction; implicitly, to any form of transcendence and absolute and transcendent ontological unity. But this type of system is impossible because, in its infinitely determined recurrence, it cannot be autonomous, self-sufficient.

Andrei Cornea, analysing the method of exhaustion in his volume (Cornea, 2010, p. 50), subsumes this method to proofs in favour of a potential nothingness in which the reductio ad absurdum provided by Zenon the Eleate to reject the beginning of determinate beings could be blocked. The same source also evokes Aristotle’s method for dealing with the issue of infinite divisibility: Aristotle claimed that, since there is a difference between the infinite divisibility as possibility, respectively as effective act, one should not recourse to it in order to annul the effectiveness of determined existence, because we will never be able to overcome a certain limit of division and could never experience *realiter* the infinity of divisions. Yet, this problem is misconceived: the effectiveness of an element cannot be (not wholly, at any rate) dependent on the capacities of a subject or on the contextual circumstance in which it is discussed; it must be judged under **its own conditions of possibility**. In this sense, any division or identification of parts is impossible in the absence of the **absolute horizon of division** that must be present, real and open so that any determined division could take place – otherwise, the same thing goes for the opposite endeavour, that of unifying or synthetically exhausting a multiple, a visionary formulation that underpins the foundation of the ontological argument. Contrary to this, the determined division falls into the impossibility of its own actualization, because it has a infinite number of steps to go through to reach its very first actualization point. Therefore, the Eleatic argument returns in full force, but it moves in the opposite direction with the Eleates’ final intention: if they wanted to establish the unreality of nothingness in behalf of an absolutely simple and continuous being, on the contrary, the hereby argument favors the exhaustion of infinite division, because its result – **nothingness** – will emerge with a modified fundamental status.

Certainly, from a logical standpoint, this impossibility has already been proven by Kurt Gödel when he demonstrated Russell's impossibility of making a hierarchy of predicative types (Gödel, 1986). However, since here we discuss the possibility or impossibility of an ontological, not simply an ideal, order, we will briefly outline the arguments against this postulate in a different manner – in an onto-logical expose with the help of natural language.

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