APPENDIX A

Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing

1 Introduction

This appendix assembles the book's answer to one question: why is there something rather than nothing? It establishes no result of its own. Every claim below is made and graded at the chapter cited, and the Premise Register — the book's table of results, each with its grade — carries no row for the appendix; what it adds is the order in which established results answer the question, together with the defence each rests on, so that the whole argument can be followed here, with the chapters needed only for the full defences.

The materials are these: the structural dependence of content on contrast (Chapter 2); the exhaustiveness of the diversity/equality partition, with the two-names result (Chapter 3, §§2, 3.5); equality as the grounding terminus (Chapter 4), then as the temporal terminus (Chapter 5); the zero-complexity constraint (Chapter 6). With them: the grid containment (Chapter 7, §3); the three names, with the two infinities (Chapter 8); the vehicle premise, with the costing of its refusal (Chapter 9, §§5.1, 6.4); the separation of ground from mind (Chapter 10); the undischarged burden of the necessary Being (Chapter 11); the closure against the negative way (Chapter 12).

The answer runs from §2 to §5, where it is complete; a reader who wants only the answer to Leibniz's question need read no further. Section 6 explains why it took so long to see. Section 7 records the verdict on the question that survives, together with what remains open; §8 retells the whole in the child's terms.

The appendix has two companions, which divide one job with it. Appendix B maps the same terminus across the traditions: it takes equality, the second column of the master table at §3.2, finding it under three names. Appendix C maps the method that draws such maps, supplying the vocabulary §6 borrows — fusion, unlicensed ascent, projection.

2 The Answer in Brief

Why is there something rather than nothing? The short answer is that there could not have been nothing: something is necessary. The modal form of that answer rests on one named premise (the vehicle premise, §4.2); the unconditional form the second route delivers is factual — at no level or moment did nothing obtain. What follows shows why both hold, at their two strengths, together with what they leave standing.

The answer is secured twice over, at two strengths. The first route, argued at §4, rules out the alternative: taken strictly, “nothing” can name neither a third state beside diversity and equality, which the partition leaves no room for, nor a second undifferentiated state beside equality, since only obtaining could part the two; so the word names an impossibility. The second route, argued at §5, works from the hierarchies of ground and time. If they run without end, being is there at every level and every moment. If they terminate, they arrive at an undifferentiated being, equality. Either way something is in place; the disjunction has no third. Its deliverable is factual where the first’s is modal: at no level or moment did nothing obtain — something has always existed — whichever branch holds. The routes are independent, so either closes the question as asked on its own: the first because nothing was never available, the second because there was never a gap for it to fill. The table gives each whole — the two cases it divides into, what it rests on, its verdict — with its claim standing as the heading.

	Nothing was never a possibility (§4)	**Something was always there either way (§5)**
How it runs	First case (§4.1): excluded middle — diversity and equality exhaust the options, so no third state is left Second case (§4.2): the only difference is obtaining — an undifferentiated condition that obtained would be equality	First branch (§5.1): no termination — no floor, no first moment Second branch (§5.2): the hierarchies terminate — grounds arrive at equality, the past where time stops
Rests on	Both cases together: excluded middle for the first one named premise for the second (§4.2; Ch. 9, §6.4)	Neither branch needs choosing: the disjunction has no third
Strength	Modal: nothing was never available	Factual: something was always there, whichever branch holds
Common to both	Either way, nothing names no unrealised possibility	No level or moment at which nothing obtained
Verdict	The word names an impossibility, so the question's contrast has one term	What necessity there is belongs to being as such, to no particular being (Ch. 11)

Section 3 lays the ground for both routes; §4 argues the first, §5 the second. What follows them takes up why the answer stayed hidden for so long (§6), together with the question it leaves standing (§7).

3 The Map: Diversity, Equality, and Nothing

Before either route can be argued, the ground has to be laid. The question names two alternatives, something and nothing, so neither can be judged until each has been defined. This section supplies the

materials: §3.1 defines diversity and equality, the two ways of being the framework recognises, while §3.2 sets them beside nothing, the claimed third, in a single table. That table is the map of the appendix: every section below works on one of its columns, or on the boundaries between them. The two routes draw on it differently. The first needs both the fact that diversity and equality leave no room for a third (§4.1) and what separates nothing from equality (§4.2); the second needs only that diversity and equality are both ways of being (§5).

3.1 Diversity and equality

A state of diversity is any state containing at least one internal distinction: one boundary, contrast, or non-identity between two items within it. Our universe is a paradigm, while the definition is minimal, since a state with a single internal distinction already qualifies. Diversity requires no richness. It requires only that a state fail to be entirely undifferentiated.

A state of equality is any state containing no internal distinction whatsoever: no parts, no regions, no temporal stages, no distinguishable properties. Ask what it is like: there is no answer to give, since it holds no feature for an answer to report. In the ladder of Chapter 2 (§2.1) it is ontological one, being without internal structure. The scope of “internal distinction” is read broadly; Chapter 3 (§2.1) fixes the breadth, while a challenger who restricts it to mereological structure is met at Chapter 3 (§3.5) and Chapter 6 (§2.2). Equality is not a new arrival. The traditions have met it under several names — the One, the metaphysical singularity, the ground beyond all predication — so this book gives it a name marking its place opposite diversity: equality. Together the two definitions sort every state to one side or the other — has a distinction, has none — a two-way cut the book calls the partition (Chapter 3, §2).

3.2 The master table

Set against each other, diversity, equality, and nothing stand as follows. Read down a column for a portrait of one of the three; read across a row to compare all three on a single point.

	Something	**Something**	**Nothing**
	Diversity	**Equality**	**Non-existence**
In one line	Being with at least one distinction	Being with no distinction	No being at all
Does it obtain	Yes	By definition, where it obtains (§4.2); whether it ever does is left open (§7)	No: it never could (§4)
In what sense infinite	By extent, if the series has no outer limit: ever more moments, parts, distinctions	No outer and no inner limit: no division a limit could mark	Not infinite at all: no being is there for a limit to bound
Why "before?" stops	On an endless past, every moment has an earlier one	No earlier or later there; the question finds no terms to sort	The question never arises: this was never a way things could be (§4)

The first two columns are the partition's two sides, both under the heading something: diversity and equality are ways of being, not rivals to it. The third lies on neither side; the question puts it in the table; §4 removes it.

4 Nothing Was Never a Possibility

The first route takes the word at its strictest. Nothing names non-existence: no state of any kind, with or without distinctions, no domain in which a state could be located (Chapter 3, §3.5). That is the alternative Leibniz's question offers (1714/1989a). If it was never available, the question answers itself. It was not, and the showing is a

case analysis, since the word has two places it might try to occupy: a third state beside diversity and equality, or the undifferentiated place that equality already holds. Each case is closed in turn, and the closure needs both, since the first case only locates non-existence and the second removes it. The first case is logic alone; the second uses one named premise, so the two are argued apart while standing together.

4.1 The first case: excluded middle

Could nothing be a third state, beside diversity and equality? The partition says no. Every state either holds at least one internal distinction or holds none. “Holds at least one” and “holds none” are contradictories, which leave no room between them — a point of logic rather than of metaphysics (Chapter 3, §2.2). So there is no third place. A state that is neither differentiated nor undifferentiated is a description that fits no state, as “the number that is both even and odd” fits no number. Chapter 3 (§2.3) adds two further grounds on which the partition is substantive; neither is needed here.

This settles what kind of failure the first case finds. Nothing, taken as a third state, is not a possibility that went unrealised. It is a contradiction. No modal premise is used; the closure is as secure as the logic.

But the partition places non-existence rather than removing it. Asked whether it holds a distinction, non-existence answers as equality does: it holds none, since there is no being there to divide, on the premise, costed at Chapter 3 (§3.5), that a lack confers no internal articulation. So it falls on the undifferentiated side, where equality already stands. One place, two claimants. Either they are the same, or something parts them. That is the second case’s question.

4.2 The second case: the only difference is obtaining

Can non-existence be a second undifferentiated state, standing beside equality? Ask what would tell the two apart. Not a feature: neither has any, so neither has a feature the other lacks. Non-existence differs from diversity; from equality it cannot differ in any feature. One thing remains. Equality obtains; non-existence does not. That is the

whole difference: an undifferentiated condition that obtains is equality; one that does not obtain is non-existence. They are not two states side by side. They are the two names one undifferentiated condition takes, according to whether or not it is the case — the two-names result (Chapter 3, §3.5).

The word already says which name it is. Non-existence is the condition described as not obtaining. Suppose it obtained: in that very obtaining it would satisfy the one thing the word equality marks; it would be equality. So non-existence that stays non-existence never obtains. It was never a second state, so it was never available. The condition rules itself out in the describing, on the one premise whose cost the section states below; with the first case, which left it this one place, the closure is complete.

Is obtaining itself a feature? The objection is natural, so it should be stated in full. Equality was defined as the state with no internal distinction. But equality obtains — that is what makes it equality rather than non-existence. Surely, then, it has at least one feature after all: the feature of obtaining. If so, it carries a distinction, so the definition has failed.

Kant's example shows what the objection misses (1781/1998, A599/B627). Compare a hundred real thalers with a hundred imagined ones. Describe both: the same metal, the same weight, the same number. The two lists of features are identical — the real coins have no further feature the imagined ones lack. What the real ones have is not one more line on the list. It is the list being filled. Frege made the same point in his own way: "exists" does not describe a thing; it says of a description that something answers to it (1884/1980, §53). Existence is not a first-order predicate — not a feature among the features.

Chapter 3 (§3.5) turns the point into a distinction within the word determination. A feature is a division inside being: F as against non-F, this side of a line rather than that. No line, no feature. Equality, equal throughout, has no inside for a line to fall in. Obtaining is determination of a different kind: not a line within the state, but the standing of the whole state against its own absence. It needs no second term, no internal

structure — the thalers needed no extra feature to be real. Equality has this kind of determination, no other. It is; there is no further way that it is.

The reply can now be given as one rule. Obtaining marks a difference between states, never within them. Within a state it is weightless: it draws no line, adds no feature, leaves equality featureless. Between states it can be all there is — and between these two it is: equality, the undifferentiated condition that obtains, and non-existence, the same condition described as not obtaining, differ in obtaining and in no other respect. One word, two jobs, no conflict, because the two jobs answer two different questions. Whether a state has features is a question about its inside. Whether it obtains is not.

The rule is not cut to fit this case. Chapter 3 (§3.5) separates the three contrasts the word determination can invoke, costing each; none adds a feature to equality. Applied at Chapter 1 (§5.3), the same rule returns the opposite verdict: there, a denial occurs rather than not, the thought standing against the background of its own absence, so the contrast is between two diverse states of the world — a difference. The rule counts a feature where a line falls between states, refuses one where none does, in both directions.

One premise sits under this second case, named here before the section closes. Call it the vehicle premise, costed at its chapter site (Chapter 9, §6.4): a possibility is a way reality could be, actual at itself. In plain words: for something to have been possible, there must be a candidate state, something that would have been the case. That premise is what entitles the section to ask its question — what would tell non-existence from equality? — of a candidate state at all. The first case needs no such premise; it stands on excluded middle alone. Because the second does, and the closure needs both, the result is graded established rather than self-vindicating, with the Register carrying the dependency. The premise can be refused. What refusing it costs, the primitivist position at §4.3 shows: no state is restored; the refuser is left holding a modal sentence with no stated subject matter.

4.3 The defences, at their chapter sites

Three positions in the literature would keep nothing among the options; each is answered in full at its chapter site. The primitivist holds "possibly, nothing exists" true with no world or state as its vehicle (Shalkowski, 1994; Lewis, 2001; Melia, 2005). Chapter 9 (§6.4) states the cost of the position: characterised, the possibility is equality; uncharacterised, the clause is satisfied at no state, since a content is individuated by what it excludes (Chapter 2, §2.1), with no stated respect then parting it from the open possibility of equality. The subtraction argument reaches an "empty world" by removing contingent concreta one at a time (Baldwin, 1996; Rodriguez-Pereyra, 1997; Efird & Stoneham, 2005; against, Coggins, 2010). Chapter 9 (§5.1) follows the subtraction to its terminus, the equalisation of a world: an operation whose every stage keeps the world it subtracts from. The populated void treats nothingness as an object bearing properties without existing (Routley, 1980; Zalta, 1983; Priest, 2005, 2014; Casati & Fujikawa, 2019). Chapter 3 (§3.5) closes the place it would occupy, since any occupant, with properties or without, is differentiated being or equality.

What the route does not use matters as much as what it does. Rundle (2004) reaches the same conclusion from the side of language, arguing that the question strains words past their conditions of application. The conclusion is shared while the route is not taken here: an ascent from what cannot be coherently said to what cannot obtain is a transfer the grid containment blocks. What can be said sits inside what can be registered, which sits inside what is real (Chapter 7, §3). Reality outruns registration, so inconceivability does not deliver impossibility. For the same reason the diagnosis of §6 is not used above: arguing from it back to the partition would invert the book's own dependency graph.

5 Something Was Always There Either Way

The first route is complete, its two cases closed, at the cost of one named premise. A reader unwilling to grant that premise should not be left holding the question, so this route closes the question from the other end, borrowing none of what the first used; its claim is weaker in kind

while sufficient for the question — at no level or moment did nothing obtain. It turns on a single disjunction about the two hierarchies that structure reality: the chain of grounds, in which every fact rests on others, and the order of time, in which every moment follows another. Either the two run on without end or they terminate (Chapter 4, §6.2; Chapter 5, §2.5); non-existence is shut out on both branches, so the route needs no argument about the word nothing. Each branch is taken in turn — the short one first — while the traditions meet both, since religion has read the two shapes in its own words, cosmology in its own: an everlasting God with an endless universe on the first branch, a timeless God with an origin where time stops on the second — the two infinities of Chapter 8 (§4), as the table at §5.3 sets out.

5.1 The first branch: no termination

Suppose the hierarchies do not terminate. The grounds then go down without a floor, the past runs back without a first moment, while what obtains at every level and every moment is being with distinctions in it. There is no first moment, so no moment at which nothing obtained; the question closes without any argument about the word. Something is there because the series has no bound to fall off. This is the first of the traditions' two instincts, read as extent: the endless universe of cosmology, a past that never began, with the everlasting God of religion, without beginning, present at every moment there has been (Chapter 8, §4.1; Chapter 24, §4.2) — something without limit standing where the asking would otherwise continue. Both read the shape rightly. Cosmology adds no more than the shape, since an endless past is diversity already; religion adds an occupant the shape does not need, a mind at every moment, while a state that holds an everlasting God already holds being (Chapter 9, §3).

5.2 The second branch: the hierarchies terminate

Suppose instead the hierarchies terminate. The chain of grounds then arrives at a floor, the past at a first state; the route needs only one fact about that bound, plainly stated: it is a state that is. The past does not run back forever; it runs back to something, so again nothing was

never the case. Something is there because the series has a bound that is itself a state of being. This branch, though, repays a closer look at the bound, since the question that survives the answer (§7) is asked of it.

Within the world of differences every fact has its grounds among other facts: the glass is fragile in virtue of its molecular structure, the structure obtains in virtue of the bonds, and so on down (Chapter 4, Appendix). The chain can end in only one way. Every candidate for a foundation with structure in it invites the question again, since a structured foundation has features, each of which could have been otherwise. That a structured foundation owes an answer is a premise, the rationalist's, and the paragraph runs on it. Chapter 4 (§4) counts unexplained features as a cost on Dasgupta's (2016) terms and records that a monist for whom structured unity is an explanatory virtue rejects the count, so the preference for equality as the floor is offered to the party who accepts the premise and is quantified against the rival it declines. The closure of §5 does not wait on it: a structured terminus is a state of being as equality is, so something was always there whichever floor the party prefers, which is all the second route claims. The only state at which the question expires rather than goes unanswered is the state with no distinction in it for "in virtue of" to operate on. At a structured stopping point explanation is declined — the chain stops while the question still applies. At equality it is foreclosed, because the grounding relation has run out of material rather than met a barrier (Chapter 4, §§3, 5). So the floor, if there is one, is equality. The boundary it makes has structure on one side only, since diversity terminates while equality contributes no edge — the unilateral boundary of Chapter 4 (§5). Equality is no first fact beneath the others; it is the limit the descending chain of diverse facts approaches, as the series ½, ¼, ⅛ approaches zero. On this branch the limit is reached as the bound, while a member of the chain at no point, since the descent within it has no lowest diverse fact (Chapter 4, §§3, 6.2). The approached-without-reached reading is the first branch under another name (Chapter 4, §5.3).

Time ends the same way, for the same reason. Time is an ordering of distinguishable states, so where there are no distinctions there is no

material to order. A state of equality is not “in time” as events are, while “before” finds no earlier and later there to sort (Chapter 5, §2). Grounding and time are different relations, one explanatory, one successive, yet they converge on one limit. Any relation that does structural work relates non-identical terms, so every such relation reaches its limit wherever non-identity gives out. The limit is one rather than two, since a second featureless state would need a feature to be second by (Chapter 5, §4), on the comparability assumption that chapter names. The book gives the shared limit a name used from here on: the terminus, the state at which the ordering relations of reality find no further terms — the boundary state of Chapters 4 and 5.

5.3 How close the traditions came

Both branches end where the traditions had already been. The traditions were after what this section has just secured, asked for in a stronger key: something that could not have failed to be, so that the asking would stop rather than pause. They approached it by every path the vocabulary offered: as the infinite, on both branches — the everlasting or the timeless; as nothing, the divine ground named by negation; as the undivided, the One reached by stripping away every difference; as the singularity, the point where description gives out; as the unreachable, what lies beyond every predicate. Each was a real path, since each of these is a face equality shows from some angle, so the search was sound: what it looked for exists, since something is there on either branch. Where the traditions went wrong was at the last step. Each, having reached the bound, went one step further than the bound allows. How close they came should be measured before the step is named. The table sets the traditions against the columns of the master table: what each reached for, read across; beneath it, what each then allowed that the column excludes, with the kind of slip — a contradiction, an ambiguity, a wrong picture — named at the head of the cell.

	Something	**Something**	**Nothing**
	Diversity	**Equality**	**Non-existence**
In this book (Ch. 2, §2.1; Ch. 8, §4)	Ontological diversity (≥ 2) Infinite by extent: no outer limit, inner limits without end	Ontological one (1) Infinite by limit: no outer limit, no inner limit	Ontological zero (0) Not infinite at all: no being there for a limit to bound
Theology reached for	An everlasting God, present at every moment (Ch. 24, §4.2)	A timeless God, without parts, beyond every predicate (App. B)	Creation out of nothing (Ch. 9)
but allowed	*Unproved claim* — a necessary Being: one particular being carrying the necessity that belongs to being as such (Ch. 11)	*Contradiction*, for the strong-simplicity strand only — a mind at the terminus, running on the differences the terminus lacks (Ch. 10)	*Impossible step* — a transition whose first term is no state (Ch. 9)

	Something	**Something**	**Nothing**
	Diversity	**Equality**	**Non-existence**
Cosmology reached for	A past with no first moment: endless extension, cycles without a start (Ch. 5, §2.5)	An origin where time stops applying: the no-boundary models (Ch. 5, §5.2)	A universe from nothing: the vacuum, the fluctuation (Ch. 8, §A.1)
but allowed	—	*One step short* — a state its models could describe: the last diverse state taken for the limit (Ch. 5, §§5.2–5.3)	*Misnaming* — a "nothing" with laws and a vacuum in it: diversity under another name (Ch. 8, §A.1)
Mathematics reached for	Infinity as extent: the endless series, the transfinite cardinals (Ch. 8, §4.1)	The limit: a bound of the series that is no member of it (Ch. 4, §5.3)	Zero (Ch. 8, §2.1)
but allowed	*Two things, one word* — one word, "infinite", for extent and for limit alike (Ch. 8, §4.3)	*Wrong picture* — the limit drawn as its last member: the one as a dot (Ch. 8, §3.2)	*Ambiguity* — zero as a quantity that is there: the fork within "nothing" (Ch. 8, §2.1)

	Something	**Something**	**Nothing**
	Diversity	**Equality**	**Non-existence**
The mystical traditions reached for	The articulated levels: the Intellect, saguna Brahman, the sefirot (App. B)	The One, nirguna Brahman, Ein Sof, das Nichts: one state under three names (App. B)	The ground called nothing: nihil per excellentiam (App. B)
but allowed	—	*Contradiction* — a terminus that produces: emanation, tzimtzum, work only structure can do (App. B)	*Two things, one word* — nothing as the name of being's ground, so that the ground and non-existence shared one word (§6)

Take each tradition's own description of what it found at the origin. Theology says: timeless, without parts, beyond every predicate (Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987). Cosmology says: without space, time, dimension or internal variation. Set the two side by side and, taking theology's words on the privative reading of its own language (Chapter 12, §5), they are one description, the description of equality — the state with no distinction in it, at which grounding and time alike run out of terms; read as eminence, the same words name a being rich in determination, within the grid, and Chapter 12 shows the tradition's language to move between the two. The traditions described the terminus; they did more than gesture at it, since the words they used are words the framework can adopt unchanged. Appendix B walks the traditions in full — the One, nirguna Brahman, das Nichts, Ein Sof — finding one state under three names.

Where they stopped short is at the next step, a step that is the same in every case: each filled the description with something the description

excludes. Theology gave the timeless, partless origin a mind, while a mind runs on differences — an act, an intention, a knower and a known — so the occupant it placed at the terminus is one the terminus cannot hold (Chapter 10). Cosmology gave the origin a state its models could describe, while a physical description, however sparse, is a description of structure, so what it placed there was the last diverse state before the limit rather than the limit itself — a verdict that reaches models not yet proposed, since it turns on what a physical description is (Chapter 5, §§5.2–5.3). The models themselves the framework keeps: read as beginningless, they live on the first branch (Chapter 5, §6.2); the slip lies only in taking the last describable state for the limit. Mathematics named the same bound three times over, as zero, as one, as infinity, where each name forks, one branch reaching equality and the other not (Chapter 8, §2). In each case the description was right; the addition undid it.

The argument needs none of the additions. Neither branch passes through a moment or a level at which nothing obtained, since there is no such moment or level to pass through; so the second way of closing the question is complete. Nor does it need the one thing the traditions' own version required. Theology gave the search its clearest form: a necessary Being, one particular being whose necessity would explain the rest. That claim was never made good — Chapter 11 shows that the burden of establishing it has not been discharged — since a limitless thing that merely happens to be there leaves open what might have been instead. What the argument gives the traditions back is what they were looking for, in the other sense of the phrase: a necessary being — being as such, never absent on whichever branch holds; the modal closure, that there could not have been none, is the first route's, at the cost of its named premise (§4.2). What necessity there is belongs to being; no particular being inherits it, divine or otherwise. The either/or does the work the necessary Being was meant to do. Its two branches exhaust the cases; both hold something in place, so no branch needs choosing, nor does any particular being need to be necessary.

A second either/or runs alongside the first, settled the same way. It concerns equality itself: was equality ever available, or was it not? The

appendix leaves this open. If it was, then being could have held either way, diverse or equal, so the world's being diverse is one outcome of two. If it was not, then being was always going to be diverse, so plurality was necessary, while still unexplained. The appendix assumes the first side, shows it consistent, without proving it (§7). What the two sides share matters more than what divides them. On neither side does the world come out of non-existence, since that was never available. On both, the question that survives is the same one.

That leaves the puzzle the traditions set. They were right about what to look for, right about the shape of what they found, yet each time added something the description excludes. Why pieces so often in hand were never put together without contradiction is the question §6 answers.

6 The Four Conflations That Hid the Partition

The puzzle is about us rather than about being. A logical observation that waited two and a half thousand years to be stated is a fact about minds, one the framework's account of the mind predicts (Chapter 8). The state at the centre of the trouble is a peculiar one. Being without internal difference looks, from different angles, like three different things: like nothing, since it holds no thing to point to; like one, since it admits no division by which to count past one; like infinity, since no limit falls inside it or around it. So the three names the traditions gave it — zero, one, the boundless — were three views of one state, where Chapter 8 (§§2–3) traces one branch of each name to a single address. The intuition kept reaching for this state; the vocabulary kept blurring it. What crystallises the intuition is equality — the state in which subtraction itself terminates (Chapter 9, §5.1) — while the blurring was the compound work of four separate conflations, taken here one at a time. Appendix B walks the traditions that reached the state; Appendix C classifies the blurring.

The delay has a source in the vocabulary, whose shape can be given in four sentences. Without limits was one word for two different states, so endless diversity and undivided equality were argued about as if they

were one thing. Nothing was one word for undivided being and for non-existence, so a person granting that "nothing" was possible could never say which of the two had been granted. Where nothing was detected, it was concluded that nothing was there — a finding about detectors treated as a finding about the world. And when the mind was asked to picture the undivided or the absent, it supplied a dark expanse, which is a picture of neither. These are the four conflations — two fusions, an unlicensed ascent, a projection, in Appendix C's classification. The table sets them against the columns of the master table before each is taken in turn.

	Diversity	**Equality**	**Non-existence**
First conflation (fusion)	"Without limits"	"Without limits"	—
Clarification	No outer limit; inner limits without end	No outer limit, no inner limit	—
Second conflation (fusion)	—	Undifferentiated	Undifferentiated
Clarification	—	Undifferentiated being: the ontological one	Undifferentiated non-being: the ontological zero
Third conflation (unlicensed ascent)	—	—	"Nothing detected"
Clarification	—	Undetectable by description, through equalisation	Not there to be detected or undetected

	Diversity	**Equality**	**Non-existence**
Fourth conflation (projection)	—	—	Uniformity, darkness; or fullness
Clarification	Where uniformity and darkness belong	Invisible: visual silence, which looks like nothing is there	Not there to be looked at

Before the rows are worked through, the section's standing should be fixed. It is diagnosis rather than proof: none of it is used earlier, nor could it be, since Chapter 8, which supplies the material, presupposes the partition, so the dependency runs one way. One item alone does argumentative work, marked where it occurs: the null result of §6.3 defeats a standing objection to equality's availability, while defeating an objection is not establishing a thesis.

6.1 The first conflation — "without limits": diversity or equality? (fusion)

Diversity and equality have both been called infinite, or without limits (Chapter 8, §4); the master table has already separated the senses: in diversity what has no limit is the extent, while in equality it is the extent together with the inside — no division a limit could mark. The two do not lie on one scale; read strictly, the phrase fits equality better than diversity (Chapter 8, §4.3). Under one word, though, the two looked like more and less of a single thing, so disputes about them were carried on as disputes of degree where no degree was at stake — which is why they never finished. Singularity, eternal, and boundless split the same way (Chapter 8, §2.2). In Appendix C's terms: intra-grid fusion, two occupants of the ontological grid holding one label between them.

6.2 The second conflation — "nothing": being or non-being? (fusion)

Nothing is a word for the undifferentiated, yet there are two undifferentiations: that of a single being, with no two things in it to tell apart, and that of non-existence, with no being to divide — the ontological one and the ontological zero (Chapter 2, §2.1). The separation is the two-names result of §4.2; the historical observation is that the word carried both, so a reader granting that "nothing" might have obtained could never tell which claim he had granted. The fission assigns an address to one branch while exposing the other as a label with no occupant.

6.3 The third conflation — "nothing detected": undetected or not there? (unlicensed ascent)

A third conflation rides on the second, met daily rather than in argument. Where a search returns no finding, the finding is reported as there being nothing there — while what it licenses is narrower: no determinate thing was detected. A detector registers differences, so the one state it can never report on is the state holding no difference to register (Chapter 8, §3); undetectability is silent just where it would have to speak, since it cannot tell non-existence from equality. Imagine yourself the last consciousness in an expanse showing no feature. You are not in the middle of non-existence, which has no middle; you are at the edge of undifferentiated being, where the difference between you and it is the last difference there is — remove that too; the scene does not go dark. It goes to equality.

This is the null result the standing note flagged. The reason most often felt for refusing equality was that undifferentiated being is nowhere to be found — where being nowhere to be found is what one would expect of it if it were there. The absence of detection is not the absence of being. In Appendix C's terms, an unlicensed ascent: a failure of registration on the epistemological grid converted into a verdict on the ontological (Appendix C, §§2.3, 4.1).

6.4 The fourth conflation — the forced image: differentiated or undifferentiated? (projection)

The fourth conflation is of another kind, one no argument reaches. Equality and non-existence are both undifferentiated; the image the mind supplies for either is differentiated, arriving before any argument begins. Picture nothing: what comes is dark empty space, a blank, a hush — each of them something, a condition with almost every feature removed but one, the minimum an image needs. The mechanism is what a mind is made of (Chapter 6; Chapter 8, §3): to register anything is to register it as this rather than that, so a state that is no way rather than another offers no difference to register. Non-existence cannot be pictured, since there is no object for a picture to be about (Chapter 8, §2.1); equality cannot, since a picture has structure while equality has none (Chapter 8, §3.4). Asked all the same, the imagination builds the nearest thing it can, delivering it without marking the splice — Bergson's pseudo-idea of nothing (1907/1911; Chapter 8, §3.4). The substitute comes in two forms. The blank just described withdraws everything; its opposite crowds everything together — a fullness, a plenum, everything held in a point — and the singularity of cosmology and the superabundance of theology are that form (Chapter 8, §3.4; Chapter 12, §5). Both are diversity, one thinned and one crowded, and neither is the featureless, which is neither empty nor full. Even the image's uniformity betrays it: being the same at one place as at another takes places, so a uniform field is a differentiated field whose differences happen to agree.

The repair is the right analogue: not darkness, which is a content of vision, one experience among others, but the blind field of Chapter 6 — the region behind your head, presented neither as black nor as empty but not presented at all (Chapter 8, §3.1), what a person born blind has in place of darkness. Where the imagination offers black space, put the end of the field.

The same borrowed picture was then pushed further: having stood in for equality, it served for non-existence too — one image, taken from diversity, for two targets it resembles in neither case. That is why non-

existence has felt picturable, together with why the one difference separating equality from non-existence has been invisible from the start.

That completes the diagnosis: four conflations, each named, each undone by holding the partition steady. What the account leaves open is recorded next (§7).

7 What Remains Open

The answer leaves one question standing, a different question. Nothing, meant strictly, cannot obtain (§4), while both hierarchies end, if they end, at equality (§5.2); what survives is why being has distinctions in it rather than none — the child's why are there many things rather than one. Chapter 5 (§2.5) splits it in two, giving each part its verdict. The mechanism question, what it was about the featureless state that produced the many, is foreclosed: an answer would have to cite a feature of the boundary state, where there are none — the most inventive attempts equip the terminus with determinations it cannot have (Nozick, 1981) — so "equality produced diversity" is a form of words the structure renders ungrammatical rather than a false hypothesis. The obtaining question, why the diverse side is populated at all, is not foreclosed but brute: well-formed, while its answer provably cannot exist. What is conceded is owned as the obtaining residue, one fact without parts — the series obtains (Chapter 4, §6.2; Chapter 5, §6.8).

What a count of such remainders is worth between rival accounts (Dasgupta, 2016), and how the dilemma the recent literature poses — a necessary being or a concession to bruteness — is met (Goldschmidt, 2013; Conee, 2014; Pearce, 2017), is the business of Chapter 9 (§5) with Chapter 11 (§4.4). The two nearest precedents for the appendix's own conclusion have their sites as well: Grünbaum (1989), for whom the demand for a cause of the beginning dissolves on the open interval — taken up at Chapter 5 (§3.3), where the boundary is not missing but non-temporal — and van Inwagen and Lowe (1996), the modern symposium on the question itself, engaged at Chapter 8 (§A.1). Here it

is enough that both verdicts stand: the question Leibniz asked is closed, while the one that survives it is brute.

Six things are left open, each recorded where it arises; none disturbs the answer of §2. The table names each, says where the book records it, and states what it bears on here; §8 then gives the answer in plain words.

Left open	**Recorded at**	**What it bears on**
Whether equality is possible	Ch. 3, Appendix; the Register's deferred tier (its open questions)	Not load-bearing. §4.1 uses excluded middle, §4.2 the description of non-existence; §5 holds either way
Whether the hierarchies terminate	Ch. 4, §6.2; Ch. 5, §2.5	The answer is unchanged on either branch (§5). The Register's note d marks the results that differ
The vehicle premise	Ch. 9, §6.4; the Register's contested premises	Needed for §4.2, so for the modal closure; §5's factual claim stands without it. Refusing it leaves a clause satisfied at no state, parted from the possibility of equality in no stated respect (§4.3)

Left open	Recorded at	What it bears on
That a lack confers no internal articulation	Ch. 3, §3.5; the Register's contested premises	Needed for §4.1's placement of non-existence on the undifferentiated side; a negative-facts theorist who refuses it is met at the chapter site, and §5 holds without it
Why this series rather than another	Ch. 5, §2.5	Stands on every account alike, so counts against none
Where an explanation could be located	Ch. 5, §2.5; Ch. 9, §5	The assumption stated where the foreclosure is run. An explanans relating to the terminus not at all is not closed by featurelessness Entry costed at Ch. 9, §5: relocate the residue, or assume the necessity thesis Ch. 11 leaves undischarged

8 The Child's Question, Answered

A child who asks why there is a world is usually expecting an answer of the form "because of X", where every X anyone can offer is already part of the world. The only answer from outside the world would be nothing, and nothing is no answer, because it is not anything. So the question, asked with its word meaning what it means, answers itself: there is a world because there could not fail to be something.

Two ways of meaning the word, both closed. Mean a third kind of state, neither one thing nor undivided being: you have described something that could no more be the case than a square circle could. Mean instead that there is no state at all: one thing has to be granted, which §4.2 states plainly: that a possibility is a way reality could be. A reader who will not grant it keeps the question, at the cost of a possibility no description reaches.

Even a reader who will not settle the word finds the world settling it. Either the past never began, or it began at undivided being; on neither path was there ever a nothing for the world to come out of (§5).

What the child may really be asking — what the mind was asking all along, once it pictured a blank, calling it nothing — is why the world is not that blank: why being has differences in it rather than none. The blank the mind pictured is not emptiness. It is not fullness either. It is being, undivided, without a single distinction in it, which the book calls equality, so the plain form of the child's question is why there are many things rather than one.

To that question there is no answer; the reason there is none is the whole of the answer: a reason would have to be some feature of that undivided being, while it has none. What is left unexplained is one fact without parts — the smallest remainder of any account the book surveys (§7).

So: why is there something rather than nothing? Because nothing was never a possibility. Then why does nothing seem possible? Because what we take for nothing is in fact something — an undifferentiated equality: a mindless, infinite, singular existence of zero complexity, which looks like nothing to every mind that tries to see it, and looks like something to every mind that tries to think it.

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