APPENDIX B

The Terminus Without Diversity: One, Zero and Infinity

1 Introduction

Across the chapters of this book, several terms appear that may seem to name different things. Chapter 4 speaks of the grounding terminus. Chapter 6 develops zero complexity. Chapter 8 distinguishes infinite diversity from infinite equality. Chapter 9 disambiguates the question of why there is something rather than nothing. Chapter 10 examines divine simplicity. Chapter 12 engages the apophatic tradition's claim that the ground exceeds all predication. What these chapters share — and what this appendix makes explicit — is that these terms converge on a single structural condition: the absence of internal distinction.

The condition has been called many things. Plotinus called it the One. Parmenides called it Being. Śaṅkara called it nirguna Brahman. Heidegger called it das Nichts. Maimonides and the Kabbalistic tradition called it Ein Sof. Pseudo-Dionysius called it the divine darkness beyond all attribution. The traditions differ in their interpretive overlays, but they agree on what they identify. The terminus they point at is the same terminus. The condition is equality — the second column of Appendix A's master table, reached there as the terminus of grounds and of time — and this appendix maps that single column across the traditions.

This appendix collects what the main text develops piecemeal. Its thesis can be stated in a single sentence: singularity (as oneness), nothingness, and infinity-as-equality are three conceptual presentations of one structural condition, individuated by which contrast each tradition takes as salient — multiplicity, being, and finitude respectively. The three are the three names Chapter 8 (§2) gives the terminus, one, zero, and infinity, each of which forks, one branch reaching the terminus and the other not; the appendix takes the branch of each that reaches it, so its title carries the names in the framework's vocabulary and its sections carry them in the traditions' own: oneness, nothingness, and infinity-as-equality. The condition itself admits of no contrasts, since any contrast would already be diversity, but the descriptive aspects under which it is encountered differ. The appendix is consolidatory in its use of the framework and substantive in its exegesis, and the two come apart: the structural results are licensed by Chapters 2–12, while the claim that the named traditions identify one condition holds of their privative strands — the strands the appendix's own scholarship shows to be contested by eminent readings at nearly every site (§§2.3, 3.4, 4.2). What is added is a cross-tradition map, allowing readers familiar with one tradition to recognise the structural identity of its central concept with the others', and sharpening the main text's arguments by showing their targets recur across the history of metaphysics under varied names.

A methodological note. Engagement with each tradition is necessarily compressed, and the appendix does not pretend to settle exegetical disputes; where scholarship is unsettled — on Parmenides, or the scope of śūnyatā — it says so and engages multiple readings. The stance follows the charitable model of Chapter 12: the traditions have correctly identified a condition, and have overlaid it with interpretive content the framework diagnoses without dismissing.

One clarification of scope. The appendix engages metaphysical and theological uses of "singularity," "nothingness," and "infinity-as-equality." It does not engage the cosmological singularity, which has its own technical literature; Chapter 8 (§A.2) addresses the structural-rather-than-physical character of cosmological singularities. Likewise,

the appendix engages metaphysical infinity rather than the mathematical infinities of set theory; Chapter 8 already locates Cantor's framework as adequate for collections of distinct elements.

The sections take the names in the order the framework meets them, one before zero and zero before infinity, since the oneness case is the paradigm (§2.2) and the other two are read against it. Section 2 develops oneness with extended engagement of Plotinus, Parmenides, and Advaita Vedānta. Section 3 then develops nothingness with engagement of the Leibnizian question, Heidegger's Nichts, and Buddhist śūnyatā. Section 4 develops infinity-as-equality with engagement of the apophatic and Kabbalistic traditions. Section 5 states the unity thesis, and explains why one condition admits of three presentations. Section 6 indicates how the thesis bears on specific chapters. Section 7 then closes with a note on method.

2 Singularity as Oneness

2.1 The structural reading

A tradition that begins from the manifest plurality of the world and seeks its ground asks: what underlies the many? The natural answer is unity; it is natural for a reason. Behind multiplicity stands a single source; behind diversity stands an undivided principle; behind appearance stands the One. The structural diagnosis then follows immediately. The ground of multiplicity, conceived as the condition before which no multiplicity obtains, possesses no internal distinction — possessing distinction would already place it within the multiplicity it is supposed to ground. So the condition is zero complexity.

What the oneness tradition adds is the interpretive overlay of unity. The condition is described not as the absence of all distinction but as the presence of a single, undivided reality. The shift from absence-language to presence-language is what makes the condition look like a something — the One, an entity, a principle — rather than the structural terminus where the resources of description fail. The appendix flags this not as an

error but as a description of how the condition appears when the salient contrast is multiplicity.

Three observations follow. First, the oneness tradition tends to be productive. Plotinus's One emanates the Intellect; the Vedāntic nirguna Brahman is the ontological source of saguna Brahman; even Parmenides must give some account of the appearance of plurality. The framework predicts the difficulty: the terminus has no determinations from which production could follow, so any productive role attributed to it imports an overlay the condition cannot underwrite.

Second, the tradition tends toward hierarchy. The One is at the top; lower levels emanate downward, each less unified than the one above. The framework can accommodate hierarchical progression — the move from zero complexity to maximally articulated diversity is indeed a structural progression — but the directionality and productive linkage belong to the overlay rather than to the condition.

Third, the oneness tradition characteristically denies that the One is one in any ordinary sense. Plotinus is explicit: the One is beyond being, beyond number, beyond predication. Śaṅkara is explicit: nirguna Brahman is without attributes, including unity in any standard sense. The traditions sense that calling the condition "one" is already saying too much, and they hedge accordingly. The framework explains the hedge: predicating unity of the terminus requires the contrast with multiplicity, which belongs to the descriptive aspect rather than to the condition itself.

2.2 Plotinus and the One

The Plotinian One (*to hen*) is the paradigm case. Plotinus develops the concept across the *Enneads*, most fully in V.1, V.2, and VI.9. The One has no internal distinction, no parts, no attributes — Plotinus is explicit that even to call the One "one" or "good" is to say more than the condition admits. The One is beyond being (*epekeina tēs ousias*, borrowed from Plato's *Republic*); it is the principle from which everything else proceeds but is not itself a being among beings.

Each feature maps onto zero complexity. No internal distinction is the defining structural feature. No parts is a consequence, since distinction is what parts would consist in. No attributes is a further consequence, because attributes are intrinsic determinations, and intrinsic determinations require the internal distinction the condition lacks. "Beyond being" marks that the One does not figure within the manifold of beings — which the framework reads as the observation that the terminus lies outside the field of diversity.

The productive role Plotinus attributes to the One is where the diagnosis bites. The One emanates the Intellect (nous), which contains the Forms and constitutes the first articulated level of reality. The emanation is not temporal but an eternal procession; Plotinus is consistent with the conditions for non-temporal grounding. The problem lies elsewhere: the emanation must be a process by which differentiation emerges from non-differentiation, and Chapter 4 shows that the terminus has no determinations from which such a process could draw its specific character. Why does the One emanate the Intellect rather than something else? Plotinus has no answer that does not import determinations into the One.

A charitable reading, available within the framework, runs as follows. Plotinus is using emanation language to describe the structural relation between the terminus and articulated diversity, not to attribute a productive act to the One. On this reading, the One does not do anything to the Intellect; the Intellect is simply the first level of articulated reality, and emanation language marks structural priority rather than causation. This reading is closer to Gerson (1994) than to the more straightforward causal reading, and is broadly compatible with the framework. What it concedes is that Plotinus's most striking imagery — the One overflowing, the Sun radiating — involves a presentation the framework cannot underwrite. The imagery does work for Plotinus's rhetoric; it does not survive scrutiny.

The Plotinian distinction between the One, the Intellect, and the Soul tracks a structural progression. The One corresponds to zero complexity. The Intellect contains the Forms and is the first level at which determinations obtain — differentiated within itself and knowing

itself, which is further articulation. The Soul descends further, the meeting point between articulated diversity and the world of bodies. The framework reads the progression as moving from the terminus through increasingly differentiated levels, with one modification: the relation between the terminus and the maximally articulated being is not one of containment but of structural opposition. The two are the two infinities of Chapter 8; Plotinus's One and Intellect point at opposite ends of the structural spectrum rather than at adjacent points on a single hierarchy.

Plotinus's reported mystical union with the One (*Enneads* VI.9; Porphyry reports four such experiences) is the experiential correlate of approach to zero complexity: the framework does not deny the reality of the experience, but diagnoses it as occurring within diversity — the experiencer remains a differentiated subject — reading the felt approach to undifferentiation as the modality's response to extreme simplification.

2.3 Parmenides and the question of being

Parmenides is the harder case, because his poem distinguishes the Way of Truth, which describes Being, from the Way of Opinion, which describes appearances. On the Way of Truth, Being is ungenerated, indestructible, indivisible, motionless, and one. Parmenides's project is to establish that the Way of Truth alone gives real knowledge and that the appearances are in some sense illusory.

The interpretive question is whether Parmenidean Being is the structural terminus (placing Parmenides in the oneness tradition) or the totality of what exists as a single articulated whole (placing him with infinite diversity). Both readings have support. Curd (1998) reads Parmenides as making a logical-metaphysical point about what can coherently be said to be, with Being as a predicate of whatever exists. Palmer (2009) reads Parmenides as describing a single, ungenerated, eternal reality that admits no internal change but may admit internal variety. Older readings, beginning with Plato in the *Sophist*, treat Parmenidean Being as a strict monism: one thing, with no internal articulation.

The framework is compatible with multiple readings, so both must be set out. On the strict monistic reading, Parmenides belongs squarely in the oneness tradition: Being is the terminus, presented under the contrast with the multiplicity of the Way of Opinion. The features Parmenides assigns to Being are those the framework predicts for the terminus, with the addition that the assignment of any positive predicate, including unity, requires the very contrast the terminus lacks. On the alternative reading, Parmenidean Being is the maximally differentiated being, not the terminus, and the denial of internal change does not entail the denial of internal articulation.

The interpretive openness is itself diagnostically revealing. Parmenides's poem is structurally ambiguous between the two infinities, and the scholarly tradition has divided along this fault line for two and a half millennia. The framework explains the persistence: the two infinities are easily conflated, and a text from the early period of metaphysical reflection may simply not have had the conceptual resources to distinguish them. Parmenides's One Being may be both readings at once, since it is the terminus on one description, the maximal articulation on another — and the unresolved tension may be authentically in the poem rather than the artefact of subsequent commentary. The classical formulation — is Parmenides a strict monist? — conflates two structurally distinct claims that the modern interpretive question can now hold apart. Whether Parmenides held one of those positions, or an undifferentiated proto-position that subsequent thinkers split, is a question for the specialists.

2.4 Advaita Vedānta and Brahman as nirguna

The Vedāntic tradition, particularly in its Advaita form developed by Śaṅkara in the eighth century, offers the most fully articulated oneness presentation outside the Western tradition. Advaita distinguishes two aspects of Brahman: saguna Brahman, with attributes (the personal divine, the object of devotion), and nirguna Brahman, without attributes (the absolute, the formless, beyond qualification). This distinction is the centre of Advaitic metaphysics, where its parallel with the two infinities is close.

Saguna Brahman is the maximally articulated being. It possesses all positive attributes, since knowledge, power, presence, and compassion belong to it together. Worship and ritual are therefore directed at saguna Brahman, which functions much as the classical God functions in Abrahamic monotheism. The framework reads saguna Brahman as the maximally articulated being of infinite diversity, parallel to the companion God of Chapter 24.

Nirguna Brahman is the structural terminus. Śaṅkara is explicit that nirguna Brahman is without attributes, that no positive predicate truly applies, that even calling it "one" or "real" is to say more than the condition admits. The classical formula — neti, neti ("not this, not this"), from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad — captures the apophatic character. Every positive predication is denied; what remains, after the negations, is not another predicate but the condition the predications fail to capture. Chapter 12's reading of negative theology applies: the neti neti tradition has correctly identified the terminus and overlaid it with the interpretation that there is something there to be encountered, just beyond the reach of predication, when the structural diagnosis is that the absence of predicability is the condition itself.

The Advaitic relationship between nirguna and saguna Brahman parallels Plotinus's One/Intellect and the Kabbalistic Ein Sof/sefirot: in each case an ultimate undifferentiated reality stands above a hierarchically lower articulated one, and in each case the tradition struggles to explain how the two relate. The Advaitic answer is māyā, the cosmic appearing of nirguna Brahman as multiplicity, an ontological feature rather than simple error. The framework cannot accept māyā on its own terms, because the terminus bears no relation to diversity that could be described as appearing in any specific manner, though it can recognise what Śaṅkara is trying to do: preserve both the absolute character of nirguna Brahman and the manifest reality of the world, encountering the very bridging difficulty Chapter 4 identifies. Deutsch (1969) develops the standard philosophical reconstruction.

The Advaitic claim with the strongest structural pedigree is that the deepest reality is nirguna, that saguna descriptions are provisional, and that liberation (mokṣa) involves the recognition of the self's identity

with nirguna Brahman. The framework cannot endorse the metaphysics of identity that this presupposes — the self, on the framework's account, is constituted within diversity and cannot be identical with a state of zero complexity in any sense that preserves what makes the self a self. The disagreement is large, and charity should not hide it: mokṣa is the tradition's point; a reading that keeps the metaphysics of nirguna Brahman while denying the self's identity with it keeps the map and refuses the destination — the charity extends to the identification alone. But the Advaitic tradition has identified the terminus more cleanly than most Western traditions. The neti neti method, the nirguna/saguna distinction, and the recognition that the deepest level of reality admits of no positive predication are moves the framework reads as structurally accurate within the overlay the tradition adds.

A note on scholarship. The Advaitic tradition is internally diverse, with disagreements between Śaṅkara and his commentators (Sureśvara, Padmapāda, later Vidyāraṇya), and substantial differences with competing schools (Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita, Madhva's Dvaita). The appendix therefore engages primarily with Śaṅkara's foundational position, while it does not pretend to settle intra-Vedāntic disputes. Where scholarship is contested, the appendix flags this and proceeds with the version most directly relevant to the structural reading.

2.5 What oneness gets right and what it overlays

The oneness presentation correctly identifies the structural condition under the contrast with multiplicity: Plotinian Neoplatonism, the strict-monistic reading of Parmenides, and Advaita Vedānta each reach the absence of internal distinction by asking what would underlie the manifest plurality of the world, and each recognises that the answer cannot itself be one item among many. What each adds is the overlay of unity — a positive predicate the condition cannot support, since a unity is a something that can be sought, contemplated, perhaps encountered. Strictly, the terminus is neither one nor many: predicating unity requires the contrast with multiplicity, which belongs to the descriptive aspect rather than the condition.

The traditions' own hedges acknowledge the point. Plotinus says the One is beyond unity in any ordinary sense; Śaṅkara says nirguna Brahman is without the attribute of being one; the negative theological tradition extends the hedge to all positive predicates. The hedges mark the difference between the structural condition and any predicate that might be applied to it. The framework reads them as the traditions' own recognition that the unity overlay is descriptive rather than constitutive.

The oneness traditions therefore stand: what is diagnosed is the overlay alone, and much of the vocabulary the framework relies on — beyond being, beyond predication, beyond ordinary unity — is theirs. That the same identification recurs under the nothingness and infinity-as-equality aspects is the thesis §5 states.

3 Nothingness

3.1 The structural reading

A tradition that begins from the manifest fact of existence and seeks its limit asks: what would the absence of being be? The question has the same structural target as the oneness question but approaches it from a different direction. Where the oneness tradition starts from plurality and seeks the unity behind it, the nothingness tradition starts from being and seeks the negation that would precede or exceed it. Both questions terminate at the same condition. The difference lies in the contrast each tradition takes as salient and consequently in the descriptive overlay each places on the condition.

The structural diagnosis runs as follows. Being, in the most general sense, is whatever admits of distinction. To be is to be differentiated from what is not, to have determinate features, to occupy a place in the field of contrasts that constitutes the manifold of beings. The absence of being would therefore be the absence of all such determination, since there would be nothing to be differentiated, no features to have, no place in any field of contrasts. The framework has a name for this: zero complexity. What the nothingness tradition calls absolute nothing, the framework calls the structural terminus.

The overlay is the negative predicate of non-being. The condition is described as the absence of being, the void, the abyss, Nichts, śūnyatā in some readings. Calling the condition "nothing" requires the contrast with "something," and the contrast belongs to the descriptive aspect rather than to the condition itself. Strictly, the terminus is neither being nor non-being. The nothingness traditions' best moments recognise this and hedge accordingly, just as the oneness traditions hedge on unity.

The distinction Chapter 3 (§3.5) draws between two senses of determination firms this hedge up, and shows it to be mandatory rather than optional. A property is a partition within being, and of properties the terminus, equal throughout, has none. But to obtain rather than not is a determinateness of a different species: existential, side-less, requiring no second term — and the terminus has just this. The nothingness tradition, insofar as it points at a condition that is there to be reached, encountered, or undergone, points at something that obtains; and a non-being that obtains is a state of equality. Non-being proper — that which does not obtain — could never be the terminus, because it could never be present to be one: the contrast with 'something' is one-sided, its second term permanently empty. So the tradition's best hedge, "neither being nor non-being," is right in the only way it can be. The terminus is being in the bare sense of obtaining, not in the sense of bearing properties; and it is not non-being, because non-being does not obtain. What presents as nothing is equality under the aspect of its contrast with being.

Three observations deserve preliminary statement. First, the nothingness presentation tends toward dissolution rather than production. Where the oneness tradition asks how the manifold derives from the One, the nothingness tradition asks how being arose from nothing — or whether the question is well-formed. Chapter 9 establishes the answer: the question is malformed because non-being has no determinations from which a transition could begin. The nothingness tradition's productive instinct is the mirror image of the oneness tradition's, and the framework diagnoses both as importing determinations the terminus cannot bear.

Second, the nothingness presentation has a phenomenological dimension. Heidegger's Nichts is encountered in anxiety; the void of mystical traditions is approached through letting-go; the absence of being is felt as a structural threat or liberation, depending on the tradition. The framework can accommodate this, because the experiential approach to extreme simplification has a characteristic affective profile that the modality registers as the absence of evaluative content. And the experience itself occurs within diversity, even when its phenomenological target is the dissolution of diversity.

Third, the nothingness presentation has been the central site of the encounter between Western and Asian philosophy in the twentieth century. The Kyoto School (Nishida, Tanabe, Nishitani) developed sustained engagements with both Buddhist śūnyatā and Heideggerian Nichts, and the work of figures such as Masao Abe (1985) has continued the project. The framework offers a resource here, since the unity thesis of §5 predicts that the traditions converge on the same condition, and the framework's vocabulary provides a neutral medium in which the convergence can be made explicit. Stace (1960) drew the same convergence at the level of experience, finding an undifferentiated unity at the introvertive core of the reports across traditions; the unity thesis restates the convergence at the level of structure, where §5 derives it rather than collecting it.

3.2 The Leibnizian question and its disambiguation

Why is there something rather than nothing? Leibniz's 1714 formulation is canonical, with versions appearing earlier, in Aristotle, in Christian creation theology, and in the kalām tradition. The structural treatment is developed in Chapter 9, with Appendix A assembling the answer in full; this section restates the disambiguation in the vocabulary of the nothingness presentation.

The question presupposes that "nothing" names a coherent alternative to "something", and the presupposition equivocates, since two senses travel under the word. Read as the structural terminus — no internal distinction — the question is ill-formed as asked: the terminus admits of no relations, so "rather than" finds no purchase. What

survives on the termination branch is the obtaining question in its well-formed version, owned at Chapter 5 (§2.5) as the obtaining residue rather than dissolved. Read instead as the absence of a universe conceived as a possible state alongside existence, the question has stopped being about nothing: the state so conceived is equality, being undifferentiated. The question becomes why being is differentiated rather than undifferentiated — well-formed, with the same residue for its answer.

The Leibnizian formulation conflates the two senses: the deep version is presented as the real challenge, the coherent version dismissed as too superficial, and the diagnosis is that the deep version is incoherent while the coherent version is not deep. There is no third option in which the question is both deep and coherent. The diagnosis is not original — Hume, Kant, Wittgenstein, and Quine offered versions of it without the structural vocabulary — and the framework's contribution is the mechanism that makes it correct.

The contemporary debate reads through the same fork. Pruss's (2006) defence of the principle of sufficient reason assumes the question coherent, answering it with a necessary being at the foundation. Chapter 11 replies that the PSR in the form required breaks down at the terminus, where there are no determinations from which reasons could be derived. Goldschmidt's (2013) explanatory demand meets the same limit, since the "outside" it invokes is not a place where explanations can be situated, while Conee and Sider (2005) take a deflationary approach that converges with the diagnosis without supplying its mechanism.

3.3 Heidegger and das Nichts

Heidegger's lecture "What is Metaphysics?" (1929) is the central twentieth-century European text on nothingness. Heidegger's treatment differs from the Leibnizian in several respects. He does not treat nothingness primarily as a logical or metaphysical category, but as a phenomenon disclosed in a particular mood (Stimmung), specifically anxiety (Angst), and his philosophical claims are tied to the phenomenological description of how the Nichts is encountered.

The central claim is that the Nichts is encountered, not inferred. The mood of anxiety discloses a phenomenon Heidegger calls the slipping-away of beings as a whole (*Entgleiten des Seienden im Ganzen*). In anxiety, particular beings lose their grip; the structure of meaningful engagement falls away; what remains is the bare confrontation with the Nichts. The Nichts is not the negation of any particular being but the absence of beings as such. It is encountered as a condition rather than as a logical category.

The structural reading is that Heidegger is pointing at the boundary of phenomenal disclosure, the point at which beings cease to be available as contents of consciousness. This boundary is, on the framework's account, the modality's absence (Chapter 13). The framework treats it as a real structural feature of consciousness rather than as a mere logical negation, and Heidegger's insistence that the Nichts is a positive phenomenon rather than a negation aligns with this.

What Heidegger adds is the famous Das Nichts nichtet — the nothing nothings. The phrase is the most contested in Heidegger's text, and Carnap's celebrated critique in "The Elimination of Metaphysics" (1932/1959) treats it as a paradigm of meaningless metaphysics. This reading offers a more charitable interpretation.

On the charitable reading, Das Nichts nichtet marks that the encounter with the Nichts in anxiety is not the encounter with a thing but with a condition that has its own phenomenological profile. Beings characteristically are; what Heidegger calls the Nichts characteristically nothings, where "nothings" names the phenomenological signature of the slipping-away of beings as a whole. The verb is constructed to block the assimilation of the Nichts to the category of beings, which Heidegger thinks is the characteristic mistake of metaphysics.

The framework can accommodate this reading with one addition, which is a departure, since it removes what Heidegger's phrase asserts: for Heidegger the Nichts nihilates — it does something — and the relocation below of that doing to the experiencing subject is charitable to Carnap's demand that a verb have a subject, and departs from Heidegger's insistence that the nothing is not a subject of that kind. The

terminus has no characteristic activity in any working sense. It does not nothing; it does not do anything; doing requires determination, and the terminus has none. What Heidegger describes under Das Nichts nichtet is therefore not an activity of the terminus but the phenomenological character of approaching it — the slipping-away of beings, the loss of meaningful engagement, the affective signature of simplification. The activity belongs to the experiencing subject, undergoing the phenomenological dissolution of her ordinary field of engagement.

Heidegger's later thought modifies the picture: the shift from Das Nichts to Sein, and to the meditation on the giving (*Es gibt*) of Being, moves him toward the maximally articulated being rather than the terminus, since the later Sein admits of articulation — the history of being, the epochs of metaphysics — which places it within diversity.

The Kyoto School engagement with Heidegger, particularly in Nishitani's (1982) *Religion and Nothingness* recognises the structural identity between Heideggerian Nichts and Buddhist śūnyatā and treats the convergence as a basis for cross-tradition dialogue. The framework endorses the convergence, since both are pointing at the same condition, with different overlays and different methodological approaches, and the appearance of disagreement is largely an artefact of different vocabularies.

3.4 Buddhist śūnyatā: a careful reading

The Buddhist concept of śūnyatā ("emptiness") is the most exegetically delicate of the cases. Three considerations make engagement difficult. Śūnyatā is interpreted differently across the major Buddhist schools. Its most influential articulation, in Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (second century CE), is famously cryptic. And the Buddhist tradition's relationship to metaphysical claims is itself contested — some read Nāgārjuna as making metaphysical claims the framework can engage; others read him as advancing a therapeutic position that abjures metaphysics altogether. Westerhoff (2009) provides a sustained philosophical reconstruction defending the structural reading. Garfield's translation and commentary (1995), and Siderits and Katsura's (2013), anchor the two readings in the text itself;

and Garfield and Priest (2003) develop the limits-of-thought reading, on which Nāgārjuna's paradoxical verses exhibit the inclosure structure Chapter 7 (§5) engages through Priest's schema — so the framework's reply there transfers to this material directly.

Two principal readings are distinguished. The framework's compatibility with each is considered separately. The appendix takes no firm position on which is correct.

The first reading — the svabhāva-denial reading — treats śūnyatā as the absence of intrinsic essence (svabhāva) in all phenomena. Nāgārjuna's claim is structural rather than metaphysical-in-the-grand-sense. Phenomena lack intrinsic essence because they are constituted relationally: each depends for its identity on its relations to others; there is no level at which a phenomenon can be characterised purely in terms of its own intrinsic features. Dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda) is the positive correlate: phenomena arise in dependence on conditions, and the network of dependencies is what their being consists in.

On this reading, śūnyatā is a claim about the structure of diversity rather than about the terminus. It aligns with the framework's structural dependence thesis (Chapter 2): content requires contrast, and contrast requires relation. What Nāgārjuna calls the absence of svabhāva the framework calls the relational constitution of content. The convergence is striking: Nāgārjuna and the framework arrive at the same insight through different routes. On this reading, śūnyatā belongs alongside Brandom's holism and Saussure's structuralism (Chapter 2), not within the nothingness tradition.

The second reading — the terminus reading — takes śūnyatā as approaching the structural terminus directly. On this reading, śūnyatā is not only the absence of intrinsic essence but the recognition that all conceptual articulation is conditioned, dependent, and ultimately empty of fixed reference. The recognition culminates in a state (sometimes prajñā, sometimes the realisation of tathatā) that goes beyond ordinary conceptual thinking, encountering the terminus itself.

The terminus reading has support in some Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions, in some readings of Nāgārjuna's most paradoxical verses

("all is empty, even emptiness"), and in the philosophical work of Candrakīrti and Tsongkhapa. The framework can engage it directly: the encounter with śūnyatā in this sense is the cognitive approach to zero complexity. Two refinements are needed. First, the framework cannot endorse the claim that the practitioner attains the terminus in any straightforward sense. The terminus admits of no encounter, because encounter requires contrast between the encountering subject and the encountered condition. What the practitioner attains is an experience of extreme simplification that the modality registers as the dissolution of differentiated content. Second, the framework cannot endorse the claim that the realisation eliminates the subject-object distinction literally. The practitioner remains a differentiated subject throughout, even when the phenomenology involves the felt dissolution of the structure. The dissolution is phenomenological, not structural.

These refinements are not refutations, since they are the framework's characteristic moves applied to the Buddhist material, parallel to the moves in Chapter 6 (on pure consciousness events) and Chapter 12 (on apophatic theology). The framework agrees with the Buddhist tradition that the terminus is a real condition, that the tradition's practices have a real relation to its approach, and that the conceptual articulation of śūnyatā tracks something the framework recognises. What the framework adds is the diagnostic vocabulary that distinguishes the terminus from the phenomenology of approaching it.

On the svabhāva-denial reading, śūnyatā belongs alongside the framework's structural dependence thesis as a parallel insight about the relational constitution of content within diversity, not within the nothingness presentation. Whereas on the terminus reading, śūnyatā belongs within the nothingness presentation as a clean identification of the terminus, with the overlays appropriate to its tradition. The cross-tradition convergence Nishitani identifies between Nichts and śūnyatā operates most cleanly on the terminus reading: both point at the terminus under the descriptive aspect of nothingness, with methodological and phenomenological differences explained by the different practical contexts. The doctrine's companion thesis of no-self, and its bearing on agency and desert, are engaged at Chapter 18 (§6.9).

3.5 What nothingness gets right and what it overlays

The nothingness presentation correctly identifies the structural condition under the contrast with being; the overlay is the negative predicate of non-being, which, like unity in §2, requires the very contrast the terminus lacks, which is why the traditions' best moments hedge accordingly. Two parallels with §2 deserve notice: the presentation has its own productive instinct (how did being arise from nothing?), failing as emanation fails — Chapter 9's dissolution and §3.2's argument being the same structural move. And it develops its own phenomenological methods of approach: anxiety, meditation on emptiness, apophatic silence — cultivating the modality's response to extreme simplification under a different descriptive aspect.

The diagnostic conclusion parallels §2. What is diagnosed is the overlay, not the underlying identification. The condition cannot bear the negative determinations the traditions attribute to it; "nothing" and "non-being" are descriptive overlays rather than constitutive features; and the condition is identical with what the oneness traditions encounter as the One under their different contrast.

4 Infinity as Equality

4.1 The structural reading

A tradition that begins from the manifest fact of bounded particulars and seeks what exceeds all bounds asks: what is without limit? Where the oneness tradition starts from plurality and the nothingness tradition from being, the infinity-as-equality tradition starts from finitude and seeks the limitlessness beyond every bound.

The structural complication, developed in Chapter 8, is that "without limit" is ambiguous between two distinct conditions. Infinite diversity is limitlessness as the endless extension of internal structure — more distinctions, more articulations, more content, without bound. Infinite equality, by contrast, is limitlessness as the dissolution of the conditions for extension — no distinctions, no articulations, no content, where the absence of bounds follows from the absence of anything that

could be bounded. The two are structurally opposite presentations of "without limit." The infinity-as-equality tradition is concerned only with the second. Traditions that conceive divine infinity as infinite diversity (a being of unbounded knowledge, power, and presence) belong elsewhere; they are pointing at the maximally articulated being of Chapter 24.

The diagnostic question is therefore: when a tradition says God or Brahman or Ein Sof is "infinite," which infinity does it mean? The answer is rarely transparent. Many traditions slide between the senses within a single text, which is itself revealing. A tradition that wants its divine infinite to be both maximally rich (infinite diversity) and maximally simple (infinite equality) commits the conflation Chapter 8 identifies and Chapter 10 develops. Nicholas of Cusa (1954) stands at the hinge the question exposes: the coincidence of maximum with minimum in the absolute reads, under the disambiguation, as the collapse of contrast that marks the second infinity rather than the abundance that marks the first. The appendix's concern is with strands of those traditions that truly target infinity-as-equality.

What infinity-as-equality presentations share is the apophatic instinct. Where oneness traditions tend toward positive predication and nothingness traditions toward negation-as-positive-phenomenon, infinity-as-equality traditions therefore tend toward radical apophasis: the divine exceeds all predication, including the predication of unity and of non-being. The apophatic instinct is the tradition's structural recognition that no positive description fits the condition, and that the negative descriptions earlier moments offered are themselves overlays the deeper apophasis must strip away.

Three observations. The presentation has been most fully developed within the monotheistic apophatic strands, which Chapter 12 engages from one angle and this section from another, given its structural identity with the One of §2 and the Nichts of §3. Its characteristic method is the via negativa, in which each positive predicate is systematically denied until only the condition to which none applies remains, a method not unique to it but receiving its most disciplined development here. And it has its own relation to mystical experience:

where oneness correlates with unitive union and nothingness with confronted absence, infinity-as-equality correlates with dissolution into limitlessness: Sufi fanāʾ, Christian ecstasis, Kabbalistic bittul — treated, as before, as the modality's response to extreme simplification.

4.2 Apophatic infinity and Pseudo-Dionysius

The most influential Christian development of infinity-as-equality is the corpus attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (late fifth or early sixth century), whose influence on Christian apophatic theology is disproportionate to its modest size.

The structural reading can begin with the closing passage of The *Mystical Theology*. That passage proceeds through a systematic denial of every predicate that might be applied to the divine. So God is not life, not being, not eternity, not time, not deity, not Father, not Son, not anything that exists, not anything that does not exist; God is beyond every assertion and beyond every denial. The passage culminates in the recognition that even the apophatic descriptions fall short of the divine reality.

The reading here is immediate, since Pseudo-Dionysius is pointing at the condition to which no determinate predication, positive or negative, applies. The systematic exhaustion of categories is the via negativa in its most disciplined form, and the recognition that the negations themselves fall short is the tradition's acknowledgment that the condition lies beyond the descriptive resources the negations rely on. The framework reads this as the apophatic tradition's structural identification of the terminus, with the characteristic recognition that the identification cannot be spelled out in any positive vocabulary, including negation.

What Pseudo-Dionysius adds is the overlay characteristic of the infinity-as-equality presentation. The condition is described as the divine darkness, the cloud of unknowing, the brilliance that exceeds vision and so appears as obscurity to the limited capacity of created intellect. The descriptions reflect the Dionysian theological commitment to the divine as the source from which all created reality emanates and

to which the soul ascends in contemplative union. The framework cannot endorse the theological commitments — the terminus is the condition at the limit of articulated diversity, not the transcendent aspect of a creator God — but it can endorse the apophatic method and the structural recognition the method achieves.

A particular Dionysian move deserves attention: the doctrine that God is "beyond affirmation and negation" (*hyper apophasin kai kataphasin*). This is the tradition's most sophisticated structural recognition. Pseudo-Dionysius is not merely saying the negations are more accurate than the affirmations (which would still leave the divine within the field of contrastive predication). He is saying that both fall short, because both presuppose the contrast each side invokes, and the divine exceeds the contrast itself. The move tracks the framework's claim that the terminus admits of no contrast, that "neither being nor non-being" is the appropriate structural description, and that the descriptive resources of contrastive predication fail at the terminus rather than landing on either side.

What the framework adds is the diagnostic recognition that what lies beyond contrastive predication is the condition itself, encountered under the apophatic aspect rather than as a transcendent reality the apophatic vocabulary approaches obliquely. Pseudo-Dionysius takes the move to indicate that the divine essence is hyper-real, exceeding ordinary categories. The framework takes it to indicate that the descriptive aspect of infinity-as-equality has reached its own limit, and that what the apophatic method approaches is the condition shared with the One of Plotinus and the Nichts of Heidegger.

The reception confirms the reading from inside the tradition. Eriugena (1987) names God nihil per excellentiam, a nothingness of excess rather than of lack, drawing the Dionysian denials to their limit. At the close of the pagan school Damascius (2010) had already pressed the first principle past the One to the Ineffable, of which even unity is denied. Both stand where the three presentations meet.

The modern scholarship on the corpus bears on which reading its author would own, and the framework's account should be stated

against it rather than around it. Rorem (1993) supplies the standard commentary and the map of the corpus's influence. Perl (2007) presents the most philosophically developed interpretation, on which the Dionysian God is beyond being as the cause and presence of all beings: theophany, every creature a manifestation of the God who exceeds them — so that the hyper-vocabulary marks superabundance, never lack. Perl's reading is, in the vocabulary of Chapter 12, a disciplined development of the eminence horn: a God beyond being through excess of determination is within the grid, richer than every concept but on the diversity side of the partition. The reading preserves the corpus's coherence at the cost Chapter 12 (§5) itemises: the hard apophatic claim is given up, and 'beyond being' names a maximum, never an exit.

The framework's identification of the terminus beneath the divine darkness is accordingly a claim about the privative strand of the corpus's language, the strand its own closing negations press furthest. Where the scholarship reads the whole corpus eminently, the disagreement is the costed fork of Chapter 12 (§4.3), met there and merely instantiated here.

A further Dionysian move worth noting is the doctrine of analogical predication, more fully developed in Aquinas. The doctrine holds that positive predicates applied to the divine are analogical rather than univocal. God is "good" not in the sense in which a human person is good but in a sense that bears a structural relation to ordinary goodness while exceeding it. The framework's response (Chapter 10) is that analogy cannot reach the terminus. Analogy preserves a structural relation between analogue and original, and structural relations require contrast, which the terminus does not admit. Analogical predication can describe a maximally articulated being whose properties analogically extend ordinary properties; it cannot describe the terminus.

4.3 Maimonides and negative predication

Moses Maimonides, writing in the late twelfth century, develops the most rigorous philosophical articulation of the via negativa within the Abrahamic traditions. Its central apophatic move can be stated structurally.

Maimonides distinguishes, in the *Guide* (1963, I.51–60), between attributes of action (descriptions of what God does, legitimate insofar as they describe God's effects in the world) and attributes of essence (descriptions of what God is in himself, illegitimate because no positive predication reaches the divine essence). When Scripture says God is wise, Maimonides reads this as an attribute of action — God's effects are such as would be produced by a wise agent — rather than as a positive ascription of wisdom to the divine essence.

The structural reading is that the attributes-of-essence prohibition is the via negativa applied to predication itself. No positive predicate can be true of the divine essence, because positive predication requires the essence to have determinate features that contrast with their absence, and the divine essence (as Maimonides understands it, drawing on the Greek and Arabic philosophical traditions) admits of no such contrast. What remains is the structural identification of the terminus under the infinity-as-equality aspect.

Maimonides's apophasis is more austere than Pseudo-Dionysius's. Where Pseudo-Dionysius offers an extensive vocabulary of divine names that are then progressively negated, Maimonides is sceptical from the outset that any positive vocabulary describes the divine essence at all. The negation is therefore more total, because even apparent positive descriptions of Scripture are reinterpreted as descriptions of divine action, and the divine essence remains beyond linguistic reach in a way that admits of fewer rhetorical concessions.

The framework's reading parallels the Dionysian case: the terminus correctly identified, a disciplined apophatic vocabulary developed — and an unendorsable commitment to a creator God whose essence is the apophatic terminus, since the essence/action bifurcation presupposes the creator-creation relation Chapter 9 rejects.

A further Maimonidean move is the doctrine of negative attributes proper. The theory holds that the strictest theological descriptions are doubly negative: God is not non-living, God is not non-knowing, God is not non-existent. The form is supposed to convey something positive (existence, knowledge, life) while preserving the apophatic discipline.

The framework's response parallels its response to analogical predication: the doubly negative form does not escape the structural problem. If it conveys real positive content, it commits the same predicative problems as direct positive ascription. If it conveys only the absence of the negation, it succeeds only in marking that the divine lies outside the contrastive field within which such predicates ordinarily operate — which is the structural recognition the framework can endorse, but which adds no content beyond what the more straightforward apophatic methods already deliver.

4.4 The Ein Sof of Kabbalah

The Kabbalistic tradition — from twelfth-century Provence and Spain through the *Zohar* to Lurianic Safed — offers the most metaphysically elaborated articulation of infinity-as-equality within Jewish thought. The concept that bears the weight is Ein Sof, literally "without end" or "the limitless."

The Kabbalistic system distinguishes Ein Sof from the sefirot, the ten emanations through which the divine reveals itself in the structure of creation. The sefirot admit of articulation, relation, and characterisation, since they are the divine attributes considered as dynamic principles of self-disclosure, corresponding to the maximally articulated divine being of Chapter 24. Ein Sof, by contrast, admits of no articulation, no relation, no characterisation. Ein Sof is the limitless prior to and beneath the sefirot. Scholem (1941) remains the foundational scholarly treatment of Kabbalistic doctrine; Idel (1988) provides a major revisionist account that emphasises the experiential and theurgic dimensions alongside the speculative. The tradition performs the identification itself: Kabbalistic usage pairs Ein Sof with Ayin, nothingness, as names for the same unmanifest ground (Matt, 1990), so the equation of the limitless with the nameless negative is internal to the sources rather than an overlay of the framework.

On this reading the case is immediate. The Kabbalistic tradition has identified the terminus under the infinity-as-equality aspect, with the descriptive overlay of limitlessness, and has located it within a metaphysical system that distinguishes it cleanly from the articulated

divine reality of the sefirot. The distinction between Ein Sof and sefirot tracks the framework's distinction between infinite equality and infinite diversity step for step. What the tradition adds is a complex metaphysical narrative about how the sefirot emerge from Ein Sof and how creation in turn emerges from the sefirot. The Lurianic doctrine of tzimtzum (the divine self-contraction by which Ein Sof withdraws to make room for creation) is the most influential narrative.

The framework's response parallels the Plotinian and Dionysian cases: the productive narrative — here tzimtzum, there emanation — cannot be endorsed, both attempting to extract determinate processes from the terminus. The underlying identification can be, Ein Sof the terminus and the sefirot the levels of articulated diversity, so the two-infinities distinction is recognised within Kabbalah.

The Kabbalistic engagement has a phenomenological correlate: bittul (self-nullification before Ein Sof) and the related Hasidic contemplative methods, read as the oneness and nothingness practices were read — approach through extreme simplification, with the phenomenological signature determined by the descriptive aspect of limitlessness.

A note on the relation between Kabbalah and Maimonidean apophasis. The two traditions are sometimes treated as competing within medieval Jewish thought — Maimonides representing a rationalist apophasis and the Kabbalists a more experiential engagement. The framework reads the apparent competition as compatible with structural identity. Both identify the same terminus; they differ in methods (philosophical analysis versus contemplative practice) and overlays (essence/action bifurcation in Maimonides; Ein Sof/sefirot in Kabbalah).

4.5 The mystical infinite across traditions

Beyond the major monotheistic apophatic traditions, infinity-as-equality appears in a range of mystical traditions. Meister Eckhart's (1981) distinction between God (Gott) and Godhead (Gottheit) is the most striking. Eckhart distinguishes God as the personal divine of

religious devotion from Godhead as the unconditioned ground from which God himself emerges. The distinction maps onto the two-infinities distinction as cleanly as the nirguna/saguna distinction and the Ein Sof/sefirot distinction. Eckhart's God is the maximally articulated divine being; his Godhead is the terminus.

The Sufi tradition develops infinity-as-equality through fanāʾ (annihilation) and the philosophical work of Ibn al-ʿArabī, whose own architecture reproduces the Ein Sof/sefirot division: the Essence (dhāt), beyond every name and relation and unknowable as such, stands against the divine names, through which alone the Real is related to anything (Ibn al-ʿArabī, 1980). The framework reads the Essence as the terminus under the infinity-as-equality aspect and the names as the articulated level, and reads fanāʾ as it reads bittul and unitive union — the contemplative dissolution of creaturely boundedness into divine limitlessness, undergone within diversity by a subject who remains one. These mystical traditions converge with the apophatic theological ones on the structural identification, differing in method: systematic analysis in the one, contemplative practice and experiential report in the other. Sells (1994) traced the same discourse across Plotinus, Eriugena, Ibn al-ʿArabī, Porete, and Eckhart as one language of unsaying; the unity thesis (§5) says what the language unsays.

4.6 What infinity-as-equality gets right and what it overlays

The infinity-as-equality presentation correctly identifies the structural condition under the contrast with finitude. The overlay is limitlessness: a predicate that, like unity and non-being, invokes a contrast the terminus does not admit, since strictly the terminus is neither finite nor infinite. Here too the tradition's best moments hedge, in parallel with the others'. The presentation completes the parallel structure of §§2 and 3: each of the three correctly identifies the terminus; each overlays it with a contrast-requiring predicate; each tradition's own apophatic hedges acknowledge the point.

A specialist resistance to this section's identifications should be met with texts rather than schema. The traditions, it will be said, describe their ultimates as plenitude: supreme fullness, not privation. To read Ein

Sof or nirguna Brahman as the condition of zero internal distinction, the objection runs, is to invert their sense. Two cases show the traditions performing the section's own move. Śaṅkara, commenting on the Taittirīya definition of Brahman as reality, knowledge, infinite (*satyaṃ jñānam anantam*), denies that the terms qualify Brahman as properties qualify a substance. They function by indication (*lakṣaṇā*), each cancelling a limitation: 'knowledge' denies insentience without ascribing a knower's structure; 'infinite' denies limit without ascribing extent. The definition's positivity is, on the tradition's own reading, a disciplined battery of negations (Deutsch, 1969).

And the Kabbalistic corpus houses its plenitude carefully. The fullness — wisdom, mercy, judgement, splendour — belongs to the sefirot, the differentiated presentations. Ein Sof 'itself' is beyond all attribution: the limitless of which nothing, fullness included, is strictly said (Scholem, 1941; Idel, 1988). The plenitude reading is right about the traditions and wrong about its target. The fullness is carried by the manifest and differentiated, saguna Brahman and the sefirot; the terminus-concepts are kept apophatically bare by the traditions themselves. Where a text does predicate plenitude of the terminus directly, the eminence horn of Chapter 12's dilemma applies: the predication places its object within diversity — beyond us, but not beyond the grid.

5 The Unity Thesis: Why Three Names for One Condition

5.1 The thesis stated

The thesis: singularity (as oneness), nothingness, and infinity-as-equality are three relational presentations of one structural condition, individuated by which contrast each tradition takes as salient. The condition admits of no contrasts — any contrast would already be diversity — but the descriptive aspects under which it is encountered differ. The traditions converge on what they identify; they diverge on how they describe the identification. The table holds the three side by side, row by row; the text then argues what the rows assert.

	Oneness	**Nothingness**	**Infinity-as-equality**
The name (Ch. 8, §2)	One	Zero	Infinity
Salient contrast	Multiplicity	Being	Finitude
The overlay	Unity	Non-being	Limitlessness
Productive narrative	Emanation	Creation from nothing	Tzimtzum
Approach and its phenomenology	Contemplative ascent; unitive union	Anxiety, meditation on emptiness; confronted absence	Via negativa, self-nullification; dissolution into limitlessness
Exemplars	Plotinus; Parmenides (monist reading); nirguna Brahman	Leibniz's question; das Nichts; śūnyatā (terminus reading)	Pseudo-Dionysius; Maimonides; Ein Sof; the Godhead
Engaged at	§2; Chs. 4, 10	§3; Chs. 9, 5	§4; Chs. 12, 8

The thesis has three components. The identification component: each tradition identifies the same structural condition, the absence of internal distinction. The identification is not metaphorical or analogical; the traditions are pointing at the same condition under different descriptions. The differentiation component: the three traditions differ in which contrast each takes as salient. Oneness is structured by the contrast with multiplicity; nothingness by the contrast with being; infinity-as-equality by the contrast with finitude. The descriptive aspect each tradition encounters is determined by the contrast under which the tradition approaches the condition. The overlay component: each descriptive aspect carries an interpretive overlay the framework can

diagnose without dismissing. Unity, non-being, and limitlessness are predicates that require the very contrasts the condition lacks. The traditions' structural identifications are endorsed; what the diagnosis adds is the recognition that the predicates describe how the condition appears under a particular contrast, rather than how the condition is in itself.

The thesis is a unification thesis: many apparently distinct concepts in the history of philosophy and theology are, on the structural reading, presentations of one condition. The unification is diagnostic rather than reductive. The traditions are not collapsed into one another, and their distinctive contributions are not erased. What is accomplished is the recognition that the apparent multiplicity of metaphysical and theological termini reflects a unity at the structural level.

The contextualist objection is that no such convergence can be read off the traditions, because mystical experience is shaped throughout by the concepts, texts and practices the mystic brings to it, so that the Buddhist, the Kabbalist and the Christian contemplative undergo different experiences and report different things (Katz, 1978). In reply, the unity thesis can grant the premise whole, since it makes no claim about experience. That the categories a subject brings sharpen what she discriminates is the framework's own view of labelling (Chapter 7, §3.1), and the three presentations of §§2–4 are that shaping at work: the contrast a tradition takes as salient decides whether the condition is met as the One, as nothingness or as the boundless. What the thesis identifies is the address of the descriptions once each is taken strictly. A description that removes every distinction leaves no respect in which what it describes could differ from what another such description describes, so two structureless conditions are one condition under two names, whatever the differences between the experiences and the doctrines that led to the descriptions. The thesis is conditional in the way this implies, and testable tradition by tradition. A tradition's ultimate is an instance where its strict description removes all distinction; where the description keeps structure, as with the persons of a Godhead, the sefirot or a saguna Brahman, it falls on the diverse side and is no instance. Against a pure consciousness event with no content

(Forman, 1990) the framework sides with Katz, since a contentless experience is no experience (Chapter 6, §4). Against Katz's inference from different experiences to different ultimates it holds that the referent is fixed by the description's content, which at the limit leaves no room for two.

5.2 Why three?

Why does the condition admit of these three descriptive aspects rather than two, or seven, or a continuum?

The answer is that the three contrasts (multiplicity, being, finitude) correspond to three fundamental modes under which diversity is structured. Every articulated field of diversity exhibits these three modes. The field contains many items rather than one, which is multiplicity. The items exist rather than not — being. The items are bounded rather than unbounded, which is finitude. These are the structural conditions any field of articulated diversity must satisfy. The terminus is the negation of all three modes simultaneously, but each tradition selects one as its starting point and consequently encounters the terminus as the negation of that mode. These are the three names of Chapter 8 (§2), one, zero, and infinity, reached there from the mind's side and here from the traditions'; the count is the same because the contrasts are.

The selection of contrast determines the descriptive aspect. A tradition that begins from multiplicity asks what would have no internal multiplicity, and the answer appears as unity. A tradition that begins from being asks what would have no being, and the answer appears as nothing. A tradition that begins from finitude asks what would have no bounds, and the answer appears as the limitless. The three are not arbitrary alternative descriptions; they are the structurally available presentations corresponding to the three structural conditions for articulated diversity.

A natural objection: why these three modes rather than others? Could there be further structural conditions, generating further contrasts and aspects?

The answer is conservative. The three modes appear to be fundamental in that no field of diversity can fail to satisfy all three. But other contrasts may generate further descriptive aspects under more specific analyses. Two deserve notice. The contrast with change generates immutability: a tradition that takes change as the salient feature and asks what would be without change reaches a condition with no internal variation. The classical theological tradition of divine immutability is the principal instantiation. The contrast with composition generates simplicity: a tradition that asks what would be without composition reaches a condition without internal parts. The doctrine of divine simplicity, developed by Augustine and Aquinas and engaged in Chapter 10, is the principal instantiation.

These do not undermine the unity thesis; they extend it. The terminus admits of as many descriptive aspects as there are contrasts under which it can be approached. Three is not a maximum; three is the number most prominent in the major historical traditions. Immutability and simplicity have also been developed, particularly within the classical theological traditions, and the framework can incorporate them as further presentations of the same condition.

The deeper point is that all the descriptive aspects share the same diagnostic structure. Each takes a feature of articulated diversity, asks what would be the absence of that feature, and reaches a condition to which no positive predicate applies. The condition reached is the same in every case; the descriptive vocabulary differs because the starting contrast differs.

5.3 The closing diagnostic observation

Each presentation is correct in what it affirms about the terminus. The terminus has no internal multiplicity (the oneness tradition's correct observation), no being in the sense of determinate features (the nothingness tradition's), no finitude in the sense of bounded internal structure (the infinity-as-equality tradition's). The traditions are not in competition on the underlying identification; they are in convergence.

What separates them, beyond the overlays, is the interpretive framework within which each places its identification — productive for the oneness traditions, phenomenological for the nothingness traditions, theological for infinity-as-equality; the frameworks differ, the structural identification does not. One reply the productive traditions share has been met above only by reference: that the terminus produces by superabundance, so that no selection is needed for the many to proceed from the One. Chapter 3 (§3.4) meets it where the traditions state it, and Chapter 4 (§5) supplies the foreclosure; the appendix's repeated verdict on emanation, māyā, and tzimtzum is that reply's conclusion applied to each. The convergence has implications for cross-tradition work: twentieth-century comparative philosophy and theology, including the Kyoto School's engagement with Heidegger, the apophatic–śūnyatā dialogue, Kabbalah–Sufism comparison, has often noticed the convergence without the structural vocabulary to articulate it, and the unity thesis provides that vocabulary: the disagreements lie at the level of overlay, not identification.

A final observation. The three (or more) descriptive aspects are not three views of the terminus, as if three observers looked at a single object from three angles. The metaphor of viewing is misleading because the terminus has no positive features that could be viewed. The descriptive aspects are three modes of failure of description under three different contrasts. The oneness tradition fails to describe the terminus by means of "one"; the nothingness tradition fails by means of "nothing"; the infinity-as-equality tradition fails by means of "infinite." Each failure has the characteristic shape of finding that the predicate requires a contrast the terminus does not admit. What appears as three descriptions is three patterns of descriptive failure, each generated by a different contrast, each tracing the structural limit at which predication fails. The unity at the structural level is the unity of the limit itself; the diversity at the descriptive level is the diversity of the contrasts that generate the limit.

The framework's vocabulary is itself an apophatic move. It describes the descriptive failures rather than the terminus itself. What it can do, and what the historical traditions have done less cleanly, is mark

the structural identity of the failures and explain why they take the three (or more) characteristic forms they take. The terminus is what is left when the descriptions fail. The framework's contribution is to make the failure intelligible without pretending to succeed where the failure is structurally inevitable.

6 Implications for the Main Text

The unity thesis is consolidatory in its structure and substantive in its exegesis (§1); it holds of the traditions' privative strands. It introduces no new structural results. What it does is make explicit the cross-tradition reach of results already established. The treatment is brief: each chapter has done its own work, and the implications noted here are clarifications rather than revisions. The table records, chapter by chapter, what the thesis adds.

Chapter	What the unity thesis adds
Ch. 4 The grounding terminus	The terminus is identifiable with the One, nirguna Brahman, das Nichts, Ein Sof, the Godhead — without any tradition's overlay. Arguments against one productive overlay generalise to all
Ch. 9 The dissolution of creation	Every productive transition from the terminus dissolves together. Emanation and tzimtzum face the difficulty creation ex nihilo faces
Ch. 10 The separation of ground and mind	Divine simplicity is a further overlay beside the three. The Vedāntic cit and sākṣin meet the reply the Neo-Thomist defences meet
Ch. 12 The limits of negative theology	The apophatic recognition was reached independently across the traditions. The convergence is evidence that the condition is real

Chapter	What the unity thesis adds
Ch. 24 Peace and God	The classical God is a layered conflation. One condition under three names, conjoined with the maximally articulated being
Ch. 8 The two infinities	The conflation diagnosed in classical theism recurs across the traditions. The constructive space it opens is cross-tradition too

The mapping records a distinction the traditions had already drawn — between the terminus and the maximally articulated being — often without the structural vocabulary to state it; the framework supplies the map rather than the choice among them.

7 Closing Note on Method

Two methodological commitments have shaped the engagement. The first is charitable engagement: each tradition has been met at its most disciplined formulation — Plotinus through his most rigorous claims, Śaṅkara through the nirguna/saguna distinction and neti neti, Heidegger through the charitable reading of Das Nichts nichtet rather than Carnap's dismissal, Maimonides through the attributes-of-essence prohibition, Ein Sof through its structural distinction from the sefirot. Charitable engagement is not neutrality: the traditions are not refuted, but their structural identifications are endorsed and their interpretive overlays diagnosed with one consistent vocabulary — if the condition has the features the framework attributes to it, the productive narratives across the traditions face structurally identical difficulties.

The second commitment is interpretive openness where the scholarship is contested. Disputes have been flagged within several traditions: Parmenides, Das Nichts nichtet, śūnyatā, Plotinian emanation, Maimonidean double negation — and in each case the major readings are engaged without forcing a resolution, since the cross-tradition claims do not depend on settling intra-tradition disputes. Openness is not vagueness: where scholarship is settled the appendix

has taken positions, and where it is unsettled it has held back from positions the framework does not require, identifying which claims the framework needs and which can be left to specialists.

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