APPENDIX B

The Terminus Without Diversity: One, Zero and Infinity

Plotinus called it the One. Parmenides called it Being. Śaṅkara called it Brahman without attributes. Heidegger called it das Nichts, the nothing. The Kabbalists called it Ein Sof, the limitless. Their vocabularies look nothing alike.

The appendix argues that they are pointing at the same thing. That thing is what the book calls equality: a condition with no internal distinction, nothing inside it to be told apart from anything else. Appendix A reaches it as the end of the chain of grounds and the end of time.

Oneness, nothingness and one kind of infinity are three presentations of one condition. What separates them is the contrast each tradition starts from: multiplicity, being or finitude. The condition itself admits of no contrasts, since a contrast would already be a distinction.

Starting from the many: oneness

Begin from the plain plurality of the world and ask what lies underneath. The natural answer is unity. A ground of multiplicity, conceived as what holds before any multiplicity does, can carry no distinction inside it.

What the tradition adds is the overlay of unity. The condition gets described as the presence of one undivided reality, and no longer as the absence of all distinction. That switch from absence to presence makes the condition look like a something: the One, or a principle.

Plotinus is the model case. His One has no parts, no attributes, and lies beyond being. The diagnosis bites on emanation, the procession by which the One gives rise to Intellect. Why Intellect and nothing else? The terminus has no features from which such a choice could be drawn. Here the appendix offers a charitable reading. On it, emanation language marks structural priority and no productive act. This sits close to Gerson’s reading of Plotinus and broadly fits the framework. The cost is that Plotinus’s most striking imagery, the One overflowing and the sun radiating, cannot be underwritten.

Parmenides is the harder case. On one reading his Being is the terminus, with the plural world demoted to appearance. On another it admits internal variety, which is the opposite extreme. The appendix sets out both and declines to choose.

Śaṅkara draws the distinction the framework wants. Brahman with attributes is the personal divine of worship, read here as the maximally articulated being of Chapter 24. Brahman without attributes is the terminus, approached by the formula neti, neti, “not this, not this”. Every positive predicate is denied in turn. One large disagreement follows. Liberation, on the Advaitic account,

involves recognising that your self is identical with that attributeless Brahman. The framework cannot allow it, since a self is built within diversity. Its charity extends to the identification alone.

Starting from being: nothingness

Begin instead from the fact that things exist, and ask what the absence of being would be. To be is to be differentiated, with determinate features. Remove all of that and nothing is left to be told apart.

The overlay here is negative: the void, or non-being. Strictly the terminus is neither being nor non-being, as Chapter 3 shows. It bears no properties at all, and it still obtains, while non-being could never be there to be reached.

Chapter 9 shows why the old question goes wrong. Why is there anything at all? Leibniz's version runs two senses of nothingness together. Read as the terminus, the question cannot form as asked, since the terminus stands in no relations at all. Read as a universe-shaped absence, the question has stopped being about nothing, and becomes the well-formed question why being is differentiated. The deep version is incoherent and the coherent version is shallow. Hume and Kant offered versions of this, and the framework adds the mechanism that makes it correct. On both readings the same residue is left, the obtaining question, which Chapter 5 accepts and leaves standing.

Heidegger's nothing is encountered in anxiety, where particular things lose their grip. His famous phrase is that the nothing nothings, which Rudolf Carnap dismissed as meaningless metaphysics. The appendix reads it more charitably, as naming the signature of that slipping-away. Then it admits a departure. For Heidegger the nothing does something, and the appendix moves that doing to the person undergoing the experience.

Buddhist emptiness is the most delicate case to interpret. Emptiness can be read as the denial that anything has an intrinsic essence. On that reading it is a claim about how diversity hangs together, close to the result of Chapter 2 and not about the terminus at all. Or it can be read as approaching the terminus directly. The appendix takes no firm position. On the second reading it adds two refinements. Nobody encounters the terminus, since encounter needs a contrast between the one encountering and the thing met. And the practitioner stays a differentiated subject throughout, so the dissolution belongs to the experience and leaves the structure untouched.

Starting from the bounded: infinity as equality

Begin from bounded things and ask what has no limit. Limitlessness has two senses, as Chapter 8 showed. It can mean endless extension of structure, with no end to distinctions. It can mean the loss of whatever could be bounded: no distinctions at all. These are opposites, and many traditions slide between them inside a single text.

The traditions aiming at the second sense share the apophatic instinct, the habit of approaching by denial. Pseudo-Dionysius is the most influential Christian case. God is not life, not being, not anything that exists. Pseudo-Dionysius also places God beyond affirmation and negation alike, because each presupposes a contrast the divine exceeds. The appendix reads the method as identifying the terminus, while refusing the theology of a creator around it.

Kabbalah draws the same distinction. Ein Sof, the limitless, admits of no articulation at all. The ten sefirot, through which the divine discloses itself, admit of plenty. The appendix reads the pair as tracking the book's two infinities. What it cannot accept is the story of how the one yields the other, the divine self-contraction called tzimtzum. Emanation and tzimtzum fail together, for the one reason.

Why three, and why they are no kind of view

Why these three contrasts? Any field of diversity holds many items, the items exist, and the items are bounded. The terminus negates all three at once. A tradition picks one as its starting point, and so meets the terminus as the negation of that one. Three is no maximum, though: it is the number most prominent in the major traditions.

The three are no kind of view of an object seen from three angles, because nothing is there with features to view. They are three ways a description fails, each word needing a contrast the condition cannot supply.

The objections the appendix answers

The first comes from Steven Katz, who argued that mystical experience is shaped throughout by what the mystic brings to it. The appendix grants the premise whole, because its thesis says nothing about experience. Its claim is about where the descriptions point once each is taken strictly. A description that removes every distinction leaves no respect in which two such conditions could differ.

The second is that the traditions describe their ultimates as supreme fullness, so reading them as sheer absence inverts their sense. The reply grants the fullness but places it elsewhere, in Brahman with attributes and in the sefirot. Where a text does credit the terminus with fullness, the appendix says that text has placed its object inside diversity.

The third is the one the appendix presses on itself. Perl, in the most philosophically developed reading of Pseudo-Dionysius, takes his God to exceed every concept by abundance. On that reading the ultimate sits on the diversity side of the book's divide. The appendix concedes that its identification holds only of the privative strands, the parts that describe by denial, and that its own scholarship finds those strands contested at nearly every site.

What the appendix claims

The appendix states no grade of its own, and the Premise Register gives it no row. It calls itself consolidatory in its use of the framework and substantive in its exegesis, and the two halves come apart.

Many of the structural results it leans on are licensed by Chapters 2 to 12, where they are graded *established*. That is the rung below the book's top mark, *self-vindicating*. The grade means a result follows from premises the book defends, so a challenger has to reject one of them. Other borrowed results sit lower. The reading of what a practitioner undergoes draws on Chapter 13's account of consciousness, graded *constructed*: the best account going, with rivals still alive. Brahman with attributes is paired with Chapter 24's companion God, which that chapter grades *proposed*, an openly revisable offer. Chapter 3's exhaustive division gets no grade, being true by logical form. The appendix adds no new structural result.

The conditions differ too. Chapter 2's claim that content needs contrast hangs on no branch, and nor does Chapter 3's division. Other results hold only if the chain of grounds terminates, and they leave open whether a condition with no internal distinction is possible at all. The claim that the terminus still obtains rests on a premise the book lists as contested: a lack confers no internal articulation.

The exegetical half gets no grade on that ladder. The claim that the named traditions identify one condition holds of their privative strands, and nowhere else. The appendix flags the dispute at each contested site, among them Parmenides, emptiness, Heidegger's phrase and Plotinus's emanation.

Appendix C turns the same apparatus on analytic philosophy, reading its method as repair work on words that blur distinct things.