

Non-Being and Nothingness

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Abstract. There is a common belief that non-being and nothingness are identical, a widespread, even general delusion the wrongness of which I will try to demonstrate in this work. And which I consider even more important, that is to define nothingness for further determination of “its” place and role in the reality and especially in human life.

I

Analyzing, from the point of view of understanding of being, [this-being](#)'s understanding of *thing*, it is not difficult to make sure that the former is lying at the basis of the latter, i.e. *is supposed silently* by this-being before attributing to this very *thing* any action or quality.

The understanding of *thing*, therefore, is supposing, first of all and unequivocally, that it *is*, and afterwards this-being is making judgments about the kind or mode of its existence, or what it is doing.

Furthermore, *thing* may be both something surrounding this-being and a thing of this-being's mind, something *present* as well as *past* or *future*, either, from this-being's point of view, something really existing or imaginary.

The above-asserted becomes more obvious when we are analyzing the understanding of *thing* in cases when this-being is negating its existence, *being*.

When we say, for instance, ‘no centaur exists’, we negate the existence of such a creature. However, such a judgment itself has already supposed the *being* of at least one centaur, although an imaginary one, a result of this-being's mind.

When we say, for another example, ‘horned man’, we immediately imagine such a man, and although we negate afterwards his existence, he all the same has been involved in the world of being thanks to our imagination.

This is at the basis of one of the ancient paradoxes when the same judgment is negating its own validity. Saying ‘this judgment’ we mean the *already existence* of a given judgment, its *being* as a judgment where something is asserted, whereas

afterward we add an assertion about its falseness. That judgment is a *thing* as a unity, including the predicate, and a predicate cannot be referred to a judgment in which it is already present.

When this-being is negating being for *anything*, it is negating the being, let's say, in the outer world, in the reality imagined by itself, and however, at the same time, is involving that *thing* in being, although as a mental object so far.

It is difficult to find a more obvious proof for the above-asserted than things created by mankind during its history. The existence of all these things had started from non-existence in the eyes of this-being, and nevertheless, they acquired no less or may be even more real being in the eyes of this-being than the being of things which have not been created by this-being.

We can conclude, therefore, that even negating in its judgment the being of *anything*, this-being, on the contrary, is *confirming* it for a *world of possibilities*. In other words, saying 'this *thing* does not exist', this-being is saying, at the same time, 'such a *thing can exist*, it *already exists* in my mind', and thus is bringing into the world of being the very *thing* the existence of which is being denied in its judgment.

II

From this-being's point of view, to be vested with being means first of all to be an *object, thing*, and that is splitting the endless and continuous range of objects and phenomena surrounding this-being and is bringing some clarity to it.

While Kant speaks about the *a priori* forms of cognition, we, perhaps, can speak about the *a priori* form of understanding of being, that is, the *a priori*, pre-scientific, *hermeneutical* understanding of one or another *thing* as a single, concrete *being*.

Negation of *thing* is *nothing, nothingness*, but unlike *thing*, which, as we have said, is the outcome of this-being's understanding of being, *nothingness* must not be mistaken for this-being's understanding of *non-being*.

No-thing, that is absence of *thing*, i.e. not only absence of being, *non-being*, but also absence of any *bearer* of that non-being. This is the main difference between this-being's understanding of non-being and that of nothingness.

Both non-being and nothingness suppose non-existence, and that is the congeniality between them. And however, nothingness, unlike non-being, has no bearer and cannot have one.

Unlike non-being, nothingness cannot be subject or predicate in an affirmative judgment in Logic. Neither 'this *thing* is *nothing*' nor '*nothing* is *something*' logical constructions are possible. In Grammar, although there can be such constructions, nevertheless, they are empty in cognitive aspect because they cannot add anything to the notion of *nothing*, initially empty from this-being's point of view.

The hermeneutical thinking cannot make nothingness its subject as well, and the only problem it can pretend to resolve is to define the margin between *being* and *nothingness*.

III

Non-being is always and everywhere *for this-being*, non-being is manifesting itself as truth uncovered for this-being. This-being is not finding yet or already a certain *thing*, and that is prompting it to the thought that the given *thing is not* yet or already, or was not and will not be at all.

While non-being is always and everywhere for this-being, *nothingness* is supposed *in itself*, as a 'sphere' on which, from this-being's point of view, no judgments and grounded suppositions are possible.

This-being is aware that both itself and all surrounding things are coming from nothingness and are going toward nothingness, and however it has no idea about this nothingness, nothingness is non-being for this-being. This-being says, 'there was time when *I was not*, and there will be time when *I will not be*', and thus it reaches a limit beyond which it should either keep uncovering its non-being in the world of being, in the periods of the history of nature and mankind preceding and succeeding its being, or point to *nothingness, its non-being in itself*.

While non-being is still supposing a certain connection to the world of being, nothingness is supposing an absolute, total negation of being.

IV

As we have shown, non-being is negation of being, and however not an absolute but limited one, negation from the point of view of real being as understood by this-being, and this does not suppose negation of *thing*, too. This-being is referring non-being to *thing* which nevertheless is involved in the world of being as a past, future, imaginary one etc.

Therefore, the contraposition of being and non-being, too, is a highly relative, non-absolute one: saying 'this *thing* does not exist', this-being, all the same, puts at the

basis of its judgment the involvement of that *thing* in the world of being, at least as an object of its mind.

Any object this-being is encountering or has an idea of, thus is being involved in the world of being. However, things are presenting themselves to this-being not all together and permanently, but in certain succession, emerging and disappearing: for this-being, their passage from being to non-being and the contrary is happening continuously.

At that, even if this-being has not been aware about any object before the latter's emergence, so after its emergence, the period of time preceding that emergence is presenting itself to this-being as a period of non-existence, non-being of the given object, and this-being is certain already that the emergence of the given object has been preceded by *its* non-being.

The same is the mode of this-being's understanding of its own being and non-being: the time is divided by it into three parts, the period of time preceding it, its lifetime, and the period of time succeeding it.

Nevertheless, all these three periods of time are presenting themselves to this-being in the world of being, where the given *thing* or this-being itself is not *already* or *yet*.

Therefore, we can assert for sure that for this-being, non-being is both negation and affirmation of being, negation for a given period of time and section of space where that non-being is uncovered by this-being, and affirmation for the world of being in general. The margin between being and non-being is not an absolute one, and non-being still relates to the world of being, although as negation of being.

Nothingness is out of the world of being and is the absolute negation of being.

This-being's idea of *nothingness* is beginning and ending with negative definitions, i.e. for this-being, nothingness is the absence of *thing*.

That implies that with regard to nothingness, all other attributes describing the world of being, and space and time first of all, are denied as well.

At the same time, from this-being's point of view, all objects of the world of being and among them this-being itself, are coming from nothingness and are going to nothingness, a 'sphere' out of space and time.

The relation between being and nothingness, as envisaged by this-being, is mutual *absolute* negation: things and this-being itself, as envisaged by the latter, are nothing before their being and become nothing after their being.

Despite this mutual absolute negation, this-being, nevertheless, is seeing a certain correlation between being and nothingness, too, on the nature of which, however, it can make no judgment and supposition.

That correlation is presenting itself to this-being as continuous passage from being to nothingness and from nothingness to being which is inconceivable for this-being and the experience of which is not given to this-being, but about which this-being *knows*.

This-being knows that it has been thrown to the world from nothingness and is going to nothingness, and that it is not in time or space that nothingness has preceded its being, but in a mode which is inaccessible and inconceivable for it.

Saying 'this-being knows that it has not been some time in the past and will not be some time in the future' means, all the same, an affirmation by this-being of its awareness of its own *non-being* and not *nothingness*. That is a historical view on its own emergence and end which are still in the 'sphere' of being.

Nothingness, therefore, is presenting itself to this-being as *transcendence*, and no judgment or even grounded supposition is possible about its relation to the world of being.

The only assertion one can make on correlation between being and nothingness is that nothingness is accompanying being, they are parallel, and passages from nothingness to being and from being to nothingness are happening permanently.