

## CHAPTER 1: ON *the* REALITY OF NOTHING.

### 1.1 The Nature of Unity

**W**E assert a fundamental Fact regarding the Number 1: it is the only *real* Number, and we therefore designate it as *Prime*, first because it hath the position of primacy in the sequence of all Numbers, and second because it represents the *actual thing* itself. All other numbers we designate as Fictive, the entirety of which are designated ephemeral Constructs of the human Mind. In this regard, Humanity can be said to inhabit its own fictive sphere of temporal reality, and thus ultimate reality must lie in the eternal sphere of Prime, wherein Unity and Zero, the very subjects of this disquisition, are but dimly understood but reign supreme.

I well understand that the reader might take great exception to these claims, but let him hear me out and consider the logic which I have so scrupulously advanced before he shall dismiss them entirely.

Consider that if we but ask, as Plato once famously did,

What is the *actual thing*, the thing itself, the answer shouldst be *Everything*. The natural and original state of Reality is Unity, or Oneness. It is the human Intellect, the very architect of our fictive reality, which divides, compares, counts, and perceives **1** as a composition of many Things. Fictive numbers, therefore, are mere descriptives. One thing only is equal to **1**, *viz.*, the Universe, which, as the ground of all Being, i.e. upon which all things are founded, has always existed. The ultimate state of things can thus be represented by a simple Equation:

$$\mathbf{1} = \infty$$

Or, alternatively:

$$\mathbf{0} = \infty$$

Concealed within this simple expression lies the sublimest of truths towards which this book shall bravely venture forth. It is a truth of relative simplicity but extremely difficult of comprehension, for it so militates against the common and much heralded notions of our Time that one's first impulse is to dismiss it out of hand at the utterance of a madman or else draw back in abhorrence, being reminded of what Shakespeare hath stated in that most troubling of plays when he wrote of *a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing*. It is precisely that Nothing, that enigmatic Zero, which is the Subject of my Disquisition.

## 1.2 The Nature of Zero

Prime contains Zero. 1 is *part* of zero and zero is part of 1 in the sense that 1 is zero turned inside-out, as it were. If so, then one might ask, as of *Aristides of Philo*, "Is zero real?" The answer, as we shall presently see, is surly both yes and no as you please. Standing as the inverse and the antithesis of Real, it is to be designated as Unreal, a category solely unto itself, the paradoxical Nothing of which the entirety of this Treatise hath taken as its Subject.

### 1.3 A Taxonomy of Zero

We designate five distinct types. There may be many more, as *Apollonius of Tyre* hath argued,

The forms and variety of Nothing may be infinite. We plumb these depths at our peril, for having entered the Labyrinth, we shouldst soon discover that even upon an infinite exertion we can never hope to surmount infinity itself.

But *Brother Bertrand of Clos* states the opposite, saying any attempt at a thorough Taxonomy of zero is futile because "a type of Nothing is still nothing." Similarly, Dr. *Quasimodo Malatesta*, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bologna, is of the opinion that "if one endeavoured to publish a book on the subject of Nothing, it should consist entirely of empty pages." *Cardinal Peccatori*, of the Holy Office, for his part, hath warned that while mathematics may generally be judged a gift from God, and therefore good, Zero, an invention of more recent times, is to be condemned as *demoniac*. In his book, *Holy Numerology*, Cardinal Peccatori advises Faithful

Christians to avoid Zero altogether, preferring the numbers Three, Seven and Twelve, which are to be considered *blessed* and which, as a result, each carries a *plenary indulgence* of five years. By way of example, he cites the sum three plus three, saying that by his reckoning it sums not to six but rather to 10. Albeit the equation may “mathematically” be judged as false, a higher sum and inestimable benefit are conveyed. The Cardinal reminds his readers of the famous ejaculation by the Holy Martyr, *St. Simplicimus*, when in Florence he was suspended by his heels from a gibbet in the *Piazza della Signoria*, as his bowels were slowly withdrawn upon a drum, he shouted out upon his last breath: “The Lord is not the God of Logic but of Faith.”

We leave to our Reader whether or no further enquiry into this matter is warranted. We shall proceed to our Taxonomy.

NULL is best conceived as Absence, a space or frame for something Else, wherein it can be construed as that which is left when something is taken away. That is to say, it is the Emptiness inside the jug; the phantom Pain of the amputated leg; the mortal Ache where once a living person, now deceased, used to be; the hole in one’s Being where meaning and confidence and purpose are supposed to reside but somehow, and for whatever reason, do not. Of late, these adumbrations have been dismissed as “spurious” and “fantastical.” It hath been recounted that *Robert Walpole*, in the company of *Samuel Johnson* sought to impress his listeners with his philosophic acumen and famously asked, “Is a deceased person in a null

state?" Whereupon Dr. Johnson rejoined, "Sir, isn't it enough that the poor man is dead?"

CYPHER designates the Hub of all Numbers, which if aligned upon an infinite scale would devolve into two kinds: negative and positive. Cipher is thus designated as the *locus minimus* wherein those two sequences meet and in that process are thereby canceled out and reduced to Nothing. Cypher contains the powers of creation and destruction, and thus best describes the concept of Time, wherein the present moment is as a kind of fulcrum point between the Past and the Future, between certainty and uncertainty, between what is and what is not, between what is real and what is imaginary. It may very well be that it is Time itself—an unreal Reality in which we live and move like the fish in the sea.

NIL is that which did not, does not, and can never exist—that is to say, absolute Nonbeing, absolute Nothing. It is universally agreed that Nil can be conceived only with great difficulty, or perhaps not at all. *Numenius* notably asked "Is there anything that really does not exist?" Determined and persistent efforts to answer the question hath been known to cause extreme agitation, vertigo, or thoughts of suicide. Could we even imagine Nil? And if we could, might it not be as a sign that we are mad? In the end, it remain an Enigma, and perhaps the ultimate one. It hath been said that if one were able to understand Nil, then one should understand everything. But for *Numenius*, it would be, as he said, the "hemlock of knowledge."

VAC is the sister nothing to Null. But whereas Null is said to be bounded, Vac is presumed boundless and therefore as such, infinite. One might argue (and so it has) that it is Infinity *per se*; namely, Itself entire, the primal Unreality out of which the Particulars of reality emerge, or alternatively, that it is the infinitely receding Point to which infinite processes are drawn and converge, much as doth Gravity as understood by Mr. Newton. Like Nil, it defies an easy comprehension. *Gaston Foucher* hath stated in his book, *On Nothing*, "In the end, Vac may be incomprehensible by all but the inhabitants of madhouses, where it is often said to be a popular subject of light Banter."

FIN is the last number, which if the Universe be of a cyclical nature, leadeth the way back to Zero, the first number. As it is a fundamental notion widely held among Mathematicians and Logicians that numbers are infinite, those who assert the validity of Fin are often the subject of rude jibes. Nevertheless, those who with M. Foucher hold to the Cyclical Opinion will strongly argue that Fin *precedes* zero, is born of zero, and in some way that even its most stalwart Defenders hath difficulty expressing, may in fact *have been* zero all along. Those who favor the opposing view that the Universe is finite are of the belief that Fin is the absolute termination of all Space and Time, as if the Universe had never existed. As M. Foucher hath stated, if such is the case, then the Nothing that follows must itself be a type of unnamed Zero, attended by the unique Property of being the first and last of its kind, and, as Nothing, has never and will never exist.

#### 1.4 The Question of Infinity

If we should but even briefly reflect upon this abstruse Scheme, we must inevitably come to conclude that the *Ground of all Being*, viz., that which is infinite in Time, Place and Potentiality, and which is not further reducible, must be of the simplest Composition, perchance comprized of ephemeral Specks so infinitesimal as to scarcely exist at all but that upon their haphazard Confrontations comes a spark that ignites a Universe into existence. Thus, given the infinite fecundity of Being, it must be that an infinite number of universes must have been and will be produced. Can we say that in such a Scheme as this, where Chance and Happenstance so freely play, there can be no higher order to which we might pin our hopes and desires for Certainty, Meaning or Purpose? Is *Eternal Being* with its endlessly multiplying machinations the simple ontological answer our Philosophers have been so diligently in pursuit? And what then are we to do with God?

To these perhaps inscrutable Questions, the consequences of which lead as inexorably to despair as to awe, we shall presently attend ourselves in the forthcoming Chapters.