III.—HEGEL'S TREATMENT OF THE CATEGORIES OF QUALITY.

By J. Ellis McTaggart.

In this paper, as in my previous papers on the Categories of the Subjective Notion (Mind, April and July, 1897), the Objective Notion (Mind, January, 1899), and the Idea (Mind, April, 1900), I shall consider one of the great secondary divisions—nine in all—into which the Logic is divided. I shall follow the exposition in the Greater Logic, from which, in this division, the Smaller Logic does not materially differ, except in being less minutely subdivided.

Quality (*Qualität*) is the first division of the Doctrine of Being, and consequently of the whole Logic. It is divided as follows:—

I.—BEING (SEIN).

A.—Being (Sein).

B.—Nothing (Nichts).

C.—Becoming (Werden).

II.—BEING DETERMINATE (DASEIN).

A.—Being Determinate as Such (Dasein als Solches).

(*a*) *Being Determinate in General* (*Dasein überhaupt*).

(*b*) *Quality* (*Qualität*).

(*c*) *Something* (*Etwas*).

B.—Finitude (Die Endlichkeit).

(*a*) *Something and an Other* (*Etwas und ein Anderes*).

(*b*) *Determination, Modification and Limit* (*Bestimmung, Beschaffenheit und Grenze*).

(*c*) *Finitude* (*Die Endlichkeit*).

C.—INFINITY (DIE UNENDLICHKEIT).

(a) *Infinity in general (Die Unendlichkeit überhaupt).*
(b) *Reciprocal Determination of the Finite and Infinite (Wechselbestimmung des Endlichen und Unendlichen).*
(c) *Affirmative Infinity (Die wahre Unendlichkeit).*

III.—BEING-FOR-SELF (DAS FÜRSICHSEIN).

A.—BEING-FOR-SELF AS SUCH (DAS FÜRSICHSEIN ALS SOLCHES).

(a) *Being Determinate and Being-for-Self (Dasein und Fürsichsein).*
(b) *Being-for-One (Sein für Eines).*
(c) *One (Eins).*

B.—THE ONE AND THE MANY (EINES UND VIELES).

(a) *The One in Itself (Das Eins an ihm selbst).*
(b) *The One and the Void (Das Eins und das Leere).*
(c) *Many Ones (Viele Eins).*

C.—REPULSION AND ATTRACTION (REPULSION UND ATTRAKTION).

(a) *Exclusion of the One (Ausschliessen des Eins).*
(b) *The One One of Attraction (Das Eine Eins der Attraktion).*
(c) *The Relation of Repulsion and Attraction (Die Beziehung der Repulsion und Attraktion).*

In Hegel's use of the word Being there is an ambiguity which may be dangerous unless carefully noticed. He uses it, as will be seen (i.) for one of the three primary divisions into which the whole Logic is divided; (ii.) for one of the three divisions of the third order into which Quality is divided; and (iii.) for one of the three divisions of the fourth order into which Being in the second sense is divided. In the same way Quality, besides being used for the division of the second order which forms the subject of this paper, is also used for a division of the fifth order, which falls within Being Determinate as Such.

I.—BEING.

A.—BEING.

I do not propose to discuss here the validity of the category of Pure Being as the commencement of the Logic. This is rather a general question affecting the whole nature of the process than a detail of the earlier stages, and I have already discussed it in my *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic* (*cf.* sections 17, 18 and 79). If, then, we begin with the category of Being, what follows?

Pure Being, says Hegel (Greater Logic, 78; Encyclopædia, 87*) has no determination of any sort. Any determination would give it some particular nature, as against some other particular nature—would make it X rather than not-X. It has therefore no determination whatever. But to be completely free of any determination is just what we mean by Nothing. Accordingly, when we predicate Being as an adequate expression of reality, we find that in doing so we are also predicating Nothing as an adequate expression of reality. And thus we pass over to the second category.

B.—NOTHING.

This transition, which has been the object of so much wit, and of so many indignant denials, is really a very plain and simple matter. Wit and indignation both depend, as Hegel remarks (G. L., 82; Enc., 88) on the mistaken view that the Logic asserts the identity of a concrete object which has a certain quality with another concrete object which has not that quality—of a white table with a black table, or of a table and courage. This is a mere parody of Hegel's meaning. Whiteness is not Pure Being. When we speak of a thing as white, we apply to it many categories besides Pure Being—Being Determinate, for example. Thus the fact that the presence of whiteness is not equivalent to its absence is quite consistent with the identity of Pure Being and Nothing.

When the dialectic process moves from an idea to its antithesis, that antithesis is never the mere logical contradictory of the first, but is some new idea which stands to the first in the relation of a contrary. No reconciling synthesis

* My references in this paper to the Greater Logic are to the *pages* of vol. iii. of Hegel's *Works* (ed. 1833); my references to the Encyclopædia are to *sections*.

could possibly spring from two contradictory ideas—that is, from the simple affirmation and denial of the same idea. In most parts of the dialectic, the relation is too clear to be doubted. But at first sight it might be supposed that Nothing was the contradictory of Being. This, however, is not the case. Being here means Pure Being, and the contradictory of this is Not-Pure-Being. This is a much wider term than Nothing, for it includes both Nothing and all determinate being. Nothing is the direct opposite of Pure Being and not its mere denial.

Hegel says, indeed (G. L., 79), that we could as well say Not-being (*Nichtsein*) as Nothing. But it is clear that he does not take the affirmation of Not-being to be identical with the denial of Pure Being.

If the identity of Being and Nothing were all that could be said about them, the dialectic process would stop with its second term. There would be no contradiction, and therefore no ground for a further advance. But this is not the whole truth (G. L., 89; Enc., 88). For the two terms, to begin with, meant different things. By Being was intended a pure positive—reality without unreality. By Nothing was intended a pure negative—unreality without reality. If each of these is now found to be equivalent to the other, a contradiction has arisen. Two terms which were defined as incompatible have become equivalent. Nor have we got rid of the original meaning. For it is that same quality which made the completeness of their opposition which determines their equivalence. A reconciliation must be found for this contradiction, and Hegel finds it in

C.—Becoming.

The reconciliation which this category affords appears to consist in the recognition of the intrinsic connexion of Being and Nothing (G. L., 79; Enc., 88). When we had these two as separate categories, each of them asserted itself to be an independent and stable expression of the nature of reality. By the affirmation of either its identity with the other was denied, and when it was found, nevertheless, to be the same as the other, there was a contradiction. But Becoming, according to Hegel, while it recognises Being and Nothing, recognises them only as united, and not as claiming to be independent of one another. It recognises them, for Becoming is always the passage of Being into Nothing, or of Nothing into Being. But, since they only exist in Becoming in so far as they are passing away into their contraries, they

are only affirmed as connected, not as separate, and therefore there is no longer any opposition between their connexion and their separation.

But, Hegel continues, this is not the end of the matter. Being and Nothing only exist in Becoming as disappearing moments. But Becoming only exists in so far as they are separate, for if they are not separate, how can they pass into one another? As they vanish, therefore, Becoming ceases to be Becoming, and collapses into a state of rest which Hegel calls Being Determinate (G. L., 109; Enc., 89).

I confess that I regret the choice of Becoming, as a name for this category. What Hegel meant seems to me to be quite valid. But the name of the category suggests something else which is not valid at all.

All that Hegel means by this category is, as I have maintained above, that Being is dependent on Nothing in order to enable it to be Being, and that Nothing is dependent on Being in order to enable it to be Nothing. In other words, a category of Being without Nothing, or of Nothing without Being, is inadequate and leads to contradictions which prove its falsity. The only truth of the two is a category which expresses the relation of the two. And this removes the contradiction. For there is no contradiction in the union of Being and Nothing. The contradiction was between their union and the previous assertion of the unsynthesised categories as independent and adequate expressions of reality.

Hegel seems to have thought it desirable to name the new category after a concrete fact. But this use of the names of concrete facts to designate abstract categories is always dangerous. It is, as I have maintained in previous papers, the cause of the confusion to be found in Hegel's treatment of the categories of Chemism and Life. In the present case, the state of becoming involves, no doubt, the union of Being and Nothing, as everything must, except abstract Being and Nothing. But becoming involves a great deal more—a great deal which Hegel had not yet deduced, and had no right to include in this category. I do not believe that he meant to include it, but his language almost inevitably gives a false impression.

When we speak of Becoming we naturally think of a process of change. For the most striking characteristic of the concrete state of becoming is that it is a change from something to something else. Now Hegel's category of Becoming cannot be intended to include the idea of change.

Change involves the existence of some permanent element in what changes—an element which itself does not change.

For, if there were nothing common to the two states, there would be no reason to say that the one had changed into the other. Thus, in order that anything should be capable of change it must be analysable into two elements, one of which changes, while the other does not. This is impossible under the categories of Quality. Under them each thing—if indeed the word thing can properly be used of what is so elementary—is just one simple undifferentiated quality. Either it is itself—and then it is completely the same—or its complete sameness vanishes, and then it vanishes with it, since its undifferentiated nature admits no partial identity of content. Its absolute shallowness—if the metaphor is permissible—admits of no distinction between a changing and an unchanging layer of reality.

This was recognised by Hegel, who says that it is the characteristic of Quantity that in it, for the first time, a thing can change, and yet remain the same (G. L., 211; Enc., 99). He cannot, therefore, have considered his category of Becoming as including change proper.

But, it may be objected, although Hegel's category of Becoming is incompatible with fully developed change, may it not be compatible with a more rudimentary form of change? Is it not possible that, even among the categories of Quality, a place may be found for a category which involves, not the change of A into B, but the disappearance of A and the appearance of B instead of it? To this we may reply, in the first place, that if such replacement of A by B was carefully analysed, it would be found to involve the presence of some element which persisted unchanged in connexion first with A and then with B. The case would then resolve itself into an example of change proper. But it is not necessary to go into this question. For it is clear that, if such a replacement could exist without being a change of A into B, then A would necessarily be quite disconnected with B. But in Hegel's category of Becoming the whole point lies in the intrinsic and essential connexion of Being and Nothing.

The category, then, cannot be taken as one of change, if it is to be consistent with the rest of Hegel's system. And when we look at the actual transition to this category (G. L., 79; Enc., 88) we see, as I said above, that the essence of the new category lies in the necessary implication of Being and Nothing, and not in any change taking place between them.

But the name of Becoming is deceptive in itself, and so is Hegel's remark that the category can be analysed into the moments of Beginning (*Entstehen*) and Ceasing (*Vergehen*)

(G. L., 109). If the implication of the two terms is to be called Becoming, there is no reason why these names should not be given to the implication of Being in Nothing and of Nothing in Being. It tends, however, to strengthen the belief that the category is a category of change. The same result is produced by the connexion of the philosophy of Heraclitus with this category (G. L., 80; Enc., 88). Of course a philosophy which reduced everything to a perpetual flow of changes would involve the principle of the implication of Being and Nothing. But it would also involve a great deal more, and once again, therefore, we meet the misleading suggestion that this great deal more is to be found in the category of Becoming.

For these reasons I believe that the course of the dialectic would become clearer if the name of Becoming were given up, and the Synthesis of Being and Nothing were called Transition to Being Determinate (*Uebergang in das Dasein*). This follows the precedent set by Hegel in the name of the last category of Measure, which he calls Transition to Essence (*Uebergang in das Wesen*) (G. L., 466).

When we have taken this view of the category, the transition to the next triad becomes easy. So long as the third category was regarded as involving change, two difficulties arose about this transition. How, in the first place, was the change which was introduced in the third category eliminated in the fourth, since Being Determinate is certainly not a category of change? And, in the third place, if this could be done at all, how could it be done as the transition from a Synthesis to a new Thesis, since this transition should not be an advance, but a restatement of the old result in a more immediate form?

On our interpretation both difficulties vanish. Change has never been introduced, and, therefore, has not to be eliminated. And the relation between the Synthesis and the new Thesis is seen to be a very typical example of the "collapse into immediacy," which should constitute this transition. For the Synthesis means that Being and Nothing are inseparably connected, and the new Thesis means that all reality consists in the union of Being and Nothing. And the second of these is a restatement of the first, in a form which has less reference to the contradiction which it surmounts, and more reference to the independent statement of the truth.