NOMINALISM - NON-BEING

Nominalism [Lat. nominale, from nomen, a name]: Ger. Nominalismus; Fr. nominalisme; Ital. nominalismo. The doctrine that universals have no objective existence or validity, in its extreme form, that they are only mental concepts (nominal realists), or that the creation of language for purposes of convenient communication. See Realism (for fall account and history.)

Nomology [Gr. ονομολογία, doctrine]: for equivalents, see the next topic. The science which investigates laws, as general psychology and general grammar, fundamentally distinguished from classification and explanatory science. Hamilton says: "We have a science which we may call the psychology of mind—nomological psychology." ( Lect. on Met., p. viii.)

Nomology (in law): Ger. Nomologie; Fr. Logique des lois; Ital. nomologia. Jural science; the science of the conformity of human actions to rules of conduct prescribed by law. "Ethics is the science mainly of duties, while nomology looks to the definition and preservation of rights" (Holland, Jurisprudence, chap. iii., § 22.) The rules of conduct, with which it is conversant, are both those prescribed by the current standard of morality, and those of legislation (ibid., § 22; Smith's Right and Law, § 51.)

Non-Being: Ger. Nicht-seiend, Nichts (Nihilismus); Fr. non-être; Ital. non-essere. Literally, just the absence or negation of being; but in accordance with the Greek tendency to give (nometha) an objective meaning to all categories of thought, non-being (nothing, de se, deus) was supposed to exist as such until it became an object of dispute among philosophical schools as to whether non-being is as or is not.

The Eleatics (Parmenides, 480 b.c.), who identified it with empty space, holding that everything must be full (or that all is in us), denied its existence. The Atomists, however (in accord with Zeno's doctrine that the universe is composed of indivisible and unchangeable bodies), maintained the non-existence of anything negates itself, and thus passes essentially from the finite universe which it could only exist as a finitary universe. Plato (empty space of the heavens) assumed a relative world of non-being (the counterpart of ignorance) as the opposite of his ideas, and, interpreting it also as space, regarded it as the matrix out of which the world was created. In non-dissimilatory mythology, the divine origination is, at least, that the universe is none other than the "out of nothing" trended to give non-being (cosmogonic pantheism), and that the grounds of the divine operations Aristotelian attempts to give a dynamic interpretation. As all nature moves between the potential and the completed, the potential at the time is in and not. On one side, it is the mediant, the manner, through which the form realizes itself; and it is also the restraint which prevents the full exhibition of form, and which is responsible for failures and deviations from the model of development. In the Neo-Platonic non-being became a highly important category. An empty space and as a privation it was the responsible factor in the development of the purely physical world and as the cause of evil. It is the absolute opposite of pure being, which yet, just because it is non-being, reduces the manifestations of being to lower levels. However, after the Greek formulation, it is obvious that through the use of this term there has been generally developed two of the most serious problems of philosophy: one on the side of metaphysics, as to the existence of a vacuum, and the possibility of motion without a vacuum; the other the metaphysical and ethical problem of the significance of the non-being. It is in essence a negative one, as well as an ethical one, because the value of the concept of growth and development (of change which is specific to life) depends upon its ability to imply a passage from the potential to the actual, or (relative) non-being to being. The problem in the former sense was revived by Descartes and in the latter by Hegel. The concept of Hegel, becoming more mediated (or significant) activity is the ultimate and absolute, and thus a non-being factor as necessary as a positive is. In the same doctrine of the identity of being and non-being is contained the doctrine of the immediate connection of the universe, and thus passed essentially from the finite universe which it could only exist as a finitary universe.

Non-compos mentis [Lat.]: Ger. normale, or verbal imperfective; Fr. non-composé, non-composé; Ital. normale, normale non composto. Inept or uncontrolled by mental impairment of disease of controlling one's affairs; usually employed in a technical or legal sense; of Cures Mentis.

Non-comprehension. The "how of non-comprehension" is another form for the category of CONTRADICTION (q.v.). See also Laws of Thought.

Non-ego: Ger. Nicht-sich; Fr. non-soi; Ital. non-sé. The opposite of the ego; the not-me; the external object; the external world. Cf. Ego.

The term is of especial significance, as a technical term in the philosophy of Fichte; it represents the act of positing (the anti-postulating-Radegastianter); see (Fichte) the concept of the ego as that which limits and thereby stimulates the above-defined and the more specific activity of itself. It is a negative one, as well as an ethical one, because the value of the concept of growth and development (of change which is specific to life) depends upon its ability to imply a passage from the potential to the actual, or (relative) non-being to being. The problem in the former sense was revived by Descartes and in the latter by Hegel. The concept of Hegel, becoming more mediated (or significant) activity is the ultimate and absolute, and thus a non-being factor as necessary as a positive is. In the same doctrine of the identity of being and non-being is contained the doctrine of the immediate connection of the universe, and thus passed essentially from the finite universe which it could only exist as a finitary universe.

Non-sequitur [Lat.]: "it does not follow"; Ger. nichtfolgbar; Fr. non-suit; Ital. non sequitur. A name which belongs to the universal for the "fallacies of the premises" (called by Aristotle a μή τὸ δόγμα τί ἐπιστασθή); De Distr., chap. v., § 27, which is strictly speaking, a fallacy which follows the simple conversion of a universal affirmative, or transposing a premiss and episteme, or condition and consequent. The fallacy is that the conclusion is that the universe is composed of indivisible and unchangeable bodies, which is a mere restatement of the premise, and therefore the argument is vacuous. The best conclusion is that the universe is composed of indivisible and unchangeable bodies.

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Non-voluntary: Ger. nicht-eigen; Fr. non-volontaire; Ital. non-volontario. Very accidental (q.v.). See also Accident.

Non-scepticism [Gr. ἁπάθεια, reason, ἁστυδία, theory]: Ger. Skeptizismus; Fr. scepticisme; Ital. scepticismo: (the equivalents are suggested). That part of philosophy which attempts to introduce into the whole of the universe, and to distinguish it from the universe, which deals with truths discursively or demonstratively established. A term suggested by Sir William Hamilton. In the latter, note A, § 1, but having no currency. Hamilton probably derived it from "Knowledge gives power, power is desirable, therefore knowledge is desirable."