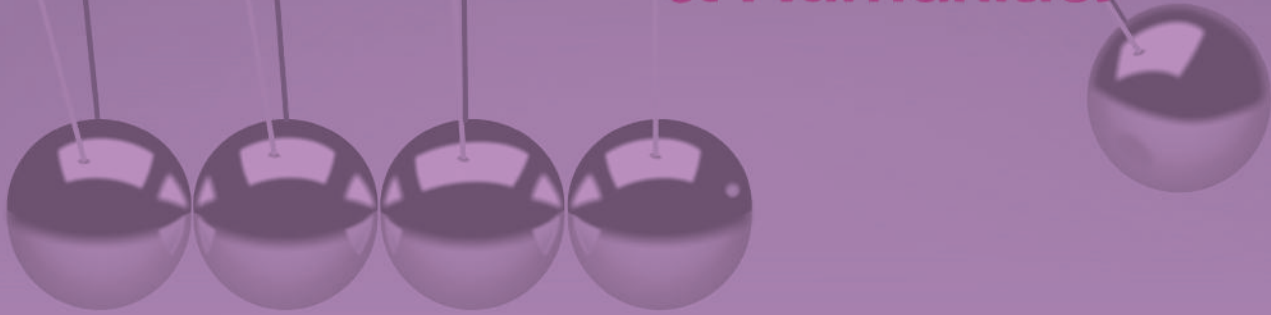




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THE QUESTION OF THE NOTHING AND METAPHYSICS

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Abstract

Given the phenomenon of the nothing, some metaphysicians argue, everything/everybody is confined and boxed in, surrounded by obstacles that hardly allow any unfettered movement or change. Bounded and encircled by the nothing, from which creation must have come, the universe with its beginnings and endings akin to that of change in it becomes a transition from one kind of nothing to the other, allowing an interval of being in between. Thus metaphysicians from Pythagoras to Blaise Pascal, and from Georg Hegel and Hegelians to Martin Heidegger, Paul Tillich, and Jean-Paul Sartre see a complementarity, an intertwining dialectics, and equality of status between that which is and that which is not (Heather, 1967, 524-525).

Keywords: *Being, Begging, Creation, End, Existence, Non-existence.*

INTRODUCTION

When Heidegger opined that the "question of the nothing" did put "us, the questioners, in question," and that it was a "metaphysical question," he was giving metaphysical legitimacy to the genuine concerns of philosophers before him. We now know that without negation questions would not be raised, especially questions about being. But negation originates from nothingness. To raise questions is the fundamental preoccupation of philosophy. And it is common knowledge that being and nothingness are correlates. Hence the phenomenon of nothingness is a problem surely proper to philosophy. And a treatise on nothingness is a treatise on being.

THE HISTORY OF NOTHINGNESS

Even as metaphysics is the study of what there is (ontology), philosophers still investigate the possibility of the existence of what does not exist, nothing. Metaphysical inquiries, therefore, span through 'what is to what is not'. The atomists conceded the existence of the nothing in the gaps between the invisibly tiny atoms. Aristotle acknowledged the existence of matter and space.

Descartes allowed only the existence of entities whose being could be proved. St. Augustine insisted that our place, at the centre of the scheme of things, was the appropriate place to begin, rather than at the beginning or the end. When things are in harmony with the being of better ascertained and proven entities, we judge them to exist. Beginning from nothing robs us of the requisite 'bearings' to move forward (Sorensen, 2003).

Sartrean existentialism associated nothingness with consciousness. Consciousness is nothingness, because rather than being its past, consciousness is some kind of state of affairs (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 1943).

The overwhelming majority of present day metaphysicians, rather than having a certain 'methodological' option for a world devoid of anything, only presume 'non-existence' for definite claims of existence. Even philosophical solipsism recognizes the being of one entity (Sorensen, 2003).

A more fashionable way to presume nothingness, it is argued, is to correlate it with the simple and the simple with the likely. But then Victor Hugo (1862, 439), some say, prevents any nihilistic philosophy when he opines that, "Everything is something. Nothing is nothing". He demonstrates the truth of "universal affirmation" instead of "universal negation" (Sorensen, 2003).

Even as neither the simplistic disposition to say no all the time nor the uncritical rule to affirm always makes definitely plausible metaphysics, yet the probability that there's something rather than that there's nothing does indeed count.

When Heidegger held that the discourse in metaphysics on being was "at the same level as the question of the nothing," he seemed to be echoing our folk psychology. As if in tone with the fact of diversity of the human reality, non philosophers frequently, and with ease too, hear, see, do and say nothing, while philosophers are yet to feel at ease in the presence of this perplexity of a thing. The question of nothingness has continued with an overbearing insistence over the centuries to prove a rough-tough problem.

Parmenides (510 B.C): Besought by an enigmatic nothingness Parmenides finds himself declaring that it is an impossibility to talk of what is not. The illogicality of this position, people say, is self-evident. For, even in the very act of making his assertion, one finds him already deep in the discussion of the avowed impossibility. Commenting on this parmenidean grave inconsistency, Heath observes that he, "broke his own rule in the act of stating it, and deduced himself into a world where all that ever happened was nothing (Heath, 1972, 524). The parmenidean position is at best a rendering simplistic of what is and ought to be complex, and an abysmal show of a high-level-ignorance.

Plato (428/27-348/47 B.C): In Plato we find a reawakening and restoration of hopes concerning the nothing" question. For, forming the inverse of the parmenidean axiom, Plato assures philosophers that whatever they can discover to discuss must have, as it were, to be an existent.

Logicians: For the logicians, nothing does not mean a thing: it is a non-sense, being nonsensical. Nothing is neither a thing nor the name of a thing, it is but a clever device of identifying anything as not being something else. Nothing for them means "not-anything" (Heath, 1972, 524). A logical positivist – Rudolf Carnap, for instance, referred to Heidegger's deliberations on nothingness as metaphysical pseudo-statements (Carnap, 1959, 69).

Nonetheless, the logicians stumble over all this gimmicks when confronted and asked to demonstrate that nothing does not signify or indicate a thing.

The human approach to nothingness is two dimensional; those who recognize its reality, and those who see the concept as absurd, senseless and meaningless. Those who are sympathetic with the concept are two-fold. On the one hand are those who have the knowledge of nothingness, and profess a "phenomenological acquaintance" with non-existent things. On the other hand are those who being fearful of non-being, and maintaining that "nothing is but what is not" enter into "dialectical encounter" with voidness and nonexistence (Heath, 1972, 524).

For the first group nothing is a reality, and is experienced positively in the practical order of experience. We all enjoy an overwhelming acquaintance with and have, stored up in our word banks, what somebody terms fragments of nothingness, namely, gaps, absences, holes. We also, in our quest for vacancies and voids, go to great lengths in advertising them in our dailies. And many a time these vacancies attract huge sums of money. But one may rightly ask: how can a space (nothing in miniature) be sold if it were not something in the first place? Ours then is a world peopled with experiential nothings' and blanks, which incessantly magnetize our attention and, therefore merit our collective and official approbation.

Metaphysicians ranging from Pythagoras to Pascal, from Hegel and his 'disciples' to Heidegger, Tillich and Sartre, are agreed on the idea of unity in diversity regarding the relation of being and nothing. Nevertheless, Ayer and Carnap also observe a two-man consensus, viz., the decision to find difficulty in appreciating the fact of "nothing" as an existential reality. (Heath, 1972, 525).

SOME PROMINENT FIGURES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE NOTHING

Now let us consider some key Figures in the philosophy of the Nothing: Hegel (1770 – 1831), Bergson (1859 – 1941), Heidegger (1889 – 1976), and Sartre a little bit more elaborately.

HEGELIAN NOTHINGNESS

Nothingness is, in truth, a Hegelian concept. The discussion of the nothing occupies a sizeable portion of one of his philosophical treatises, namely, the Science of Logic. Hegel defines the nothing as what is totally equal with itself, completely empty, devoid of any "determination and content", what is in itself not differentiated (Hegel, 1969, 82). Stressing the meaningfulness of cogitating nothingness just as one would contemplate and perceive being by simple inspection and direct apprehension, Hegel argues that if we could figure (Imagine) nothing, talk of it, and apprehend it in thought, it will then follow as a logical consequence, that nothing exists. It has its existence in our imagining, talking, and "thinking" (Hegel, 1969, 82).

In another vein, Hegel believes that being and nothing are in constant and perpetual tension with each other. And so, in a manner characteristic and axiomatic of his dialectics he declares that the truthfulness, candour, and ingenuity of being and nothing consists in their

confluence or over-flowing-into-each-other, (Stace, 1955, 136) saying that “Nothing is usually opposed to something” (Hegel, 1969, 83).

Denying the parmenidean “being is, non-being is not”, and commenting on the Heraclitian position, Hegel credits to Heraclitus the maximum that being exists as little as nothing exists. He also associates with Heraclitus the view that “all flows,” that is to say that “all is a becoming” (Hegel, 1969, 83). He also rejects the metaphysical principle which holds that, ‘ex nihilo nihil fit (out of nothing, nothing comes), arguing that it fails to explain the obvious fact of becoming with its unequivocal implication that the nothing rather than continue to reside as nothing metamorphoses into being. He accuses those who maintain that being is simply being, and nothing is flatly nothing of implicitly conceding to the abstract atheism of Spinoza and the Eleatics. Hegel sees so much unity and togetherness between being and nothing that he finds, “no where in heaven or on earth...anything which does not contain within itself both being and nothing” (Hegel, 1969, 83).

Thus the stage is set, the ground properly cleared for Hegel’s definitive stance that being and non-being are two abstractions; the synthesis gives rise to concrete being. Suffice this to say that being has its origin in nothingness. However, the glory of Hegel in the discussion of the problem of nothingness lies in his statement that “mind is the negative” (Sartre, 1965, 102).

BERGSONIAN NOTHINGNESS

Henry Bergson indicts philosophers for hardly contemplating the nothing. Nonetheless, the nothing is the covert fountain/impulse, the “invisible mover of philosophical thinking” (Bergson, 1944, 299).

He conceives the ‘Nothing’ as identical with the idea of “Everything”. What this means in effect is that the idea of “Nothing” as the idea of “All” is omnipresent and permeates everything. He asserts that men talk of void, emptiness or nothingness only when, in reality, they have before them the presence of another object which they did not intend to encounter at that specific place and moment, but which contrary to their expectation has displaced the object of their interest.

You send a boy, for instance, to a dining table, equipped and decorated with a variety of eating utensils, to fetch you a spoon; he returns a minute later and reports: “I found nothing”. Yes indeed, he “found nothing”, but did he not encounter a lot of items such as tea cups, table knives? He could not see a thing though he encountered numerous things. The reason is self-evident. Because he does not find the object of interest, he reduces everything to nothing. Such is the nature of our problem with nothingness.

It is also the genius of Bergson to have clarified, as it were, the hitherto existing false notion of disorder. We now know that the idea of disorder does not connote the non-existence of all order. It stands rather for the presence of one of the ‘two orders’ (Bergson, 1944, 289) which falls short of satisfying our interest, taste or demand.

Bergson goes on to explain also that the idea of affirming or believing that one perceives real absences is untrue. He argues that what is perceived can only be something. Absences are never perceived. One talks of absences only in respect to the "falsification of (ones) 'eventual expectation' (Bergson, 1944, 306). Such is the epistemological purity and veracity of man's claims regarding absences, vacuousness and nullity. However our consolation is that it is already axiomatic in scientific circles that nature abhors vacuum.

Exposing further the naivety and shallowness of people's opinion of emptiness, Bergson says: "The conception of a void arises here when consciousness lagging behind himself, remains attached to the recollection of an old state when another state is already present" (Bergson, 1944, 306).

Moreover, Bergson holds a conception of negation to the effect that all negation leads to affirmation. Negation affirms indirectly. Again, negation serves a corrective and preventive purpose. It is utilized to correct and keep one from falling into error. It is of a 'pedagogical and social character' (Bergson, 1944, 321). For Bergson, then 'nought', 'void' and negation would not, strictly speaking, exist. Even negation, as we have seen already, subsumes into affirmation. It is the position of Bergson too that the idea of the nothing does not imply the annihilation of all things (Bergson, 1944, 324).

He also maintains in a somewhat different context that it is illusory to think of nothing as the substratum or receptacle of something. The idea of nothing does not imply the super-addition of being to it. The view that being is superimposed on nothing does not hold water.

HEIDEGGERIAN NOTHINGNESS

In Heidegger *das Nichts* (the nothing) becomes the "negation of the totality of beings; it is non-being pure and simple" (Heidegger, 1978, 99). Here we see the world suspended in nothingness. This is what he says of his *Dasein*: 'Dasein means: being held out into the nothing' (Heidegger, 1978, 106). The human attitudes of remorse, hate, defence, involve conscious perceptions, in one way or the other, of nothingness.

But, more specifically nothingness is confronted and apprehended in *Angst* (anguish, dread). *Angst* is the discovery of this untiring annihilation. *Angst* is one's feeling or realization of one's contingency. One becomes what one is not through dread. Heidegger confirms this when he rhetorically asks: "If the nothing is originally disclosed only in anguish, then must we not hover in this anxiety constantly in order to be able to exist at all" (Heidegger, 1978, 106).

The upshot of all this is that *Dasein* (man considered from an ontological viewpoint) is led to ask, 'How does it happen that there is something rather than nothing' (Sartre, 1965, 101). This question of man's coming to grips with his nothingness in anxiety is more vividly expressed in the following words of Desan, through dread our being emerges surrounded by non-being" (Desan, 1954, 17).

In the discussion of nothingness, Heidegger has also an additional point credited to him for not stumbling into the Hegelian error of carving out a being from non-being. 'The nothing is

neither an object nor any being at all” (Heidegger, 1978, 106). Being and nothingness are identified as one. Nothingness is a reality so much so that even to question its being is to affirm implicitly its existence. Hence Heidegger writes, ‘in our asking, we posit the nothing in advance as something that ‘is’ such and such, we posit it as a being (Heidegger, 1978, 98).

Everything erupts, emanates, and generates from nothingness, and subsequently disintegrates into it (Sartre, 1943,12). Heidegger propounds the principle that ‘Ex nihilo omne ens qua ens fit’ (Heidegger, 1978,110). That is to say, from the nothing all beings as beings come to be. This is his interpretation of the traditional ‘ex nihilo, nihil fit’ (from nothing, nothing comes) a view Christian philosophy also throws over-board.

Heidegger also reasons that should metaphysics discuss being, then it has a duty too towards the discourse and examination of nothingness, for nothingness is a question fundamentally proper to metaphysics (Heidegger, 1978,111). In truth, it encompasses metaphysics in globo. Science too should take the question of nothingness seriously; for it is because there is nothing that beings are capable of being made objects of research and exploration (Heidegger, 1978, 111). It might be interesting to observe too that it is not man alone who relates to and contends with nothingness. Other beings are not exempt from this relational framework (Stumpf, 1977, 484). Moreover, nothingness is not bereft of nihilation, infact it nihilates itself.

SARTRE’S CRITIQUE OF THE HEGELIAN AND HEIDEGGERIAN SENSES OF NOTHINGNESS

Sartre accuses both Hegel and Heidegger of not treating the problem of nothingness sufficiently and adequately. Both display an appreciable recognition of a negating capacity or the ‘negative’ in the scheme of things. Yet, regrettable there is hardly any ‘concern to ground this activity upon a negative being” (Sartre, 1965, 103). Against Heidegger, Sartre sees no rationale in asserting that nothingness grounds negation, if this will merely lead us to putting forward a theory of non-being which in the ultimate analysis “ separate nothingness from all concrete negation’ (Sartre, 1965, 103).

Similarly, he holds that the fault of Hegel lies in his preserving a being for non-being. He charges Heidegger also of presenting his Dasein in positive terminologies, with its attendant character of covering up or veiling inherent negations. He, in contrast to Heidegger, appreciates Hegel’s ‘mind is the negative’. However, he tongue-lashes Hegel for not demonstrating, for the sake of clarity and proper elucidation, how negativity can be the structure of being of the mind. He asks Hegel: ‘what must mind be in order to be able to constitute itself as negative?’ (Sartre, 1965, 103).

Further, Sartre maintains, against Heidegger, that “nothing” should not be viewed as the ground of something. Instead, he argues that, "not only that being has a logical precedence over nothingness but also that it is from being that nothingness derives its efficacy" (Sartre, 1943, 49).

Likewise, he finds it hard to make out how nothingness after shutting in and enclosing being in all sides could at the same moment be ejected from being. It is indeed difficult to reconcile Heidegger's identification of nothingness with being, and his position that being reveals itself only in dread, as well as that everything crumbles into being. Unable to effect this reconciliation Sartre inquires: "how can one say that it is solely through anguish that being reveals itself, and that it is into being that everything may collapse" (Sartre, 1943, 12).

Perhaps, Bergson, rather than Heidegger and Hegel, was more exhaustive in the consideration of nothingness. Agreeing with Bergson, Sartre argues that nothingness is not in things; for, in the world there is no vacuum. The nothing is, rather, situated in human consciousness. Again, Michael Novak, in his introductory note to Thielicke's *Nihilism*, trying to give nothingness a more positive meaning than is found in Heidegger's sense, argues that nothingness emanates from man's ability to question reality, and as such should be seen in a more positive light. He writes: "But if the experience of nothingness is rooted in human capacity for questioning, and arises when that experience is exercised and grows strong, then that experience is not a sign of illness but of health, not of decline but of growth, not of aberration but of maturity" (Sartre, 1943, 5).

SARTREAN NOTHINGNESS

Sartre maintains that the existence of the human being is a dilemma where we exist, whilst we are alive, in an altogether state of not being anything - that enables free consciousness. Still concurrently, in the physical world, we are compelled to follow through with unceasing conscious determinations. This polarity brings about anguish, considering that choice or subjectivity amounts to a limitation of our freedom amidst an unrestrained variety of thoughts. Ensuingly, we strive to escape our anguish using "action-oriented constructions," notably, "escapes, visualizations, or visions" (dreams, for instance) targeted at, providing us a route to, some "meaningful end, such as necessity, destiny, determinism (God)" (Wikipedia, 2018)

In this way, we commonly become subliminal actors, unintentionally taking up roles to accomplish the destinies of our selected characters, such as, chauvinists, feminists, liberalists. Thus, our conscious options (that steer us to unconscious behaviours) vitiate our intellectual autonomy. Still we are circumscribed by the constrained and material world that continuously requires to carry out undertakings. Our dreams of accomplishing our undertakings fail, due to our inevitable inability to close the gap between our pure and spontaneous thoughts and excessively limiting actions; the void at the middle of what is and what is not that is simultaneous and coexistent with the self.

In our misplaced seriousness we treat societal values as "transcendent givens" free from "human subjectivity". We only break free from our pursuits when we accomplish them. We fulfill this meticulously by enforcing order in the Nothing. When we are of a serious nature we are torn between two contrasting poles of seeking to play roles and of freeing ourselves from our roles to chart new pathways (Wikipedia, 2018). In the face of the nothing, *that which is* shrinks and decreases, because consciousness is predicated more on impulse and reflex than on firm and balanced seriousness.

WHY DO WE HAVE SOMETHING RATHER THAN NOTHING

Given that any epistemological proposition, existential claim, or metaphysical assertion (any posting of being, any stating of what there is) implies the being of someone making the proposition or assertion, it is a herculean task to prove that 'there is nothing'. So it's difficult to establish why we should be genuinely, realistically, and justifiably looking for nothing instead of something.

Conceding the creation of the world by an omnipotent unmoved mover, Aristotleans recognize the possible existence of a void. Aristotle posits the being of a "unique center of the universe," towards which all movements head, taking their natural positions. There are no collisions because there is only one earth. A majority of thinkers acknowledge Aristotle's unique cosmic center.

IS NOTHING SOMETHING?

Stephen Mumford (2012) asks if nothing is something. He probes into "nothings and absences." He asks whether entities have negative and positive properties. Conceding that our universe contains negative and positive facts, Bertrand Russell (1985), explains that negative facts explain negative truths. Some define nothing as the absence of something, the inverse of everything, and the antithesis of what there is. Some others say that the nothing does not exist, that being is the only reality there is, and that whatever there is is positive

DO WE HAVE AN EMPTY WORLD?

We perceive actual states of affairs as necessary instead of contingent. This is why science incapable of accounting for necessary truths, as Immanuel Kant notes. It does seem more plausible to admit that we have necessary origins. The combination of sperm and egg that gave rise to Socrates could not have been different from that from which he actually originated (Saul Kripke (1990, 112-113). So, one is essentially a man or a woman, as one is essentially a human being.

The idea of possible worlds hardly bothered the majority of existentialists, some of whom saw the nothing as some sort of force that impeded an object's being. Some say that allowing a central hole in the being of things will implicitly affords us some insight about all there are. In a whole universe of being, they argue, one or two of the things that are not, can give us some hint of the things there are. Some philosophers subscribe to an a priori proof of the being of God that doubles as an account of why there is something. If there is God, they argue, then there is something, given that God is something (Sorensen, 2003).

NON-EXISTENT THINGS AND EXISTENT THINGS

Supporting the 'intuitive primacy of positive truths,' Henri Bergson maintained that the positive nature of reality pre-empted nothingness (Sorensen, 2017).

If we claim that there is nothing, it is argued, we would be claiming a contingent and negative fact. But for this claim to count it would need some grounding on some positive

reality. That positive reality in turn would guarantee the existence of something rather than nothing.

Even as Aristotle conceded the existence of necessary truths, he held that to exist abstract entities required grounding on concrete ones. Although he regarded the existence of some individuals as a necessity, he placed the existence of any particular individual under contingency.

In his *Tractatus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1921) opined that a world was a 'totality of facts.' Considering that any fact needed at minimum an object, a universe devoid of objects would be a universe devoid of facts. Yet a world devoid of facts would be a contradiction in terms. This demonstrates the impossibility of an empty world.

Aristotle claims existential imports for 'universal generalizations'. The existence of gods are implied and implicated when we say that gods are mortal. Logicians deny the being of empty worlds. But they do not want their rejection of empty worlds to be exploited for metaphysical purposes. Wanting ontological neutrality, they refuse to be dragged into metaphysical disputations. They feel logic should maintain some measure of neutrality in the being of anything (Russell 1919, 203).

Leibniz and some others not only deny total emptiness but also the possibility of some measure of emptiness. Leibniz argues that the actual universe has something instead of nothing, since the actual universe is the utmost of the possible universe of worlds, and something is more desirable than nothing. And, given that more is preferable to less, the actual world is devoid of vacuums.

Since "void is nothing, and nothing cannot be," many philosophers since Melissus have rejected the idea of a void that existed in a way that an object would exist. They see the existence of a vacuum as contradictory (Guthrie 1965, 104).

IS THERE REALLY NOTHING?

Some philosophers concede the existence of non-existent, mind-independent, entities. They are convinced that non-existent things exist, because we think about, talk about, and make references to things we say do not exist. If these things did not exist, they argue, we wouldn't be talking about them, thinking about them, and referring to them. Some others moderately hold that there are such things, but they do not exist (Garrett, 2011, 35).

Parmenides denies that Not-Being (*to mē eon*), absolute nothing, exists. Arguing that as a total negation of being, one can neither know nor say Not - Being (*to mē eon*), and that it can never be. Only Being is, he declares, Not-Being is not. And Being is of necessity "one, unique, unborn, indestructible, and immovable" (Yamini Chauhan, Nov. 08, 2010).

The Greek atomists, responding to the Parmenideans, posit the being of absolute Not-Being and total void (the Greek *kenon*) (Yamini Chauhan, Nov. 08, 2010). They hold that the

universe is made up of simple and indivisible entities that move around in empty space. They affirm the being of void to account for experiential phenomena like movement.

Aristotle, on the contrary, disagrees that void can account for the movement of things. Objects need a mover to push or pull them into movement. For well over one thousand five hundred years, thinkers agreed with Aristotle's disproof of void.

In 1277 the catholic church denounced Aristotle's disproof of void and encouraged academics to permit the likelihood of the existence of vacuum. This allowed the omnipotent God. God could have preferred creating the universe differently: in one way or the other. This implies that a vacuum is possible. Besides, the biblical creation account states that God created the world *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) (Genesis 1:1).

The presupposition in Greek philosophy was not that creation came from nothing. Instead, Greek philosophers assumed that creation was out of a more basic entity. If things were destroyed, it was assumed they dissolved into a more primitive entity.

In ancient Chinese philosophy, Taoism and Confucianism taught that creation was from some formlessness rather than from the Nothing (JeeLoo Liu, 2014)

Creation out of nothing presupposes the possibility of total nothingness. This in turn implies that there can be some nothingness. Thus Christians had a motive to first establish the possibility of a little nothingness.

Blaise Pascal (1666, 75) conducted an experiment and concluded that it couldn't be doubted that there was a vacuum. In this way he dismissed the objections of Hero of Alexandria.

Descartes held that bodies were extended and so there was no need for void. Newton propounded a universal law of gravity that implied subtle substances all over the cosmos.

Einstein, the physicist, put forward a relativity theory that gave a relational account of space. His theory argued that there wouldn't be space, if we hadn't objects. Thus, we needed to abstract space to ground the objective world.

Vacuum couldn't be empty if it had energy and could be converted to mass. Scientists celebrate the finding that vacuums are not void. And some argue that this discovery settles the question, why there is being rather than non-being. Among scholars who argue this way include Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow (2010, 180), Frank Wilczek (1980), and Lawrence Krauss (2012).

THE NOTHING AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Blaise Paschal (1669) conceptualized the significance of non-being to the human condition. He discovered that a human being had a distinctive point of view on his finitude. In his *Pensées*, Blaise Paschal (1669) showed how we grasp the infinite and yet choose evil over goodness. Our choice makes us insignificant in a vast space and immense eternity. Our

concern should be how to dwell between the two depths of infinity and nothingness. In nature, man is a not anything when set side by side with infinity; he is everything when juxtaposed with the not-being. He is at the middle of the Not-anything and the Everything. Man's inability to understand extremities conceals the originations and the ends of the the things there are from him. The human being is also ill-equipped to apprehend the Not-anything out of which he was fashioned, and the incomprehensible Infinity into which he evaporates (Blaise Pascal, 1669, sect. II, 72). Blaise Pascal relates the nothing to the insignificant and the meaningless.

The Romantic scholars heightened Blaise Pascal's identification of the nothing with the insignificant and the meaningless. Downplaying the salvation economy, Romantic scholarship attempted to understand nature, without the intervention of human reason (Sorensen, 2017)

Immanuel Kant worsened the God-issue when he placed God-matters in the oblivion of the noumenon, accessible only to practical faith, and not to theoretical reason

Responding to the question, why is there something rather than nothing, Schopenhauer (1819) an atheist, argues that the world is a "meaningless accident," contrary to the frantic efforts of rationalism and religion to convince that it has some design. Whenever we are astonished that anything exists it is an indication that we are aware that the cosmos is chancy, he argues (Sorensen, 2017)

William James argues that not only that it is a mystery that anything exists, but that a certain thing exists is also a wonder (James, 1929, 39).

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1921) regards the question, why is there something rather than nothing as our instinctive communication of our sense of awe at the existence of things. The question prompts to conceive of the universe as a wonder. It has an emotive sense much more than a cognitive one (Wittgenstein, 1921).

Phenomenologists accept Schopenhauer's (1819) understanding that the emotional bears some metaphysical insight.

THE NOTHING AND EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialists give elaborate accounts of the sense of awe elicited by the possibility of Being and Nothing. Investigating the phenomenon of dread, Søren Kierkegaard (1844) concludes that the Nothing crops up in our consciousness through our emotions and moods. As an intentional state the emotional is always object-directed. If one is happy, there must be something about which one is happy.

Martin Heidegger (1959 & 1962) notes some motivating factors behind our tendency to loathe the existential import of our "emotional encounter" with the Nothing. It gives us an intuition into the possibility that our death is nothing and our existence is groundless. Thus Heidegger denies us the hope that recognizing and accepting that our existence lacks roots could save meaning from the disarray of nothingness. Human freedom, Heidegger suggests,

has its roots in the Nothing. Our idea of logical negation has also its origination from our experience of nothingness. This affords the human being a privileged point of view vis-à-vis the animal. Some existentialist philosophers view the Nothing as some sort of constraint that obstructs the being of an object.

Leibniz was concerned that when we drive the bias in metaphysics for the simple to its logical conclusion we could get the disconcerting conjecture that there is nothing. Empiricists, Hume or one, dismiss the view that reason alone can prove the being of any existent thing. Rationalists proffer a priori proofs of the existence of God that double as an account of why there is something.

Existentialists approve of the rigor of rationalist thought, but are displeased that their avowed standards are hardly followed through. Existentialism recognizes the disconcerting contrast between how we expect the real world to conduct itself and how it does actually behave. This recognition of nature's absurd behaviours makes existentialism more receptive of the paradoxical than rationalism. While existentialism see nature's paradoxical manifestations as privileged openings to adjust "unrealistic hopes," rationalism sees them as challenging reason's authority.

CONCLUSION

With all the controversy surrounding the Nothing, people want a definite answer to the question whether being can come from non-being or not; if existent things can come from non-existent things or not; whether something can come from nothing or not. To maintain that what is cannot come from what is not will not even yield the results those who reject Aristotle's unmoved mover (or the Christian creator) are seeking. If something cannot originate from nothing, then it could either be that the ordinary real life itself is everlasting, or it arose from some core reality that exists in eternity. The lone possibility for our current real world to have ultimate origin is when *what is* emerges from *what is not*. If this is not the case, then every existing thing would stand in need of a pre-existent thing; this would necessitate that some entity must have eternally been in existence.

Again, even as anxiety uncovers the nothing, as phenomenology and existentialism show, yet metaphysicians who inquire into why there should be something rather than nothing, usually end up in confusion. Still the issue seems to pull through in any test for being simply the product of some unsureness or obscurity (Sorensen, 2017).

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