

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# The Place of Nothingness, Absence, and Denial in Art and Science

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### Abstract

The objective of the following lines is to undergo a clear distinction between nothingness and other concepts that have usually been alike to it, such as denial and absence; at the same time, following said distinction, attention will be centered on demonstrating the place that nothingness has occupied, through its analogies, in the world of science and art. Among other things, the intention held by this study is to point out that knowledge is not only centered on the tangible or on things that are; rather, that it requires, just like art, the notion of a reality not centered on the being. Nothingness is, therefore, as a container of infinite possibilities, the source of the materialization of scientific findings and works of art.

**Keywords:** *Nothingness, Denial, Absence, Science, Art.*

### Introduction

In order to achieve locating nothingness in science and art, it is firstly necessary to undergo an existing distinction that it holds to denial and absence. Therefore, the first part of this article is focused on delimiting what is understood by each one of these concepts and the relationship among them; evidently, the link between nothingness and denial is clarified in the use of language, but a relationship between denial and the not-being is forewarned to a greater degree than a relationship with nothingness.

On the other hand, when the difference between nothingness and absence will be fulfilled, it will be based on two particular conditions, primarily: expectation and perception, issues without which a consciousness of absence does not exist. Finally, some historical findings of nothingness in science and their link to art will be boarded.

### Distinction between Nothingness and Denial

With the intention of distinguishing between nothingness and absence, I will focus on some ideas proposed by Sartre in his book *Être et la Nada* [The being and Nothingness].

In it, the French philosopher supposes that the origin of Nothingness is in the negative judgments that enable it. Perhaps that responds to the question: what makes man perceive the possibility of Nothingness? But it does not respond to the question: what originates Nothingness?

The aforesaid due to the following: if Nothingness would surge from the negative judgments we make of things, since we question, then it could not be understood where the intention, or the notion of the possibility of a negative judgment, surges from *a priori* to making it. How to see the negativity in something without the Nothingness which precedes that possibility of perception? And furthermore, if I am in the situation in which such perception of negativity has not been perceived, then, still: Nothingness is there, for it is to the extent that the perception is not.

If “the denial is the result of concrete psychic operations, sustained by these same operations and unable to exist by itself”, [1] then we would have to recognize that the denied is needed for the denial to be. But, the absence of the denied is also needed for the denied to be the line of the denial. It is

not only that the object to be denied is needed, but also the absence of the object which enables the denial. In this manner, the denial is not the line of Nothingness but, rather, the inverse; the concreted Nothingness, the specified nothing, is the line of the absence which, at the same time, is the line of the denial.

For example, it could be said that my lucubrations exist due to my having read what Sartre wrote; it would have to be said that such reflections in me were absent until -in fact-they occurred. On the other hand, when I write what I am thinking, that thought is, and at the same time possesses, a possible message that has not yet been seen and that someone else can grasp upon reading me, and so on and so forth; Nothingness reiterates to itself in possession of all imaginable response.

Now, if I have grasped something before the Sartrean affirmations, it is because it was already as a possibility of being grasped; the possibility that made itself real when, certainly, I grasped it. Prior to the grasping, the ideas that had not yet been generated in me remained in Nothingness, which covered them, allowing their possibility before me.

Here we are speaking of the grasping, or not, of something; not of the existence, or not, of Nothingness; for with me, or without me, Nothingness is. Should I grasp it or not, understand or not, in any way Nothingness does not depend on it. Being so, we have that before any message the possibility of any interpretation exists, for there are no messages that contain in themselves in a denotative manner all the possible meanings that we could give them. In the case that I believe that a message, given by any person, is grasped in its totality and there is no option of other alternate interpretations of such message, then certainly I am mistaken. It is because the denial of other possibilities of grasping something does not suppose that, effectively, there are no other forms of interpretation.

If I believe that things and messages have a single acceptable form of being interpreted, certainly, I am not contemplating Nothingness, but even so, Nothingness is. And the manner in which Nothingness is, in

this case, is as the absence of the grasping itself of Nothingness; this is to say, in the non-grasping, in the not-being of the grasping of Nothingness. Being so, Nothingness does not depend on my subjectivity, but rather I depend on my subjectivity – and on certain judgment – in order to grasp that Nothingness. When Socrates, for example, affirms, “I only know that I know nothing” he was more knowing than they who did not grasp the absence of their knowledge, their own ignorance.

To know ignorance is a way of knowing, recognizing the absent, the lacking, the not-being within that which I perceive. In the absence, the not-being can manifest itself, but as I have stated previously, the not-being is only a manifestation of Nothingness, not Nothingness itself. So, speaking of general knowledge, are we individually closer to the totality or to the lacking? Surely the reader will agree that what we don't know is greater than that which we know. Why, then, to deny the Being of the not-being?

The non-grasping of what I have not grasped -the ignorance of ignorance, we could say-enables Nothingness in itself through the not-being; this is to say, the not-being of knowledge. Nothingness enables the not-being and the Being. Contemporary man (and in all eras) thinks he knows and doesn't know that he doesn't know. This absence of grasping, or this not knowing that he doesn't know, gives him the naïve certainty that he knows and, hence, he perpetuates himself in his not-knowing. The ignorance of ignorance is a fertile soil for the massive reproduction of obstacles to contemplate Nothingness.

Having arrived at this point, I have to accept -without any drama – that I cannot know everything that I don't-know; and, consequently in fact, I can't have notions of the reaches of my ignorance. That is why, precisely, nobody escapes the ignorance of the ignorance, at least on a basic level. Analogically, we don't escape the perpetuity of Nothingness. There is more Nothingness than man himself is able to grasp; there is more Nothingness than that which man sees, or better stated, than that which man does not see.

And this is because Nothingness precedes man. In the beginning, Nothingness was; or do we not imagine that when we try to think about Nothingness, in other words, to think about something that effectively is? To play with that, is nothing more than to try and describe Nothingness, disturbing the nothing that slobbers us with nausea. Nothingness is still there. Hence, Sartre closes the question with the following affirmation of good faith: “The Being is prior to Nothingness and founds it”[2].

But is this possible? Sartre mistakenly centers himself on an absolute whose fundament is the Being. Could it be contrarily understood that Nothingness founds the Being? Some will tell me no, trying to explain all of this from the religious optic, affirming that “the beginning was the Verb”; and my response would be that the “not-being” is also a verb. Nothingness allows the Being to be, it precedes it.

In a different manner, I coincide, in part, with Sartre in calling *fragility* [3] the human possibility of not-being. However, I would not be completely in agreement for two reasons:

In the case of understanding that we are fragile due to us containing Nothingness, we would be in an error that does nothing more than return us to a categorical failure. If I believe that I am fragile for possessing Nothingness, it is because I suppose that I am strong if I possess the Being; I have not broken the dichotomic duality between the Being and Nothingness, I have not understood that Nothingness is the possibility of the Being itself. It is not that man has the possibility of Nothingness, but that he has the possibility of containing the Being; precisely in these instances in which he believes that he is something, before the perception of Nothingness makes him think the contrary.

If I am capable of understanding that Nothingness is not something not-mine from which one must move away in the ridiculous attempt to “be myself”, or in the Sartrean idea of “being in-itself”, then I will lose myself in the being of utter frustration. Frustration is not a not-being; frustration is, and it is not that I am not frustration, but I

can live it. What possible salvation is left? To accept my nothing in order to reconcile myself with Nothingness and – thanks to it – leave aside a series of conditions that can make me think the contrary. I must not escape Nothingness trying to be, for Nothingness is what makes me be, to have the Being. What do I call the comprehension of this? Fitted Nihilism. There will be time to board the issue further on, when I refer to the being of a Nothingner. Hence, the term *fragility* adopted by Sartre, is not in reality what man is by its possibility of not-being, but rather is how the Western man feels, due to his incomplete perception of his own Nothingness.

When Sartre speaks of the “possibility of not-being”, it would seem that he has lost from sight his initial theoretical bet of not recognizing potentialities. How would potential possibilities exist in a being that is only what it is? If I affirm that I am what I am, then I would be affirming also that I am not what I am not; but it would have to be said – moreover – that I am not either what I am, in the sense that we are not constituted by what we think we are, and that even that thought itself could be falsified.

The egocentric and vain affirmation of “I am he who I am” supposes a false totality for implying a suppression of the being due to the impossibility – apparent – of Nothingness in such a phrase. It is because everything is eagerness to be in this affirmation. If I say that “I am what I am”, it is not observed that I can also be what I am not yet, or maybe I am something that I don’t see and I think I am not. And yet, to affirm that “I am what I am” is less mistaken than to define myself with adjectives, for that is to unnecessarily encapsulate myself.

Leaving Nothingness to be in me is more favourable than attempting to be me. Hence, I am not what I am. We need to precisely distinguish denial from Nothingness. I am Nothingness; I am not what I am now, what I believe to be.

### **Distinction between Absence and Nothingness**

I will now make the distinction between

absence and Nothingness, centering myself on two prerequisites of all absence: the expectation of what we consider to be absent and the perception of the non-presence of it. In a broad sense, there always exists the possibility of absence for everything is not in the same site, since everything that exists is also located in a specific place.

That is why there possible absences do exist according to who perceives the things as present or not. Nothingness enables these absences without being absence as such. And it is not absence because it does not require the human being as a verifier of itself.

### ***Expectation as a Condition of Absence***

It could be objected that if the conscience does not grasp Nothingness, then it could disappear and we have triumphed over it. If we affirm that, we are mistaken. The possibility of grasping things is in the proportional relation to the relationship of such things with their basis. Everything we grasp is grasped, precisely, in its distinction to a basis that the form or figure is not. All form has a basis from where it is reflected. Nothingness is the basis from which, and thanks to which, the form (or figure) of everything tangible is seen.

Now, in the moment that I see the basis, I lose that form; or, moreover, it has turned into the basis, which is why when I see the form the basis stands out. The basis and the form are impossible to separate. I can see the ocean and not be conscious of grasping the space that is at the basis of it, yet I have grasped it. The basis is always grasped; whether I am conscious (or not) of what I grasp, is another thing.

There is no conscience of the grasping consciousness, but there is a conscience of what is there, even though I cannot explain it while I see the *only thing* that, according to myself, I am seeing. Between the Being and Nothingness swing the form and the basis; there is not one without the other. And, in the end, the basis is the form and the form is the basis.

I take an example from Sartre when he writes about the nature of absence based on the non-presence of a friend of his who he

calls Pedro. The French philosopher tells us: "I was expecting to see Pedro, and my expectation has made Pedro's absence arrive as a real occurrence"[4]. It would have to be said that if Sartre had not expected (as a predisposition) for Pedro, then the sensation of Pedro's absence would not have existed.

The consciousness of absence is a product of the expectation of perception. Upon not perceiving what I expect to perceive, I feel the absence. In the same manner, since the common man does not expect to perceive Nothingness, that is why he does not grasp that he does not grasp it.

This is to say, we are not conscious of our ignorance before the presence of Nothingness by supposing that there is no such presence, by not even considering it. And if I don't perceive Nothingness, then emptiness comes. It is not Nothingness which causes emptiness, but rather the un-perception of Nothingness which, curiously enough, could fill us.

Continuing on with the example of the absence of someone, if I get angry because Pedro has not arrived – then – the emptiness due to his absence comes. In this case, it is an emptiness generated by the expectation that I have about Pedro's absence. Absence is then something contingent-dependent-on our expectation that that which is effectively not, be.

Now, before Nothingness, today's man does not have an expectation but-even so-he keeps on perceiving the absence of something. The explanation to this is that we ordinarily hope to fill our empty spaces with the Being – things, people, events-and upon such aspects not being with us, we then perceive the absence. The issue here is that such absence is only a function of our expectation.

Without expecting, there are no absences. What if we expect Nothingness and fill ourselves of it? The first thing we would have to do is realize its absence-presence in our opinion of life. If we include it (in fact, it is), if we contemplate it, we could assume that the apparently empty spaces are filled with Nothingness; filled in the explicit sense.

However, upon not expecting Nothingness, not desiring it, we don't become aware of its absence-presence. We must note that it is not that Nothingness is absent in the literal sense of the issue, for Nothingness is-in fact -in us. I mean that it is absent in the sense that we don't contemplate it, implying then that we feel hollow and supposing that we must fill ourselves of something or someone.

Concretely: we perceive the absence but the absence *isn't* by its own self but, rather, to the extent that it is preceded by the desire or expectation of what we don't grasp or feel. In this sense, I will only feel the absence of something if I have the predisposition to grasp it.

In what is referred to Nothingness, this is always in the manner of the possibility of absences, but it is not the absence in itself. Since we don't expect Nothingness, we don't grasp that we don't grasp it and it turns into -in the cognitive or conscious apprehensive sense-an absence of the grasping of its own absence.

We do not realize that we don't perceive Nothingness because we do not have the predisposition to perceive it. If we could perhaps be capable of expecting Nothingness and contemplate its non-absent absence, we could also realize that the emptiness we suppose in us is not really so, for it is full of Nothingness. Nothingness is the only thing we can expect that is never conscious of absence, for it is always as a possibility of the rest of the possible absences, though it is not in itself *the* absence.

All our expectations of being filled can be betrayed, unless they are expectations of being filled by Nothingness, which is there from the same moment in which we are and until we cease to be in order *to be only* Nothingness. To the extent of our expectations centered on the Being, will our frustrations be.

Contemplating Nothingness, on the contrary, fills. Absence, then, is the non-presence. Nothingness is always present but not expected, which is why even its absence is absent. If we expect it, we know that we will have it. It is even not about expecting it, for one cannot expect what one already

has. Nothingness is not expected; instead, it is attempted to be contemplated.

Neither is the non-presence the same as the not-being. For the non-presence implies that something is not *in front* of us, or within reach of being grasped in us. The not-being, further than being something submitted to the grasping, or not, of itself due to its proximity, is in the plane of what is not graspable under any possible position or context within the plane of what is.

I am to separate two ideas with regard to emptiness: the ontological and the experiential. With the first, I refer to the emptiness of the physicists, to which I will refer further along. With the second, I refer to another type of emptiness: subjective emptiness, the personal experience of feeling empty.

Precisely because of it, if it is about an experience of vacuity, then emptiness is subjective experience: created by man and merely contingent, which is why it doesn't exist either in itself for it requires a man that feels empty. In Sartre's example, Pedro's absence is absence only to the extent that he *expects* Pedro. His absence has always been; his absence that is not presence *is* due to the presence *not being*. What converts such absence into emptiness is the expectation of Pedro's presence.

If expecting something that does not arrive supposes for us its absence before us, then, as a function of not perceiving the absence of something, we would have to cease expecting. Now then, in what manner can I cease to expect Dying.

The fundamental question in life is not between being free or not, between being happy or not, but instead about which jail can be less painful; and, in total, the only fundamental decision is between dying and living. The first issue that pushes us to death, paradoxical as this may result, is – precisely – Being. And, thus, the greatest ignorance possible is to know. It isn't necessary to die once and for all, but to die little by little. And it is because there are expectations to which we must die, or that must die within us. I will speak of this further along.

Returning to Sartre, he insists for us: “There is no no-being but on the surface of the Being”, [5] and he observes the not-being as a possibility, feasible or not, which is why he loses sight that it is a potentiality in itself which, at the same time, already is. My opinion is opposite: that the Being is on the surface of Nothingness, and that is why we grasp it without grasping Nothingness. What is on the surface, the phenomenon, is precisely something that occurs, but not its essence that is Nothingness. We suppose to know the being based on what we grasp, but we don’t understand it until we contemplate the Nothingness that is behind all surfaces of the Being.

Due to it, phenomenology is always partial. We only have representations. It is not possible to place between parentheses what is not the grasped object, for the same object is a representation; I will never be in contact with the real but only with the veiling, with the remoteness of truth. The erred aspects of our phenomenological affirmations consist in proposing as something true, that with is only a representation.

Neither is there a pure hermeneutic possible, only a failed hermeneutic based on the naïve vision of things. There isn’t something that is only Being, in the idea that it only be, but not that it be and not be. The same occurs when we make issues absolute, such as liberty that ends up being an optical illusion. Liberty is the stage name for the denial of impotence. What I propose is the liberation of liberty in order to understand only dialectic arbitrariness, always in deliberation with representations. Nobody comes out alive from the world of the representation.

If the not-being and the being can live together, then, it is understood that not only one of the two is while the other is not, as if only the act existed and the potentiality was excluded. If the not-being and the Being are one same interdependent thing, then potentiality is, even, in the sense that we can perceive the world of the possibilities, and not in as much as what is not, not truly be. The not-being is, in our representative perception, a not-yet-grasped-as-being. That is why an “I love you” is always a possible “I hate you”; it contains it, but is not yet

grasped like that. However, the not-being of that “I love you” is latent due to it also being. When we can grasp both issues as part of all of the existent, then there is no affliction possible if the “I hate you”-as potentiality-becomes act, for it all would have been grasped and, hence, was expectable. Concretely, any person who says to love us can cease to love us, for the affirmation supposes the possibility of denial.

The not-being is then the not-yet-grasped, but not because of it is it the non existent or not possible. So, I can expect anything from who says to love me, just as – in fact-I can expect anything from anything. This is to say, the solution to the problem of expectations is not necessarily in not expecting anything, but to expect everything. What is fundamental is to not expect with exclusive desire, or to not expect that everything is in the manner I desire it to be.

It is not about not becoming passionate, it is about being willing to accept everything, for in reality, the willingness for the passion of everything is better than useless passion, which clings to one only object of passion.

In the world of what is real, there is no valid predefined fidelity nor objective exclusivity, for everything is possible. What we perceive is only an ephemeral fraction in this universe of latent possibilities that are already, but that are-not-yet-grasped. If someone manages to desire it all by the mediation of the acceptance of the totalitarian Nothingness, then, he will be in the understanding of what this is all about.

### ***Perception as a Condition of Absence***

Another factor – in addition to expectation-that conditions the grasping of absence is to perceive it upon not perceiving something. Let’s say I have a date at the park with a person-who I will call Paulina – and that person did not show up. We are to recognize, that not because I didn’t see Paulina in the park does it mean that Paulina is Nothingness, but that there is a nothing that is her presence and is in *that specific place*; for it is a fact that Paulina’s presence is in a site that I don’t perceive. That nothing of Paulina’s presence (not of Paulina herself) is

what we call absence. In this manner, not only do we not perceive the not-being of someone but such not-being *is* a manner of non-perception. The fact that Paulina is not in a place doesn't mean that Paulina is not in an absolute manner. Paulina *is* in another place. In such a way that what I don't perceive is not Nothingness because of that, but that Nothingness, as a not-being, would be the manner of being of that for me.

In this moment I can have the expectation that a book of mine is found on my bookshelf. Upon searching for it and not finding it I realize that it's not there; I become aware of its absence, therefore of its not-being in front of me in that specific space. But this absence of the book is only in its sense of not being perceived by me and it's a relative affirmation to a manner of being of something which does exist anyway: my book.

This book is not in front of me but that doesn't mean that the book is not; what is not *is* its presence. If I affirm that the not-being of my book that I search for is made present when I don't see it on the bookshelf, I would be supposing that the essence of the book depends on me. But we would have to recognize that it is the nothing (not-being) of the book's presence, in that specific place, what I perceive (upon not perceiving). Let us understand that the book is, for my book is not Nothingness. It could be that one week later I find such book in the trunk of my car. Its un-presence for me has become absence and now its presence is for me. But prior to finding it, that book was a un-presence for me, therefore an absence.

The book has constantly been just as, also, the possibility of its absence *for me*, both in potentiality and in act. This absence is perceived in the beginning (upon not seeing it) but later (upon seeing it), what is absent is its absence, for now its presence is present. In one moment the presence of the book was potentiality and its absence was in act; later, its presence is in act and its absence is in potentiality, in the case that it is lost again. Now, the act and potentiality we have described *are*, but they are from my perspective before the thing or object.

Now, can I say that the act and potentiality

are without the dependence of my perception? The answer is yes, but in the understanding that they will not be for me, but in reference to a different subjectivity that constructs those possibilities. This is to say, if I die, that same book can be presence or absence to a different subjectivity. Even without my dying it is presence and absence to a different subjectivity at the same time. In what moment will Nothingness, or the being, be independent of the subjectivity that grasps? Responding from the point of view of subjectivity, of the phenomenal, the being or Nothingness will always need to be subjective in order to be.

However, on other planes, in regard to the independence of Nothingness before the Being, this would still exist without an individual to grasp it. For example, let us imagine that there does not exist a single human on the earth – before which it would be as unnecessary as impossible to respond to this-and let us also think that even the earth and existence are eliminated; there, in such a case, certainly Nothingness and the Being would cease to be graspable upon there not existing any grasping individual.

Likewise, the absolute would be enabled, that in this precise case would be Absolute Nothingness. In the end, Nothingness would triumph, for it is the only thing that would remain when there is nothing else but *Nothingness*.

### **Nothingness and its Place in the World of Science and Art**

Even though Nothingness has been relegated to the forgotten in some cultures and in some specific eras, in reality it cannot be denied today, for the testimony of philosophers, poets, artists, and nature in general are too large to not be seen. In fact, "among the great things that are found among us, the existence of Nothingness is the greatest" [6].

In Islamic art, the Muslims celebrate Nothingness as an emptiness that must be filled, not as a danger but as an opportunity. It is because in the end, people yearn for guidelines and something with which to fill any emptiness. The great art historian Ernst Gombrich baptized this impulse, referring it to decoration as *horror vacui* [7].

Precisely, in medieval thought as in the first part of the Renaissance, Nothingness was seen as the antithesis of God, or as the state of forgottenness into which God's adversaries and enemies were cast. In this sense, believing in "one only Divine creation of everything out of Nothingness, was a basic dogma of faith"[8] and nothing outside of this was permitted. Due to this, Augustine of Hippo (354-430 B.C.) affirmed that Nothingness was contrary to God, for it was what was present prior to the divine work. It is probable that the monk from Hippo didn't realize that with this, he gave more force to Nothingness than to God himself.

Upon being questioned in this sense, he proposed that time itself was created in the same instant that God created the Universe and that, therefore, there was no time prior to the created. The aforesaid is quite a creative prestidigitation of faith but easy to beat, for if time began with creation, then creation began together with time; and, if all creation supposes the passing from the non-creation to the created, then neither could the idea of creation itself be sustained, upon there not existing a past from which what presently would exist could have been created.

Further along, Thomas of Aquino took charge of radicalizing the Aristotelian denial of Nothingness, and he understood it as that which had been annihilated with the action of God. Aquinas believed as well that "if Nothingness absolutely existed in the past then nothing could exist now",[9] with which he supposed the obligatory nature of a Creator. However, though an initial energy that supposes the movement of something that is not to a being or new way of being, could be necessary, neither does this imply an omnipotent creating will.

It is clear that with the medieval interpretations of Aristotle and the imperialism of Christianity, a complex tangle of ideas was produced whose philosophical consistency was reduced to an act of faith. This is how "as a result of Aristotle's rejection of the idea that there could exist a separate emptiness, on the basis that it was logically incoherent, during the High Middle Ages it was almost

universally believed that Nature loathed the creation or persistence of any empty state"[10].

This included, of course, the idea about Nothingness that was denied during hundreds of years, precisely to accommodate the idea of God. Furthermore, Ribas supposes that anti-vacuism began with Aristotle when he comments that "the great focus on which the great dominating current of anti-vacuism is articulated is the tradition of Western thought. During many centuries, Aristotle's opinion composed the corpus of scholastic thought, that which much be rejected and succumbed in order to enlighten the modern scientific Revolution"[11].

Such as Barrow explains, in the seventeenth century there proliferated similarities to the Stoic idea of emptiness in which it was understood that the finite cosmos was surrounded by an infinite emptiness and that, furthermore, the attributes of such emptiness coincided with the attributes of an enclosing emptiness in this same world. This is to say, that it was an immutable, continuous and indivisible space, closer to the idea of Nothingness than that of physical emptiness.

Isaac Newton seems to credit this Nothingness, which is in all places, upon relating to the Deity itself. He affirms that we must not consider the world as the body of God, or its diverse parts as the parts of God, for He is a uniform being, empty of organs, members, or parts, being in all places present to the things themselves [12]. As we see, the ideas of God and Nothingness have been, and usually are, both contradictory and similar.

The idea of God as the Nothingness itself began to make sense, but never stated in such a clear manner. Naturally, not everybody would agree with Newton and the neo-Stoics, especially those who need tangible and anthropomorphic representations to refer to, and understand, the Deity.

One of them, as was mentioned in the first chapter, was Leibniz. Little by little, this controversy was left aside; the idea of God as a Being was resumed informally, and the notion of God as Nothingness excluded.

Poets and writers have also made a recurring theme out of Nothingness. We clearly observe this in the following poem: “Nothingness was first and shall be last for Nothingness is maintained for ever. And nothing has escaped death so it cannot be the living most endured [...] Nothingness can live when the world has disappeared, for everything will arrive at Nothingness [13].”

In the same manner we could say that Nothingness is higher than God. And due to it, *something* is. Vacuity is not the denial of the Being, for it *is* in relation to the Being as denial of presence; therefore, emptiness is an emptiness of something, a something that could have been before and, in that sense, it would have been absence.

In difference to absence, emptiness is the physical space not occupied by a specific being, but not the denial of the Being. Emptiness is not always assimilated in this way. An example of it is Christianity which, within its pantheistic perspectives, denied that possibility of emptiness upon affirming that God is in every place.

There are various notions about Nothingness in the works of William Shakespeare (1564-1616). The following citation from *Macbeth* is notable: “Life is a story told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying Nothing” [14]. In turn, the German physicist Otto von Guericke (1602-1686), understood Nothingness better than some philosophers. His consideration is cited by John Barrow in the following affirmation:

Nothingness contains all things, it is more precious than gold, without beginning or end, more joyous than the perception of munificent light, more noble than the blood of kings, comparable to the skies, higher than the stars, more powerful than a lightning bolt, perfect and blessed in everything. Nothingness always inspires.

There where nothing is, ceases the jurisdiction of all kings. Nothingness is exempt from harm [...] Nothingness is out of the world, it is in all places. It is said that emptiness is Nothingness and it is said that imaginary space – and space itself – is Nothingness [15].

In the terrain of science, Otto von Guericke began the experiments with air bombs that were to be continued later on. His affirmations about the existence of emptiness, even out of the world, in space itself, [16] are overwhelming; with which he resembles, in part, that originally proposed by the Stoics.

On the other hand, in France, Blaise Pascal attempted to unite both conceptions of Nothingness which had been in use until the seventeenth century; in other words, the abstract, moral, and psychological Nothingness, and the physical nothing associated to emptiness.

In this work, though I have included references to the Nothingness associated to emptiness, I am mainly interested in the abstract Nothingness, implied in the metaphysical order. For Pascal, centered on the debate about the physical emptiness, the separation was not as viable as the one I have proposed here; that was because the detractors of emptiness utilized theological arguments (or pseudo-arguments) to reject him with the intention of making him seem heretic and which, therefore, would stop his affirmations.

Let us not forget that a few years before the birth of Pascal, occurred the trial of Giordano Bruno who died burnt at the stake in 1600. Those were tense environments where the defenders of the faith – many of them Jesuits like Father Noel, Descartes’ tutor-confronted Pascal, who had to separate, in the end, his affirmations about physical emptiness from the theological implications that they supposed.

Afterwards, the controversy about the existence of physical space began to take on experimental shape in the search for a demonstration of real emptiness. Scientists like “Torricelli, Galileo, and Boyle, utilized bombs to extract the air from glass recipients in order to demonstrate the reality of pressure and to demonstrate the weight of air”[17].

Later on, the existence of cosmic ether that partially explained the impossibility of real space was thought up. In an article

published in 1881, Michelson [18] affirmed that the hypothesis of stationary ether was erred, with which imaginary ether was able to be eliminated from the scientific plane and its space allocated to the emptiness of mass and energy. Afterwards, it was discovered that even emptiness supposed an energy that impregnated the universe. This supposed the admission of the existence of emptiness, in spite of the inevitability of energy in quantic emptiness.

Until a few years ago, it was affirmed that “there must be some simple law in Nature, which we have not yet found, that restores emptiness and makes this energy of emptiness equal to zero” [19]. United to it, there is also evidence today that such energy is that which propitiates the expansion of the Universe and possibly its end [20].

Albert Einstein, after the discovery and elaboration of the theory of relativity in 1915, dedicated himself to understanding the Universe. From Einstein’s studies, it was Alexander Friedmann who warned that the Universe changes and that it is not static; that not only the stars and the planets move, but that the Universe itself has movement and that this is in expansion.

The energy that the expansion supposes is an energy of emptiness, which is why the emptiness in itself is “filled” by an energy that implies the possibility of movement.

From this perspective, it cannot be properly spoken of empty spaces but, instead, of *empty states* or *fundamental states* [21] that, even so, possess energy. This led, little by little, to the elaboration of the term *quantum emptiness*, which can be understood as “an ocean of compositions of all the elemental particles and their anti-particles that continually appear and disappear [...] based on the quantum emptiness, then mutually annihilate themselves, and disappear” [22].

Therefore, emptiness is far from being deprived of energy, at least in the sense of quantum physics. However, this impossibility of absolute emptiness in the physical world does not apply to the Nothingness of which we speak. For if Nothingness is identified with emptiness, in the philosophical and material sense, that is

not the strict sense from which we begin on the idea of Nothingness that I use here; and that is glimpsed more on the ontological plane than on that of Physics, though this does not eradicate similarities that can be the object of subsequent studies.

Lastly, if the emptiness of quantum physics contains the minimum amount of available energy, then in it exists the possibility of change and it is there where the notion of Nothingness as enabler of change continues to make sense. The scientific proof of physical emptiness is not compulsory for the comprehension of the Metaphysical Nothingness to which I refer, and it may even be the counterpart of the cultural conceptions that have been attributed to the deity.

It is unnecessary for an absolutist posture that attempts to affirm at all costs the existence of the utterly physical emptiness devoid of energy, since it cannot be sustained anyway, at least from the perspective of quantum physics. I coincide, clearly, with this scientific discipline in that the Universe is not continuous and in which change does exist as a function of Planck’s constant; an issue not perceived from our common myopic reaches.

Being so, the quantum entanglement is possible due to the interaction between the Being and Nothingness; hence, the theory of relativity, quantum physics, and my position with regard to the concept of Nothingness, are not opposed if we consider the perspective of quantum electrodynamics, which is a very feasible line to follow. Anyhow, in total, we cannot equal the concepts of emptiness and Nothingness to one another. Emptiness has been understood as the region of space which does not contain matter; but Nothingness is, still, even without the space itself that the supposed emptiness would require [23-28].

## Conclusion

Different from denial, which requires man to pronounce it, nothingness is not contingent to any human opinion or posture; the same occurs with absence, which is subject to the conscience of something or someone’s non-presence, according to the expectation and perception that one has of things and the world.

Nothingness has been present in artistic manifestations as that which is not possessed but is wished to be expressed or that which is lived and exteriorized through a masterpiece. Science has historically ventured into the realm of nothingness upon attempting to study it as emptiness; nevertheless, it can currently be boarded

from different possibilities linked to quantic reality and the interesting veins of exploration that concern space, black holes, dark matter, dark energy, or similar issues. In such a manner, the denial of nothingness is truly far from making sense, unless our expectation and perception is so small as to admit it.

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