

Reflections on nothingness

On the opposite side of the room stands a bucket of paint, the brush floating in it like a stranded vessel. The philosopher gazes at the newly painted wall with a sense of satisfaction. The varnish-like odor drifts in the room. With closed eyes, one could almost imagine being in an art studio.

In a way, this is an art studio; a new study with a desk at the large, arched window. Here, ideas will be born. They will be written down in a pallet of poetry, namely a writing journal.

Reflections on reality and fantasy will run freely from the nib of a black ballpoint pen.

“Philosophy is like watching paint dry,” a friend once told her. The philosopher smiles, as the realisation dawns that this is exactly what she is doing, and rightly so. It is a good reflective exercise. After all, is reflection not what philosophy is all about?

The shadows in the corner where she has seated herself are warm. The movements they make with the light have a liquid quality, like dark water quenching her parched mind’s thirst for thoughts. She gazes at the coat of paint once again, noting every shade and tint.

It is a cold yellow, the wall. It brings her no comfort, or any similar emotion for that matter. It spreads out before her like a vast canvas. She ponders on this concept for a moment. If she were an artist, she would leave it blank. It serves its purpose the way it is: cold and functional, a poetry of pragmatism. Besides, a blank canvas leaves room for new ontologies of thought to float around without interruption. They cannot sprout in a cacophony of colors. Personally, the philosopher prefers the dark monotony of shadow. Shadow makes her feel calm and collected. It blocks out the iridescence of shimmering light, which blinds and disorients her. It hides her from the protruding gazes of those who intrude her thought-world with words.

If people could read the thoughts of the philosopher, they would see her as dejected. She considers this for a moment. A chuckle creeps down her throat, as she sees it from their point of view: *Who in their right mind prefers darkness to light?* They forget that beautiful things, such as fireflies, need darkness to glow. If darkness did not exist, the purpose of light would be less profound. When large lights are something, they cause more subtle lights to be as nothing.

The philosopher gazes up at the white ceiling. Specks of mould are starting to arrange themselves in patterns on its surface. Just as thoughts have patterns, nature has patterns. Would it then be possible to conclude that thoughts imitate such characteristics within the things the eyes perceive?

White is not a colour. It is the absence of colour. When you look at it you see nothing. Yet, in its nothingness, it is still something, even if the only element of somethingness it possesses is its definition. In theory, however, nothingness cannot be defined. If this is done, the descriptions within the definition would give it attributes, which would imply some sense of substance.

Nothingness is not necessarily a bad thing. It has a calming effect on the philosopher, helping her to escape somethingness of everyday life. It grants her fresh perspective. She sees it as a reconditioning of the mind in order to accept what everyday life has to offer. In this sense, she sees herself as some sort of ascetic.

But then again, even nothingness contains a hint of somethingness. If something didn't exist there would be no nothing. If nothing existed it would become the only something. The human mind cannot grasp the concept of nothingness. Life in itself is a rearrangement of the letters that spell the word 'something.' Life, lewe, vie, ζωή...

She shifts her gaze back to the yellow wall. Shadows slowly engulf the dapples of light on it. A feeling of resignation is evoked in her as the last one disappears. When light becomes nothing, shadow is the something that replaces it.

She continues to think, coming to a conclusion that strikes her as profound. Despite the fact that it is impossible for her to grasp the concept of nothingness, there is one who does understand it perfectly. Through Him, all that is something came into being.

Through him all things were made, and without him ***nothing*** was made that has been made (John 1:3).

He was the source, the epitome of somethingness, yet he gave up all that he was, all that he represented, in order to make the effects of sin nothing. He became what he was not, in order that she could become something she was not. He took her sin upon himself that through him she might become the righteousness of God. In being granted this, she obtained a corner of the ultimate somethingness. That which she could not even have imagined had she sat in her corner for ten lifetimes.

The philosopher spots a corner of light, an unexpected remnant. It falls on the open Bible she has left on the floor. It lights up the following words:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself ***nothing***, taking the very form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Phil 2:7).