

From Nothinging to Nothingness; The Healing Power of Positive Negation

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Editorial

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*O naught!
Bother not naught!
For naught.
Attributed to Rumi*

Negative phenomenology has almost been neglected in the modern thinking. Talking about death, void, Nothingness, absence and loss is a demanding endeavor for our imaginary minds. We prefer to convert these negative phenomena to some positive images. Even amid loss and absence, we persist imagining the lost or absent object which is intertwined with a void locus.

Death is also always embodied in the human skull, the grim reaper, hourglasses, or mythical images, such as Azrael. Death is perceived as an entity or force against life, rather than the end point of life, or an attribute of the life process.

It appears to be a shortfall in the evolution of our present minds that formal thinking and non-conceptual awareness have not advanced adequately to comprehend the negative facets of our phenomenological world in its authentic darkness and silence. This brief essay extends an invitation to contemplate more profoundly into the negative dimensions of the mind and its significance in fostering resilience, adaptability, and the evolution of consciousness. Therefore, finding an authentic way to connect with the negative aspects of life can be pivotal in the management of loss, grief and trauma.

First of all, let's take a glance on types of negative phenomena. In my book (2008);

“*Hich inja Mihichad*”, meaning, “Nothing is doing nothing here”, I explore some of these concepts, ideas and introspections that may elucidate various types of the negative phenomena. Here, I simply introduce two negative dimensions; Nothinging and Nothingness.

The realm of Nothinging

Nothinging refers to compensatory mental processes aimed at alleviating the pain caused by losses and unrealized desires. As Heidegger (1993) explained in his book, “What is metaphysics?” by using the verbal form of nothing: “*das Nichts nichtet*”, revealing that non-events, similar to events, are in act in our minds, and even in our societies.

Nothing can stop in the ever-changing world and endless chain of signifiers. When someone loses a job, a spouse, or a property, does that disappear from the mind? Lost objects insist on existing and acting; in other words, they are Nothinging in, and between us. At times, a deceased family member has a more decisive role than the living ones. The images, memes, and impressions of others make a complex intersubjective matrix, and the lost object can act interpersonally. Some mythic or historical-mythical characters, as animistic memes, can do everything amongst their Nothinging.

Abu Zayd Balkhi (2013) was the first to proclaim that mental illnesses are not merely the result of humoral imbalances, but are in fact ineffective reactions to losses. It still makes sense that our inappropriate interpretations and maladaptive coping strategies can form problem-making Nothinging processes.

Nothinging is like a living death as Blanchot (2015, p. 155) writes in Commenting on death in “*The Space of Literature*”:

“... In it they die; they do not cease, and they do not finish dying”.

The realm of Nothingness

If Nothinging is much ado about absence, Nothingness is the silence of absence. Losses lead to insecure emotions while emotions are intentional states, therefore, directed towards objects and associated with related images. Reactive emotions towards lost objects paired with the darkness of obscurity and trauma raise the chaos of Nothinging.

Understanding of Nothingness in the silence of conceptualization and interpretation is the royal way out of infernos of Nothinging. Nothingness as a state of mind is based on openness to the formless and integrating interoceptive vibrations.

Acceptance and mindfulness and other contextual approaches are transdiagnostic strategies to perceiving losses and our towards-death being without making Nothinging a web of meanings (see Thompson et al., 2021; Hayes et al., 2011). Acceptance in its deep sense is accepting of meaninglessness, as the basic state of mind, and negating the insecure meaning-making procedures.

According to Heidegger, freedom is rooted in Nothingness. This is in line with Taoist and Buddhist scripts for liberty. Lao Tzu (2020) clearly addressed “joy comes from Nothingness”. That is why the Buddha (1965) invited people to a heaven of “not-knowing, not-not-knowing”; being aware of Nothingness.

This is not the Schopenhauerian negative negation of will to living, posing consciousness against life, but is a positive negation of the uncontrolled will to knowing. We need a more Nietzschean approach to say yes to the totality of life and being, and saying no to reducing consciousness to cognition (see Blenkinsop and Morse, 2017). This way, we can compose ourselves in the form of a complex elixir of a tragic awareness, a playful knowing nothing, doing nothing, and a whole-body

desire to know and act.

A twin black hole

When we are traumatized, we are simultaneously faced with “the bad” and “the being”. The bad comes from an extreme allostatic load and provokes insecurity and related emotions by context, and associates previous memories and fantasies. The being is the hard core of the traumatic event that does not allow for conceptualization, so appears as a dark black hole which may swallow our identity and being (Goli, 2023). The profound dread of confronting “being”, undoubtedly hurls us into a dark abyss, and we find ourselves meandering along a Mobius-like path between badness (or negativity) and Nothingness.

What is the way out of this endless suffering, between of the Scylla of “the being” that threatens us to abolition and Nothingness, and Charybdis of Nothingness about “the bad” that evokes all painful memories and expectations?

Joyful Nothingness

In the ancient symbolism of Sufis, the water of life perpetually flows within the absolute darkness of "zalamAt." (Nezāmi, 1956). This is the mystical address of the way to Nothingness, creating an authentic life and posttraumatic growth, while Nothingness is the unlimited semiosis of insecurity and badness.

Despite all of the devilish associations with darkness and Nothingness, it is insightful to know that the light in itself is dark, and the being in itself is Nothingness, because there is no thing there; no object recognized and no propositional meaning.

A dare to be, a step out of the boundaries of the mental ego to the meaninglessness of the formless state of being, is the key of the bondage of the twin black hole of traumas and pathological griefs. Embracing the meaninglessness of being, or Nothingness, paves the way for a genuine freedom in constructing a more integrated meaning of life and navigating through challenging events.

While the 20th century was a period for growth of the realm of bright rationality and ontology, it seems that the twenty-first century is the time for the development of a dark realm of consciousness and the ontic. This growth promises a balance between the yin and yang of the psychological knowledge and practice.

We are no longer exclusively in pursuit of the joy of success and the clarity of reason, but simultaneously deriving joy from nothing. As Ungaretti (2004) puts it, a light up of immensity [of Nothingness]; “M’illumino d’immenso”.

Conflict of Interests

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