

# NOTHINGNESS: AN EXCURSUS INTO TRADITIONAL METAPHYSICS

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## Abstract

*'Nothing' and indeed 'nothingness,' are concepts that have earlier discursive in traditional metaphysics. This paper appraises the advancement of the concept and sets to understand the foundations for the various conceptions of 'nothing,' in traditional metaphysics. The paper employs the analytic method of research to analyze the emergent themes on nothing in traditional metaphysics. It discovers that there are different themes that emerged in discussions on nothingness in traditional metaphysics. From this discovery, it makes its central claim that 'nothing' assumed several themes in traditional metaphysics such as: Void and cosmology, logical-entity and nonbeing, and privation and non-material for creation. The paper asserts that these ideologies are still useful today, with the mereologists and nano-scientific discoveries on entities and imperceptible units out of what previously was considered nonbeing or nothing.*

## 1. Introduction

The word *nothing* or *nothingness* is one of the concepts which discussions on, have spanned from the epoch of the ancient Greek philosophers to the present age. The concept *nothing* engages the attention of metaphysicians, logicians, philosophers of language, scientists, literary artists, atomists, mereologists, etc. Nothing or *nothingness* is however a philosophical category that poses serious challenge for discussion. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, 'nothingness' is "a state where nothing is present or where nothing exists that is important or gives meaning to life."<sup>1</sup> This definition shows that *nothing* implies *vide*, *inexistence of substantiality* (or considerateness), and *meaninglessness*, and could be discussed as inherent themes in discussions on nothingness as it is evident in traditional metaphysics.

Nonetheless, the definition does not encompass all the significances of nothing, especially in metaphysics, albeit it is species of the ideologies on nothingness. These significances of *nothing* will be immensely used in this discourse; as they come up in various ideologies of the thinkers. It will first make some linguistic explorations on the concept of *nothing* in

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<sup>1</sup>*Nothingness*. Cambridge Dictionary. Retrieved 05/06/2025 from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/nothingness>

English, before considering its meaning and nominal inflations in concerned European languages which most discussants of the topic philosophized with. The languages include English, French, German, and Greek. It explores the ideologies and emergent themes in the discussions on *nothingness* in traditional metaphysics.

The paper reveals that discussions on *nothingness* in traditional metaphysics began as a cosmological discourse on the ultimate stuff of the universe in *Parmenides*, and later turned to discussions on: Mereology in the *Atomists*, and on the centrality of its inconceivability by man in the *Sophists* and *Plato*, on the grammatically denying roles of paraphrasing in *Melissus*, and on its logical than ontological existence in *Aristotle*. There are also the medieval age ideas of nothing and creation, and their variations, etc.

These ideologies do not exhaust all that is in nothingness in traditional metaphysics, but are samples of major discourses on the topic. They nonetheless do not make unique views on nothingness in metaphysics, but as Izu M. Onyeocha would say, “Philosophy has accumulated values, and new truths supplement old ones.” The ongoing discussion reveals how traditional metaphysics explored the concept of nothing, and each treatise tends to assume new truths that supplement old or opposing ones on the concept of nothingness.

## 2. Some Linguistic Foundations on the Concept of 'Nothingness'

*Nothing* in English, French, German, Greek and even Italian, etc, and as such in most European languages, has same morphological structures and inflation patterns. In each of these languages, *nothing* and its linguistic equivalence in the other languages is a *pronoun*, and *nothingness* and its linguistic equivalence in the other languages, is a *noun*. Thus, one sees in English (nothing and nothingness), in French (*rien et néants*), in German (*nichts und nichtigkeit*), in Greek (*tipota kai tipotenios*), in Italian (*niente e nulla/nullita*), etc. In all, these linguistic equivalents of *nothing* are pronominal and those of *nothingness* are nominal, and have several other synonyms.

The English word *nothingness* is an inflation of the pronoun *nothing*, which signifies: 'Not anything, something of no importance, complete lack of quality in an entity,' and 'state of nonexistence.' The pronoun- *nothing*, is compounded of the adjective 'no' (which signifies- not, not at all, and often appears as the shortened form of 'none'- considered as 'not any of something, not any part of something, not a single one of something,' etc) and 'thing,' which signifies 'inanimate' object, occurrence, word, etc, and as such means 'not-thing, none-object, no-thing,' etc.

If the formation of the word “no-thing-ness” is at all rearranged in precedence (Ness-no-thing), with the significance of the component morphemes as- *Ness* (the state of), *no* (not, not at all) and *thing* (being something perceived concretely), 'nothingness' would mean, the state of not being perceived in concreteness or not tangibly perceived (to be Berkelean). But this 'state of not-being-perceived' does not entail its inconceivability, as imperceptibility is not same as inconceivability. This, as later seen in Sartre and Heidegger, shows that human consciousness is an evidence of the conceivability and reality of nothingness, and also the

seat and seed of nothingness. For Sartre, consciousness and no-thingness are the distinguishing features of humans as against brutes. Similar manifestations are also evident in Henry Fielding as with him, consciousness is the certainty of the 'know-ability' and non-deniability of nothingness. In this sense, nothingness would further signify 'absence of everything, a vacuum, total worthlessness and meaninglessness. Nothingness would thus have as synonyms- Void, emptiness, nonbeing, nihilism, annihilation, zero amount, etc. These are the various perceptions and sub-themes in discussions on 'nothing' or 'nothingness' in traditional metaphysics.

The concept 'nothing' in traditional metaphysics began as *τιποτα* (*tipota*) in Greek- "not a thing," which came from the ancient Greek *μηδεν* (*naught, nothing*) and *ανύπαρξια* (*anyparxia*)- nothingness, nonentity, absence, which are basic concepts in the thematic treatises of Parmenides' and other early ancient Greek philosophers on nothingness, not as nonbeing, but as nonentity. Yet, the notions of nothing in traditional metaphysics influenced later philosophies of French and German thinkers, especially Sartre and Heidegger.

### 3. Nothingness in Traditional Metaphysics

In traditional metaphysics, discussions on 'nothing' and 'nothingness,' took certain dimensions that could be classified as themes. These themes are: Void and cosmology, logical-entity and nonbeing, and privation and non-material for creation. These underscore the views of such traditional metaphysicians as: Parmenides and the Atomists; as well as O Melissus, the Sophists, Plato and Aristotle; Plotinus and Augustine; Aquinas and St Anselm, which themes are examined here.

a) *Nothing as Void and Cosmology*: These are central views in the discussions of Parmenides and the Atomists on *nothing* and *nothingness*. The pre-Socratic philosopher, Parmenides was the first metaphysician that discussed 'nothingness' as a topic of philosophical concern. His discourse centred on- being, vast array of time and void, and suggests a prefiguration of the Heideggerian metaphysics. For him, *eon* permeates all that exist, and represents immutable Being in its most abstract form. Void is impossible as it implies a place without *eon* and thus with nonbeing. In his poem "On Nature," Parmenides prescribed two views about being or reality- *The Way to Truth*, which explored the unity of reality, the impossibility of change, and how existence is timeless and uniform.<sup>2</sup> Also, Parmenides held that there is no becoming, nothing comes into being and nothing goes out of being, being simply is and does not change. This is evident in his Fragment 8 (lines 1-4), where one sees Parmenides' goddess argue thus:

As yet a single tale of a way  
remains, that it is; and along this path markers are there  
very many, that What Is is ungenerated and deathless,  
whole and uniform, and still and perfect.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>J. Palmer, *Parmenides and Pre-Socratic Philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup>Fragment 8 (lines 1-4), Palmer, John, "Parmenides", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = [<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/parmenides/>](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/parmenides/).

Also, from same *Fragment 8* (lines 7-13) the Parmenides' goddess argues further that:  
 How, whence increased? From not being I shall not allow  
 you to say or to think: for not to be said and not to be thought  
 is it that it is not. And indeed what need could have aroused it  
 later rather than before, beginning from nothing, to grow?  
 Thus it must either be altogether or not at all.  
 Nor ever from not being will the force of conviction allow  
 something to come to be beyond it: on account of this neither to be born<sup>4</sup>

Here, Parmenides argues that if anything comes into being, it must come either from being or from non-being. If anything comes from being, then it is already being and so does not really come into being. If also it comes from non-being, then it is nothing, as only nothing can come from nothing or non-being. In either case, there is no becoming, nothing comes into being.<sup>5</sup> Being for him cannot arise from Nonbeing and Being neither arises nor passes away.<sup>6</sup> *What is not* is unthinkable, inconceivable and unspeakable. This is the major message in *Fragment 7* where the goddess' warns Parmenides further, not to allow his thought to proceed along the way typical of mortal inquiries: "...for this may never be made manageable, that things that are not are."<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the ancient Greek Atomists- Democritus and Lucretius discussed nothing from another perspective that makes from it a different theme for cosmological discussions. They held that everything is composed of atoms moving in the void, meaning that both matter and no-matter coexist, and where atoms are missing there is emptiness.<sup>8</sup> For instance, to Democritus is ascribed the Greek declaration: μή μάλλον τό δέν ή τό μηδέν εἶναι<sup>9</sup> (m? mállon tó dén ? tó mēdén eínai- "nothing comes from nothing"). This declaration is from the background of ontological discussion that is centred on atoms and possibilities of mereology. It is possible that Democritus was influenced by Leucippus, who also discussed *nothing*, though, it is regretful that only two fragments of Leucippus' philosophical notes are said to have survived, and with a single complete sentence: "Nothing happens at random; everything happens out of reason and by necessity."<sup>10</sup> This statement may differ from the object of this discourse, as it points to causality and necessary being, more than to ontology proper as Parmenides espoused.

4J. Palmer, "Parmenides"

5J. Omoregbe, *A Simplified History of Western Philosophy*, Vol.1: Ancient and Medieval Philosophy. (Maryland-Ikeja: Joja Press, 1991), 13-14.

6Plato, "Parmenides," *Plato in Twelve Volumes. Vol. 9. Translated by Harold N. Fowler. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967-79).*

7J. Palmer, "Parmenides"

8R. Godfrey, *Democritus and the Impossibility of Collision*. *Philosophy*, 65, no. 252 (1990).

9W.I. Matson, "Democritus, Fragment 156." *The Classical Quarterly*, 13, no. 1 (1963): 26-29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/637931>.

10 F.E. Baird, *Philosophic Classics: Ancient Philosophy Vol. 1*. (New York:Routledge, 2010).

b) *Nothing as Logical-Entity and Nonbeing*: This conception of *nothing* and *nothingness*, represents the thoughts of Melissus, the Sophists, Plato, Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. With Melissus, a seeming 'linguistic turn' is observed. According to Christopher John Fardo Williams, who brought in the idea of paraphrasing voids away<sup>11</sup> as a discursive approach on the concept of *nothingness*. Melissus is said to have remarked thus, "Nor is there any void, for void is nothing, and nothing cannot be."<sup>12</sup> Melissus noted that in a statement like: "There is a vacuum in the flask," one affirms the existence of something in the flask- the vacuum. Vacuum means 'an absence of something', and in the statement, one is denying that there is something in the flask. Thus, the statement is a contradiction. Melissus paraphrased the sentence, "There is a vacuum in the flask," into "The Flask noths." "There is fog in Winchester" (Winchester is foggy). "There is a smell in the basement" (The basement smells). However, some philosophers differ in opinion about vacuum as a property of things.

Also, a radical anthropological turn was witnessed in the Sophists, who took an *anti-nothing* perspective on 'nothingness.' They denied its objectivity, and argued its possible subjective nature, which reality depends on man's judgement. They were the first to deny the existence of nothingness and nothing (*anyparxia kai meden-* Inactivity and nonbeing).<sup>13</sup> The Sophist Gorgias, claimed that nothing does not exist, and if it exists at all, its nature cannot be understood, and even if its nature can be understood, one is not able to communicate that understanding to another person.<sup>14</sup> Gorgias denied the possibility of knowledge and of objective existence, in refutation to Parmenides who claimed that existence could be understood as composed of a single unified substance because *What-is* cannot come from *nothing* nor from 'what it is not like,' and therefore, *What-is* must have always existed. Gorgias argues that one cannot claim existence exists, much less what it consists of. Besides, if objective existence and objective knowledge were possible, human speech cannot communicate it. Thus, there is no connexion between human thought and conception, but not the inexistence of conceptions.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, Plato like the Sophist Gorgias, came up with the declaration that *nonbeing* is difficult to conceive. Being *is* as a replication of *what-is* in the World of Ideas and since 'everything is' a replication of the existents in the Ideal World or World of Forms, nonbeing is inconceivable. In his book- *Sophist*, Plato's *Visitor* declared interest in the investigation of *not-being* in order to make sense of appearances and false statements. He discovered that it is difficult and non-realizable to think of non-being without any attribute. It is inconceivable and irrational to hold that *things-that-are-not, are*.<sup>16</sup> Hence, Plato through the mouth of the *Visitor* concludes that it is easier to define the

C.J.F. Williams, "The Ontological Disproof of the Vacuum." *Philosophy* 59, no. 229 (1984): 382-84.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3750954>.

W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol.2.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 104

Plato, *Gorgias*. Gonzalez Lodge. Editor, Based on Deuschle-Cron's Edition. (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1890).

J.J. Mark, "Gorgias" on Nature (On the Non-Existent). *World History*. Retrieved 29/06/2023 from

<http://www.worldhistory.org>

Plato, Gorgias. Gonzalez Lodge. Editor, Based on Deuschle-Cron's Edition. (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1890).

Bossi, B. and T. M. Robinson (eds.), 2013, *Plato's "Sophist" Revisited* (Berlin: De Gruyter).

nature of *being* than that of *nonbeing*, and thus differentiates *what is not* from *what is*. Here, Plato seems to consider *what is not* merely as the privation of being, and thus dismisses the idea of absolute nothingness. This idea of *what is not* as a privation of being, surfaces in the Medieval philosopher and Neo-Platonian, Plotinus and St. Augustine, who considered *nothing* as *evil*, but defined *evil* as *privatio boni* (the privation of good).

More so, in Book III of the *Republic*, Plato inquired if not-being can be the subject matter of opinion? “Well then, is not-being the subject-matter of opinion? Or rather how can there be an opinion at all about not-being?”<sup>17</sup> Can one “have an opinion about nothing?” This for him is impossible. He argues that “And not-being is not one thing but, properly speaking nothing?” It is only by ignorance that not-being is assumed to be the necessary correlative of being, of knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

The most radical turn to the idea of *nothing* as a logical entity and nonbeing is seen in Aristotle. Plato's brightest student, Aristotle, came up to deny *nothing* as an ontological entity but affirmed its logical existence. He also disagreed with the Atomists and argued that nature abhorred vacuum, and thus, the void is impossible. He developed further Plato's discussion on nonbeing. For him, there are two types of non-being or nothing: The *ontological nothing* (which is simply *the absence of being*, and what a speaker has in mind when speaking of 'nothing' or non-existence) and *logical nothing* (which is *the concept that we form of nothing*). The later, 'nothing,' is as it exists in our mind and, as opposed to ontological nothing. This concept 'nothing' is actually something. In other words, ontological nothing is not real, but conceptual nothing is real. Thus, for Aristotle, there is no nonbeing that exists outside of the mind. But there is a nonbeing that exists in the mind, namely, the concept of nonbeing: The *logical nothing*. It is an act of the intellect.<sup>19</sup>

In the Book 7 of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle noted that

Being' and 'is' mean that a statement is true, 'not being;' that it is- 'not true 'but false'- and this alike in affirmation and negation; e.g. 'Socrates is musical' means that this is true or 'Socrates is not-white' means that this is true, but 'the diagonal of the square is not commensurate with the side' means that it is false to say it is.”<sup>20</sup>

Aristotle here shows that *the being* or *not being* of a statement or proposition is different from *the being* that mostly matters for metaphysics- *Ens qua ens*.

The 13<sup>th</sup> century Scholastic, St Thomas Aquinas, followed Aristotle in believing that 'Nonbeing is a being of reason,' meaning that *the significance of nonbeing is constituted through reference to being by way of negation*, which is an act of the intellect.<sup>21</sup> In his

<sup>17</sup>Plato, *The Republic of Plato*. trans with Analysis and Intro, by B. Jowett. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), 171.

<sup>18</sup>Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 172

<sup>19</sup>Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 1003b 10.

<sup>20</sup>*Aristotle's Metaphysic*, trans. Sachs, Joe, 2nd ed. (Santa Fe, N.M.: Green Lion Press. 2002), Book 7, 1017a 931-35.

<sup>21</sup>Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1003b 10; 1004a 9–12

*Summa Theologiae*, St Thomas noted that “being and not-being is not convertible with being. But the true extends to being and not-being; for it is true that what is, is; and that what is not, is not. Therefore the true and being are not convertible” and thus, “that which extends to being and not-being is not convertible with being. But the true extends to being and not-being; for it is true that what is, is; and that what is not, is not. Therefore the true and being are not convertible.”<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, in *De Veritate*, Aquinas argued that “Things in the same state are the same. But the true and being are in the same state. Therefore, they are the same. For Aristotle writes: 'The state of a thing in its act of existence is the same as its state in truth.' Therefore, the true and being are entirely the same.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, *nonbeing* as an *ontological nothing* is not possible, but *nonbeing* as a *logical nothing* or *being of reason* is possible.

c) *Nothing as Privation of Being and as Non-Material for Creation*

*Nothing* is regarded as *nonbeing* or *not-being* in medieval philosophy, and it is considered in two manners- as *privation* and as *logical nothing*. It is *not-being* and thus the *negation of being*. It is distinguished from evil, which is not a being but the privation of being. This *nonbeing* is a *being of reason* (a *logical nothing*). Its significance is formed by reference to being by way of negation. This theme on nothingness is seen in Plotinus, Augustine, and Anselm of Canterbury. These Church Father used both the Platonic and Aristotelian ideas of being and nothing to develop their God-centred discussions and as such saw *nothing* and *nonbeing* from the creationist apologetic ideology.

The Neo-Platonist, Plotinus, considered the One, matter and evil as *nonbeing*. They are *nonbeing* because they do not have essence that identifies with being.<sup>24</sup> For instance, in his *Enneads*, Plotinus believed the One is a transcendent being and a non-being<sup>25</sup> and that matter, “must be void of quality in order to accept the types of the universe.”<sup>26</sup> He also believed that both matter and evil are privations of being. “Matter is a privation of being, a privation of good, and therefore evil”. Evil itself “is not a positive thing, it is not a being, but the negation of being, the privation of being.”<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, St Augustine saw *nothing as privation of being*. Like Plotinus, Augustine saw evil as the privation or the falling away from Being toward non-Being or nothingness. In his *De Moribus Manichaeorum*, he saw evil as lack of permanence and essence, and as

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Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a, 16.3 ad 2, 5. Thomas Aquinas, Saint, 1225?-1274. The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas ... (London: Burns, Oates & Washburne, Ltd., 192042).

T. Aquinas, *De Veritate* 1.5 ad 2. Thomas, Aquinas. *Quaestiones Disputatae De Veritate: (qu. 22 [partim] - 29 Sec. Universitatum Traditionem)*. (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2010).

Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.8.3.1-8

Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, translated by Stephen MacKenna and B. S. Page Vol. 6 Second Tractate. On the Kinds of Being (2), 432-33. Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Grand Rapids, MI Christiab Classics Ethereal Library, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/p/plotinus/enneads/cache/eneads.pdf>

Plotinus, *Enneads* V, 7

J. Omoregbe, *A Simplified History of Western Philosophy, Vol. I Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, 91.

such, a nonbeing.<sup>28</sup> Augustine saw reality as being hierarchically placed. This hierarchy of Being forms a “chain of Being,” which leads from God downwardly to almost nothingness. Being thus has three hierarchical levels: God, created spirits (such as angels and human souls) and living and non-living physical objects (such as bodies- both human and animal), plants, and rocks.<sup>29</sup> The human will is defectively evil, and thus falls away from God toward the nothingness out of which it was created. This for Augustine is *an ontological loss* toward *nonbeing or nothingness*.<sup>30</sup> Thus, nothingness is an ontological loss or a nonbeing.

Augustine also saw 'nothing' as non-material for creation. Creation for him was done out of nothing<sup>31</sup> (*creatio ex nihilo*). For him, the will as a nature was created good due to its creation by God; its falling away from its nature is due to its creation out of nothing. In this way, only a nature created out of nothing can be perverted by a defect because it is mutable.<sup>32</sup> This turning away of a rational being from God results in an ontological loss and downward movement from a higher level of Being toward non-Being or nothingness.<sup>33</sup>

The idea of nothing as nonbeing and non-material for creation continued in the 11<sup>th</sup> century Patristic philosopher, St Anselm of Canterbury. In the chapter 3 of his *Monologium*, Anselm argues that all existing things exist through some one thing. Every existing thing exists either through something or through nothing. But for sure, nothing exists through nothing, so every existing thing exists through something.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, St Anselm argues that “For, everything that is, exists either through something, or through nothing. But nothing exists through nothing. For it is altogether inconceivable that anything should not exist by virtue of something.”<sup>35</sup>

Also, in the chapter 4 of the *Monologium*, *nothing* assumes some agency attribute and becomes a sort of creative force, and thus a sort of existent. Anselm here argues further that:

That this Nature, then, without which no nature exists, is nothing, is as false as it would be absurd to say that whatever is is nothing. And, moreover, it does not exist through nothing, because it is utterly inconceivable that what is something should exist through nothing. But, if in any way it derives existence from nothing, it does so through itself, or through another, or

<sup>28</sup> De Moribus Manichaeorum (Manichaean Ways of Life). In Saint Augustine: The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life, trans. Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher. Vol. 56 of The Fathers of the Church. Edited by Roy Joseph Deferrari 65-117. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XII.2, 500 (The City of God against the Pagans). Translated by R. W. Dyson. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Cf. *Confessiones* (The Confessions), trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. (London: Penguin, 1961).

<sup>30</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, XII.6, 505; XIV.13, 609.

<sup>31</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, XIV.13, 608-609.

<sup>32</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, XIV.13, 608-609.

<sup>33</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, XII.6, 505; XIV.13, 609

<sup>34</sup> B. Davies and G. R. Evans (ed.), *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). *Monologium*, Chapter 3, Paul Halsall, “August 1998 Medieval Sourcebook: Anselm (1033-1109): Monologium” Fordham, 1998, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/anselm-monologium.asp>

through nothing. But it is evident that in no wise does anything exist through nothing. If, then, in any way it derives existence from nothing, it does so either through itself or through another.<sup>36</sup>

In the chapter 8 of the same *Monologium*, he saw the idea of conceiving *nothing* as a creative agent as erroneous. The reason is that the conception of *creation out of nothing* means *de nihil ipso* (from nothing itself) as if *nothing* means a material from which existence is derived (*ex nihilo tanquam materia*) or pre-existing physical states of affairs. Anselm argues that “nothing comes from nothing” (*ex nihilo nihil fit*). Here Anselm insinuates *nothing as a primordium state*, which entails that void was prior to being, things or creation. Thus, *ex nihilo* means either that in the beginning there was no sort of physical state of affairs, and then God created things and something was, or that God created things 'not out of something' (*non ex aliquot*), meaning without anything. This not-out-of-something is a total negation of any possible physical state that could be logically or chronologically prior to God's creative acts.

There is another interpretation which is, indeed, capable of supposition, but cannot be true; namely, that if anything is said to have been created from nothing, it was created from nothing itself (*de nihilo ipso*), that is, from what does not exist at all, as if this very nothing were some existent being, from which something could be created. But, since this is always false, as often as it is assumed an irreconcilable contradiction follows.

There is a third interpretation, according to which a thing is said to have been created from nothing, when we understand that it was indeed created, but that there is not anything whence it was created. Apparently it is said with a like meaning, when a man is afflicted without cause, that he is afflicted 'over nothing'.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

The concepts- *nothing* or *nothingness* caught the interest of philosophers since ancient Greece. It engaged wider attentions of thinkers from various fields of study including- The Greek philosophers, atomists, realists, logicians, and scholastics. They all held various perspective for 'nothing,' and this is the major aim of this Paper- to expose the various conceptions of *nothing* and *nothingness* in the ideologies in traditional metaphysics. The discussion revealed some themes on *nothing*: Void and cosmology, logical-entity and nonbeing, and privation of being and non-material for creation. These themes are the central thesis of the paper, which sum is that the concept of nothing and nothingness in traditional metaphysics laid foundations for the diverse views developed from them in modern and advanced metaphysics, and that today, the olden views of the atomists and mereologists on 'nothing,' manifest in nano-scientific and physicists discoveries of the contemporary period.

<sup>36</sup>St Anselm, *Monologium*, Chapter 4

<sup>37</sup>St Anselm, *Monologium*, Chapter 4