

Wolfgang Leidhold, Nothing, in: Das Stadtgymnasium, 50 (1966), p. 12 (first published in German as *Nichts*)

Nothing

Some people write about nothing for pages on end. Most of the time, this is either incomprehensible nonsense or meaningless mumbo-jumbo. Admittedly, this article is about nothing, too. However, on the one hand it is about the matter itself, namely about "the Nothing", while on the other hand I hope that it might be no nonsense at all. A view that I trust my readers will share.

Very well — you are sitting in a comfortable armchair, reading your utopian or scientific book, completely immersed in the subject matter and (as the saying goes) you think no evil. Then suddenly the concept of nothingness appears. The author gets lost in confusing reflections about this dimension zero, which is neither temporal, nor spatial, nor areal, nor lineal, indeed it is less than a point. You don't understand anything; you close the book and try to imagine the matter yourself. In any case, that is what I did. Why can't you imagine anything?

I started by imagining the situation as if I were in it. I should then feel nothing, taste nothing, smell nothing and hear nothing. That is all still quite conceivable. However, what about seeing nothing? If you do not see anything, then it is normally completely dark around you, but that should not be the case here either! Well, this challenge can be overcome with concentration and a quiet room, even if not effortlessly. However, and now it gets extremely difficult, I should also think nothing when nothing is around. Why not? If you do not feel, taste, smell, hear and see anything, you still think. And as long as you think, you know that you are there, that you have a body, which needs a certain space. But this does not exist in the nothing, because the nothing represents even less than a point. In order to be able to imagine it, you have to turn off your thinking, too. But who can imagine something without thinking? To this I should like to add: it is already impossible to imagine yourself being part of a line or part of a point. But beyond that, *nothing* is still something else: It is not only another level in the series of dimensions, but also the opposite to any of them.

So this leads nowhere. What remains is to picture *Nothing* from the outside. Yet why does this fail, too? It fails, since *Nothing* does not exist. Not in the sense like a chimera does not exist, but like something that is beyond a one-dimensional point. Humans are used to think three-dimensionally. E.g., if you imagine a friend standing in front of you, an impulse is running through your brain. We grasp a three-dimensional structure, more specifically our friend or a photo (which then superficially would be only two-dimensional). This object does not need to exist in reality, but only in our imagination. However, the three-dimensional imagination and the neural impulse are still there. Surface, straight line and point can be imagined, even if only approximated and spatially. In the case of *Nothing*, however, there is no thing spatial, which could produce an impulse. But we need the impulse, if we want to see something in our minds. Nobody can think of something, which does not cause an impulse. Right? Good luck with your own exploration of nothing...

Wolfgang Leidhold U II b