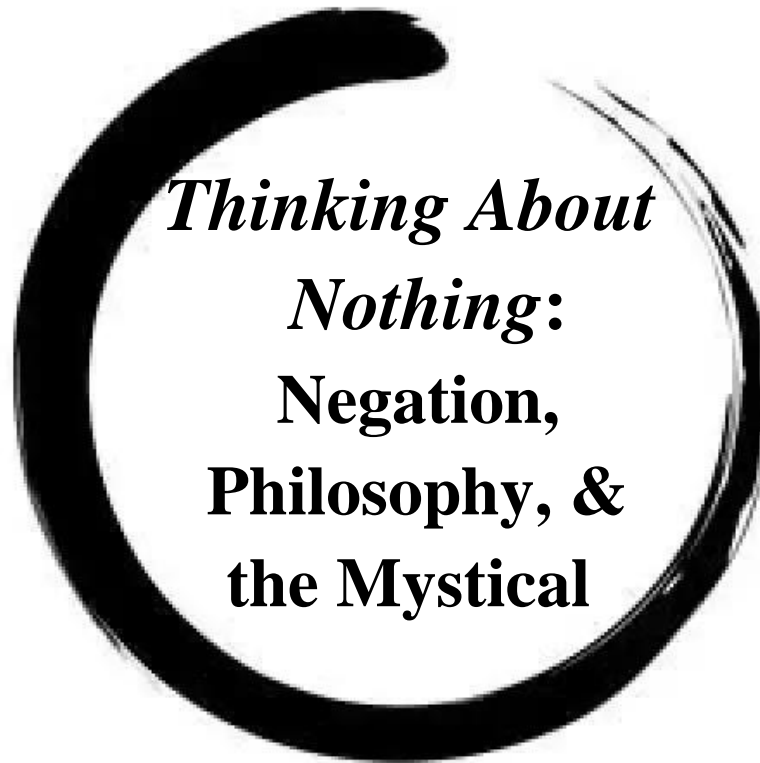


**2021 Annual Conference of The Mystical Theology Network  
& The Association for Continental Philosophy of Religion**



**Liverpool Hope University, 12-14 July 2021**

**How and why is ‘nothing’ such a central concern for the mystical?**

**What meaning, if any, derives from negation, un-knowing, un-saying;  
or from evoking the Absolute in terms of absence, silence, darkness, void,  
abyss, desert, and no-thing-ness? Why do mystics across different religious  
traditions return continually to images and ideas of negativity?**

**And how might these interfaces between ‘nothingness’ and ‘the mystical’  
illuminate our contemporary concerns with these two elusive notions?**

**This interdisciplinary conference brings together theologians, philosophers,  
historians, literary scholars, linguists, psychologists, artists, art historians,  
poets, musicians, and contemplative practitioners to examine interfaces  
between themes of ‘nothingness’, ‘negativity’, and ‘the mystical’.**

# Thinking About Nothing 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

## Monday 12<sup>th</sup> July

| Time   | Paper   | Presenter  |                            |                               |
|--------|---------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 9.30am | Welcome |  |                            |                               |
| 10am   | Keynote | George Pattison<br>“I, I who am nothing'. Reflections on nothingness by Kierkegaard's female pseudonym.' |                            |                               |
| 11.30  | Break   |  |                            |                               |
| 12.00  | Panels  | A<br>Poetic  | B<br>Daoist &<br>Buddhist  | C<br>Light &<br>Darkness      |
| 1.30   | Break   |  |                            |                               |
| 2.00   | Panels  | A<br>Literature &<br>Critical<br>Theory  | B<br>Buddhist<br>& Islamic | C<br>Analytical               |
| 3.30   | Break   |  |                            |                               |
| 4.00   | Panels  | A<br>Negativity &<br>Nothingness   | B<br>Jewish                | C<br>Psychology &<br>Politics |

## Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July

| Time   | Paper   | Presenter  |                           |                                  |
|--------|---------|--|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 9.30am | Panels  | A<br>Epistemological   | B<br>Mediaeval-<br>Female | C<br>Meaning<br>Nothing          |
| 11.00  | Break   |  |                           |                                  |
| 11.30  | Keynote | Melissa Raphael<br>'Visualising No-thing: Jewish Feminist Art and the<br>Counter-Idolatrous Disappearance of the<br>Feminine.' |                           |                                  |
| 1.00   | Break   |  |                           |                                  |
| 2.00   | Panels  | A<br>Suffering &<br>Freedom  | B<br>Mediaeval            | C<br>Symbolism<br>&<br>Semiotics |
| 3.30   | Break   |  |                           |                                  |
| 4.00   | Panels  | A<br>Meister Eckhart   | B<br>Patristic            | C<br>Idealism &<br>Psychology    |

## Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July

| Time   | Paper   | Presenter   |  |                                 |
|--------|---------|---|--|---------------------------------|
| 9.30am | Panels  | A<br>Meaning &<br>Desire  | B<br>PANEL:<br>Thingness,<br>No-<br>thingness,<br>& Absence<br>in Early-<br>Franciscan<br>Theology | C<br>JOINT<br>PAPER:<br>Kenosis |
| 10.30  | Break   |   |  |                                 |
| 11.00  | Keynote | Rik Van-Nieuwenhove<br>'Knowing and Loving Nothingness. Medieval<br>Perspectives on Gratuitousness, Ecstasy and<br>Self-transcendence.' |  |                                 |
| 12.30  | Break   |   |  |                                 |
| 1.30   | Panels  | A<br>Apophaticism   | B<br>PANEL: God and<br>Negation. From Philo<br>of Alexandria to John<br>Chrysostom                 |                                 |
| 3.00   | Break   |   |  |                                 |
| 3.30   | Panel   | A<br>Art & Music  |  |                                 |

# Welcome, Keynotes & Final Session (Art & Music)

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/89054084833?pwd=b2RCNU0xUTlqeFYrK2R1NEJZai9CQT09>

## LINKS: PANEL A

### Poetic

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/88614546128?pwd=bDFybUlBQUlodWxRWVlseTZxQWhYUT09>

| Surname    | First Name  | Affiliation                 | Title  |
|------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Marczyńska | Julia       | Warsaw, Poland              | Speaking Silence: The Role of Pause in Poetical Text                               |
| Wilson     | Philip      | University of East Anglia   | Angelus Silesius and the Poetic Grammar of God                                     |
| Ryan       | Bartholomew | Universidade Nova de Lisboa | Penetrating the 'void' and 'lovely nothing' in James Joyce's <i>Finnegans Wake</i> |

## Literature & Critical Theory

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/88614546128?pwd=bDFybUlBQUlodWxRWVlseTZxQWhYUT09>

| Surname | First Name | Affiliation                      | Title  |
|---------|------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Motta   | Pier Paolo | Goldsmiths, University of London | Critical Theory and the quest for the meaning of life  |
| Coopey  | Jack       | Durham University                | An Absolute of Literature as Negative Theology: The Literary Absolute (1988) and Jean-Luc Nancy's Philosophical Method as Negating Nothingness |
| Hill    | Nathaniel  | University of Michigan-Ann Arbor | Time, Eternity, and the Novel in <i>The End of the Affair</i>  |

# Negativity & Nothingness

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/88614546128?pwd=bDFybUlBQUlodWxRWVlseTZxQWhYUT09>

| Surname  | First Name | Affiliation                                  | Title  |
|----------|------------|--|--|
| Lucas    | Hannah     | Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford | Revelation Through Adversity: The Interaction of “Negative” Experiences and Mysticism  |
| Marovich | Beatrice   | Hanover College                              | “On Death & Nothingness”   |
| Maxey    | Amy        | University of Notre Dame                     | Rejecting “Nothingness” and Retrieving “Negativity” in Post-modernity: Catherine Keller’s Entanglements with Christian Mysticism |

# Epistemological

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/87079584231?pwd=aDh2MElUbEc2aWtNUU5qUzRubU92Zz09>

| Surname    | First Name | Affiliation                                  | Title  |
|------------|------------|--|--|
| de Kesel   | Marc       | Titus Brandsma Institute, Radboud University | A Different Nothing: on Pre-Modern and Modern Mysticism, and on The Modern Subject |
| Gutschmidt | Rico       | University of Konstanz                       | Failing to think God. Transformative Experience in Negative Theology               |
| Rohrhofer  | Raphaela   | University of Oxford                         | Suspending Analytical Consciousness with Julian of Norwich                         |

# Suffering & Freedom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/85155771357?pwd=ekNQdT3lYaUxLY2l0Zis1L01nS2dGZz09>

| Surname             | First Name | Affiliation                                   | Title   |
|---------------------|------------|---|---|
| Beres               | Laura      | King's University College, Western University | The night-symbol and nothingness as journey towards wholeness   |
| Witherington        | Derrick    | Marquette University/KU Leuven                | Learning to Let Go: An Examination of the Pedagogical Role of Suffering in the Working Through of Metaphysics |
| Radakovich Holsberg | Lisa       | Fordham University                            | Creat(ivity) out of Nothing: Berdyaev, <i>the Ungrund</i> , and Freedom                                       |

## Meister Eckhart

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/88614546128?pwd=bDFybUlBQUlodWxRWVlseTZxQWhYUT09>

| Surname    | First Name  | Affiliation   | Title  |
|------------|-------------|---|--|
| Levina     | Tatiana     | Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia                      | Liberated Nothingness: Avant-Garde Meister Eckhart   |
| Lifintseva | Tatyana P.  | National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow | Higher states of consciousness in Meister Eckhart's mysticism and post-Vedantic traditions of India: Detachment and Sākṣī (the Observer) |
| Wright     | Lucas Scott | University of California, Irvine                                | Das Nichts und die Möglichkeit der Sterblichkeit: Contingency and Nothingness from Eckhart to Adorno                                     |

## Meaning & Desire

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/87079584231?pwd=aDh2MElUbEc2aWtNUU5qUzRubU92Zz09>

| Surname     | First Name      | Affiliation             | Title   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---|
| Perry       | Richard Stephen |                         | The Bérullian Search for a Christian Humanism: The "Miracle" of Néant and Image |
| Stone-Davis | Férdia          | University of Cambridge | Call and response: negation and the configuration of desire                     |

# Apophaticism

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/88614546128?pwd=bDFybUlBQUlodWxRWVlseTZxQWhYUT09>

| Surname | First Name | Affiliation                         | Title  |
|---------|------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Franke  | William    | Vanderbilt University               | Apophatic Thinking and its Applications: Between Exhaustion and Explosion                            |
| Scott   | Michael    | University of Manchester            | Apophaticism: logic, language and negation   |
| Corbman | Marjorie   | Molloy College, Rockville Centre NY | Formless Void, Mystical Explosion: The Role of Re-Creation Ex Nihilo in the Thought of Albert Cleage |

# Art & Music

Joint Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/89054084833?pwd=b2RCNU0xUTlqeFYrK2R1NEJZai9CQT09>

| Surname                               | First Name       | Affiliation                                       | Title   |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|---|
| Elisabeth L. Belgrano & Mark D. Price | Elisabeth & Mark | Lund University                                   | Performing Nothingness: A Vocal Meditation  |
| Chase                                 | Carlton          | Fordham University/The Directors Guild of America | Breaking into Nothing: the fragment and the artful gap                            |
| Sawicki OSB                           | Bernard Łukasz   | Pontifical Athenaeum Sant'Anselmo, Rome           | From “oddness” and “lack” to “nothingness”: in search of mystical traces in music |



## LINKS: PANEL B

### Daoist & Buddhist

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/89054084833?pwd=b2RCNU0xUTlqeFYrK2R1NEJZai9CQT09>

| Surname    | First Name     | Affiliation                | Title   |
|------------|----------------|----------------------------|---|
| Smith      | Joshua William | University of East Anglia  | "Between Nothingness and Infinity" — The <i>gestalt</i> of the One and the Many in Nagarjuna and the later Wittgenstein |
| Eilebrecht | Tilo           | University of Tübingen     | The Practical Power of Thinking Nothing: Exploring the Daoist mindset   |
| Skultety   | Radovan        | National Taiwan University | Nonsense as a Means of Conveying Mystical Knowledge: Daniil Kharmis and Zhuangzi Talking about Nothing                  |

### Buddhist & Islamic

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/85155771357?pwd=ekNQT3lYaUxLY2l0Zis1L01nS2dGZz09>

| Surname      | First Name | Affiliation                        | Title   |
|--------------|------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Teliebhakhsh | Monireh    | Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran | Negativity as the absolute force of "perpetual creation" in Islamic Mysticism     |
| McGuire      | Robert     | University of Glasgow              | Nothing makes sense: the pluralistic appeal of negation in the path of fulfilment |

### Jewish

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/89054084833?pwd=b2RCNU0xUTlqeFYrK2R1NEJZai9CQT09>

| Surname | First Name | Affiliation             | Title   |
|---------|------------|-------------------------|---|
| Listik  | Yonathan   | University of Amsterdam | Maggid of Mezritch's account of creation: a new conceptualization of Nothing    |
| Maayan  | David      | Boston College          | Nothingness and Necessity: A Hasidic Existentialist Practice of Personal Prayer |

|        |            |                                    |  |
|--------|------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Miller | Michael T. | Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw | The worship of God and the worship of nothingness in an African American "Hebrew Israelite" group. |
|--------|------------|------------------------------------|--|

## Mediaeval-Female

### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/89054084833?pwd=b2RCNU0xUTlqeFYrK2R1NEJZai9CQT09>

| Surname   | First Name | Affiliation                            | Title  |
|-----------|------------|--|--|
| Arblaster | John       | KU Leuven                              | Surrender, Annihilation and Nothingness in Marguerite Porete and John of Ruusbroec           |
| Lambert   | Cathie     | University of Divinity, Melbourne      | The Annihilated Soul: A Model for Contemporary Women's Mystical Experience                   |
| Nelstrop  | Louise     | St. Benet's Hall, University of Oxford | 'Nothing Really Matters': Discourse on Nothingness and Kenosis in Medieval English Mysticism |

## Mediaeval

### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://theofed-cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/95599873168?pwd=d2NLRzIzU2IyZThSeVRhcExJMXNmZz09>

| Surname    | First Name | Affiliation                                | Title   |
|------------|------------|--|---|
| Desplenter | Youri      | Ghent University (B)                       | Jan van Leeuwen (†1378) and Nothingness. How Did a Lay Brother Use Apophatic Language?  |
| Faesen     | Rob        | KU Leuven                                  | <i>Institutiones Taulerianae</i> (first edition 1548).  |
| Fraeters   | Veerle     | Ruusbroec Institute, University of Antwerp | "To become nothing in Minne is the best thing I know". The Poetics of Annihilation in the Mystique Courtoise of Hadewijch of Brabant (c. 1240). |

# Patristics

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/89054084833?pwd=b2RCNU0xUTlqeFYrK2R1NEJZai9CQT09>

| Surname    | First Name      | Affiliation   | Title   |
|------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Duca       | Valentina       | KU Leuven   | "Standing Erect Within the Dark Cloud" (III 7,5): 'Negativity' and the Subject in Isaac of Nineveh  |
| Geiman     | Shodhin K.      | Valparaiso University USA                               | Two Arrows Aiming at Absolutely Nothing: Imageless Prayer in Evagrius                               |
| Wellington | James Frederick | Alumnus of the Universities of Cambridge and Nottingham | The Tunnel at the End of the Light: Gregory of Nyssa and the Resetting of Early Christian Mysticism |

## PANEL: Thingness, No-thingness, and Absence in Early-Franciscan Theology

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://theofed-cam-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/95599873168?pwd=d2NLRzIzU2IyZThSeVRhcExJMXNmZz09>

| Surname | First Name | Affiliation                       | Title  |
|---------|------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Abbott  | Dominic    | KU Leuven                         | Love and Union in John Duns Scotus   |
| Hahn    | Michael    | PIMS Toronto/University of London | 'You say it best when you say nothing at all': Saying and un-saying in Angela of Foligno's Liber |

## PANEL: God and Negation. From Philo of Alexandria to John Chrysostom

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/87079584231?pwd=aDh2MElUbEc2aWtNUU5qUzRubU92Zz09>

| Surname | First Name | Affiliation        | Title   |
|---------|------------|--------------------|---|
| Wyss    | Beatrice   | University of Bern | Philo of Alexandria: The nothingness of the human being, God's unknowability, and mystical experience |

|        |           |                    |  |
|--------|-----------|--------------------|--|
| Kaplan | Ilya      | University of Bern | Words and Images: Approaching the Divine with Gregory of Nyssa   |
| Huian  | Georgiana | University of Bern | Layers of Negativity in Thinking and Talking about God: Exploring John Chrysostom's Language of Negation |

## LINKS: PANEL C

### Light & Darkness

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/87079584231?pwd=aDh2MElUbEc2aWtNUU5qUzRubU92Zz09>

| Surname           | First Name   | Affiliation  | Title   |
|-------------------|--------------|--|---|
| Th. Zarras        | Konstantinos | National and Kapodistrian University of Athens   | Rock Hidden in a Cloud: Ayin, Nothingness, and Space in the Zohar'                  |
| Couture-Mingheras | Alexandre    | Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, International es Zentrum für Philosophie | Monos Neuter. Negation in Light of true Gnosis                                      |
| Rhoer             | Ilja van de  | University of Amsterdam  | Life in Light and Darkness: Thinking the Absolute through Non-human Modes of Living |

## Analytical

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/87079584231?pwd=aDh2MElUbEc2aWtNUU5qUzRubU92Zz09>

| Surname  | First Name | Affiliation                            | Title   |
|----------|------------|--|---|
| Dillon   | Robbie     | Concordia University, Montreal, Canada | Why You Gotta Be Negative Like that?: Can alternatives to classical negation resolve feminist critiques of "Logic?" |
| Leclercq | Bruno      | University of Liège                    | The Logic of Nothing: Nothing as the Minimal Object of Thought  |
| Pivcevic | Edo        | University of Bristol                  | "Is <i>Nothing of Anything</i> a Coherent Notion?"  |

# Psychology & Politics

## Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/85155771357?pwd=ekNQY3lYaUxLY2l0Zis1L01nS2dGZz09>

| Surname | First Name | Affiliation              | Title   |
|---------|------------|--------------------------|---|
| Murphy  | Mark       | University of Nottingham | Speaking and Listening from Nothingness: Lacan, John of the Cross and the Direction of Desire         |
| Exall   | Maria      | Durham University        | The possibility of democratic mysticism: apophaticism and the negative dialectics of reason and faith |

# Meaning Nothing

## Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/88614546128?pwd=bDFybUlBQUlodWxRWVlseTZxQWhYUT09>

| Surname    | First Name | Affiliation                             | Title  |
|------------|------------|---|--|
| Gandellini | Francesco  | Univ. of Southampton                    | Venturing the Nothing. Heidegger confronted with mysticism               |
| Marczyński | Anton      | Warsaw School of Information Technology | The Body as Nothing. On the Corporeal Ambivalence in Mystical Experience |
| Pivcevic   | Edo        |   | Nothing  |

# Symbolism & Semiotics

## Join Zoom meeting:

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/88614546128?pwd=bDFybUlBQUlodWxRWVlseTZxQWhYUT09>

| Surname     | First Name | Affiliation                         | Title   |
|-------------|------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Futch       | Michael    | University of Tulsa                 | Stace and the Evocation of God's Nothingness                    |
| Valentini   | Philipp    | University of Fribourg, Switzerland | The Two Nothingnesses of the Thing                              |
| Wojtulewicz | Chris      | KU Leuven                           | Erich Przywara and the Place of Analogy in Mystical Nothingness |

# Idealism & Psychology

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/85155771357?pwd=ekNQOT3lYaUxLY2l0Zis1L01nS2dGZz09>

| Surname   | First Name   | Affiliation   | Title   |
|-----------|--------------|---|---|
| Farinella | Simone       | Università degli Studi di Firenze” and „Friedrich–Schiller–Universität Jena | Negativity and Theosophy: the Hegelian Interpretation of Böhme during the Jena Period   |
| Wagner    | Markus Maria | Independent Scholar   | Carl Albrechts Phenomenology of Mysticism: The central role of 'Nothing', deriving from a reciprocal ratio of gnoseological sparseness and existential relevance in the 'mystical relation' |

## JOINT PAPER: Kenosis

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://hope.zoom.us/j/89054084833?pwd=b2RCNU0xUTlqeFYrK2R1NEJZai9CQT09>

| Surname   | First Name | Affiliation                                   | Title  |
|-----------|------------|---|--|
| Maspero   | Giulio     | Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome | Kenosis and the Relational <i>Not</i> in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Ontology |
| Vigorelli | Ilaria     | Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome | Kenosis and the Relational <i>Not</i> in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Ontology |

## **Virtual Art Feature: Ben Betney, *Ego Above Life* (2021)**

**We planned on having art exhibitions and events as part of the original conference held on Hope Park Campus, Liverpool, and are disappointed we cannot still do this. With this in mind, Ben Betney has produced a virtual art exhibition, titled, *Ego Above Life* for you to enjoy at your own leisure. Ben is currently an undergraduate student at Liverpool Hope University, studying single honours in Philosophy, Ethics, and Religion.**

**This virtual exhibition is included here in the form of a PowerPoint presentation.**

Conference Organisers: Dr Duane Williams; Dr Steven Shakespeare; Dr Simon Podmore