

Darkness
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where everything vanishes

Does darkness equal nothingness?
What happens when the light goes out?
Does darkness exist?
When does memory go? (Does it exist?)
How does perception change when the light vanishes?
What remains in the darkness?
Does nothingness exist?
Is the absence of light known?
What is the total experience of the dark?
Can we see in the dark?
Where do we find darkness?
What remains in the darkness?
What is a total experience of darkness?
Why is darkness often equated with fear?
What happens when you are in the dark?
Is the act of seeing the end of darkness?
And thus the end of the world?

DARKNESS

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Hermann Hesse

Truly no man is wise,
who does not know the dark.
That inescapable and silent,
that separates from all.

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Chapter 1/ /Entering Darkness

Close your eyes and fall with me into darkness. What awaits you here, what do you feel when you look into it? Pick a word, which best describes your experience of darkness.

If you take a closer look at the word associations of the inner part of the book, you will see how controversial the subject of darkness can be perceived. Perhaps you will find one or two terms to which you can relate. Past experiences we make with darkness strongly determine the associations and feelings related to future encounters with darkness. So, whether darkness is a place of fear and terror or a place of security and comfort is subject to everybody's individual perceptions.

Personally, my childhood memories, mainly characterised by oppressive feelings when faced with darkness, have turned it into a frightening being for me.

Exactly, who does not know the feeling of isolation - noises and shadows jumping at us in darkness and turning us into helpless observers? A fear that is accompanied by a fascination with the "unknown".

However, my own experiences and ventures, as well as the poem „Im Nebel“ by the German poet Herman Hesse, reawakened my interest in darkness and the "unknown".

In the respective poem, Herman Hesse deals with the laws of polarity (darkness and light). According to my understanding of this poem, the hidden truth of life can only be understood when one has penetrated and understood the two poles of a thing. That is especially true for the contrasts between light and dark. Yet, our psyche is conditioned to seek its truth first in the light and to avoid darkness. In Hesse's poem, however, darkness is understood as a necessary counterpart, which allows us to grasp the greater whole.

Consequently, when we consciously leave the light in order to understand the other pole, we find our way to a new, complete consciousness.

**“Truly no man is wise,
who does not know the dark.
That inescapable and silent,
that separates from all**

**The world was full of joy,
when life was still light.
Now, as the fog falls,
no one is visible.”¹**

¹ Hermann Hesse, *Die Gedichte*, trans. Jana Maiworm (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993), p. 236.

Darkness is a silent companion to show us the obvious - brightened by life, the shadows of darkness are absorbed, and the truth can only be seen when the fog falls.

As a result of this poem, the following rhetorical questions arise:

Can we truly understand the world around us if we do not know the darkness? Might darkness be the key to understand our life?

These questions accompany my following thoughts. They are part of my motivation for the underlying thesis, which deals with the topic of darkness. They inevitably led me to the core of my considerations. What creative power is hidden in the dark, and how do I find access to it? Therefore, this work is about the exploration of darkness and which effects and space it can create for us.

Sealed off from supposedly everything that moves us, that defines us, away from traditional sensory impressions and related experiences— what may arise from this? If we understand darkness as a space that opens to us and if we start to move consciously within this space - then the following questions emerge: what can we discover in it? What aspects does darkness contain? Does the fear of darkness give way to a wealth of new experiences?

The following chapters offer an approach, which explains and illustrates the possibilities for approximating darkness. Through seeing, sensing and experiencing, we can gradually create an understanding of the nature of darkness. Thereby, the different polarities (light and darkness, nothingness and fullness) are repeatedly compared and contrasted. The investigation seeks to find out how one can exist without the other and whether in darkness, the superficial nothing exists at all.

Over the course of this work, self-experiments were performed in order to meaningfully complement and validate the chosen theoretical approaches.

Chapter 2/
/Seeing Darkness

Seeing enables us to observe, perceive and study the environment around us. Surrounding objects get a position, meaning, use and a distance. Vision allows safe movement in spaces and interaction with objects. However, what happens if we do not see anything? Do surrounding objects lose their meaning? Or do they even cease to exist? Dretske describes a correlation between seeing and the knowledge of the existence of what we see and distinguishes between two different types of seeing. On the one hand, the epistemic approach suggests that the way objects are seen is marked by the belief that the respective object exists, while on the other hand, the non-epistemic approach implies that the existence of a thing does not presuppose faith.²

The knowledge of the state of a thing is decisive for the perception and evaluation of the seen object (Dretsche). An object we look at can, therefore, be perceived as a pure object (non-epistemic vision), or be associated with a conviction/knowledge that goes beyond factually neutral perception (epistemic vision). If we look at a tree, it is merely a tree for the non-epistemically-seeing person. For the epistemically-seeing person, this tree might be an oak tree as he or she knows it from past experiences. A non-epistemically seeing person interprets him – or herself what he or she sees. He or she can see the oak tree, but the connected association determines what he or she actually sees. By consequence, for them, this tree can be anything: a beech, a mythical creature or an indefinable something.

So how do we see in the dark? The knowledge about the nature of the dark space (knowing the room before it became dark) implies that we see epistemically, since we know what we cannot see when it is dark. Yet, if we enter a room that is foreign to us, we do not see epistemically. We interpret the darkness and make associations to things, which may not even exist. Nonetheless, this is only true to a certain extent, because as soon as it gets dark, we lose the certainty of the supposedly known. In such case, everything that is seen in darkness is, in a sense non-epistemic. Against this backdrop it can be said that everything that is seen varies in accordance to how we perceive it, detached from observations and evaluated (because we see nothing), interpreted and combined into a new construct of vision. The non-epistemic vision differs since it requires the seeing per se. However, seeing is, by definition, not possible in the dark.

Only a sighted person who looks at the world with open eyes can tell the difference between darkness and light. He or she is aware of this difference as he or she knows both states. David Lewis summarises such

²Fred I. Dretske, *Seeing and Knowing* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).

phenomenon in a paper explaining that “we think we do not see in the dark; but also, we think we find things out by sight only when we see; and in the pitch dark, we find out by sight that it is dark.” Assuming that

“In a sense, we do see in the dark when we see that it is dark.”³

The authors emphasise that we can perceive darkness and distinguish it, but to see in it is something else.

The famous quotation of Socrates “I know that I know nothing”⁴ shows that the knowledge about not knowing is a primal philosophical thought. It establishes the existence of a thing without knowing what it is. “The Socratic not-knowing consists of the awareness of not having tested knowledge in the most important questions of life.”⁵ Genuine philosophising thus presupposes the consciousness of not knowing. According to this thought, real seeing also presumes the realisation that one cannot see anything.

In the second episode, “Eye” of the T.V. show “The Night Gallery,” a blind woman gets a nerve transplant, which enables her to see for the next 11 hours. Alone in her flat, she removes the bandage and catches a glimpse of a crystal chandelier before suddenly everything turns black. Not knowing what happened, she collapses in tears while the whole city is as blind as she is. A power outage turned New York into darkness. Without knowing, what happened, she thinks she is blind again and decides to jump out of the window - when the sun was just about to rise.⁶ Assuming that darkness can be perceived with the eyes, what does she see between the moment she spots the chandelier and the sunrise. Why did she confuse darkness with blindness? Was it the lack of the visual, which misled her to the belief of being blind or was it the absence of what she expected to see.

Roy Sorensen claimed in his article, “We see in the Dark,” that we only absent something if we are looking for it.⁷

In this respect, there are two different “perspectives” of darkness:

1. The contemplation of a sighted person who enters a state of darkness but has already seen it.
2. The contemplation of a non-sighted person who is either blind from birth or at least has never been able to see.

The two viewers differ in their expectations of what they hope to see. While the sighted person bases his/her expectation on what he/she has stored as images in their memory, the expectation of the non-sighted

³David Lewis, *Philosophical Papers II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 283.

⁴Philip Stokes, *Philosophy 100 Essential Thinkers*, ed. by Paul Whittle (New York: Enchanted Lion Books, 2006), p. 21.

⁵F. J. Weber, *Platons Apologie Des Sokrates* (Padaborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1971), p. 5.

⁶*The Night Gallery: Eyes*, dir. by Steven Spielberg (NBC, 1969).

⁷Roy Sorensen, *Seeing Dark Things* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 464.

person is based on his/her imagination. Both, however, spring from personal reality.

One does not only focus on things one expects to “see”, but extends the horizon to space behind the obvious. This, in return, concerns both, the expansion of our visual imagination as well as the perception through all other senses.

Detached from the viewpoint is seeing in the dark, always supported by our experiences stored in the brain. An experiment at the University of Rochester succeeds in proving that the human species is capable of “seeing” in the dark. In different experiments, they found out that in total darkness and while waving one’s own hand in front of one’s face, visual sensations of motion can be perceived. Additionally, they discovered that the eye was even able to track the hand in its movement. However, this was only possible when the waving was practiced by oneself, suggesting that even in complete absence of visual input, the brain predicts visual consequences of actions.⁸

Still, this is only possible as the brain learns and stores the movement patterns that are repeated over time. If our brain, however, „blindly“ trusts these visual experiences that memory predicts, we can be deceived. We lose our impartiality and can no longer grasp the room/our surroundings in their genuine sense. In the experiments of the University of Rochester, it becomes clear that such predictions and visuals are created by multi-sensory connectivity.⁹ The latter means that our other senses awake when the visual is gone, hence predicting the space one is in.

That leads to the assumption that, in darkness, we detach ourselves from visual seeing in order to open to a space behind, thus starting to fill the visual nothingness.

Does this behaviour arise from a creative potency, a curiosity or deep despair, which make us unable to bear emptiness? The fact remains that the resulting images create a new world. Just as Alice follows the rabbit into wonderland not asking why but just freeing up to a world, whose existence she did not know about.¹⁰ This new, alien state leads us into another world of experiences and contributes to a new feeling of transformation.¹¹

In sum, one must open one’s eyes in the dark in order to reveal the hidden secrets and to experience a new dimension of space. “The absence of light in the night opens more to other dimensions of reality, to other beings, indeed to other otherness.”¹² It opens the possibility to receive something out of the ordinary.

⁸ Kevin C. Dieter and others, ‘Kinesthesia Can Make an Invisible Hand Visible’, *Psychological Science*, 25.1 (2014), 66–75.

⁹ Dieter and others.

¹⁰ Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

¹¹ Robert Dowd, Marion and Hensey, *The Archaeology of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2016), p. 35.

¹² Don Handelman, ‘Epilogue: Dark Soundings - towards a Phenomenology of Night’, *Paideuma*, 51 (2005), 247–61 (p. 254).

//The non-existence of the body

The loss of orientation in space accompanies the definition of darkness. In addition to the loss of self-perception, it is also characterised by the perception of the most significant reference point in our visible world—the horizon.

With open eyes, we slide into the new dimension of darkness. Plunged in it, we lose the perception of the horizon and our orientation in the world. With the loss of the horizontal reference point, our vertical alignment gets lost as well. That usually enables us to orient ourselves in four dimensions to others and spaces. As we enter darkness, we disorient with the vanishment of it. The physical body starts to fade into the darkness to its final dissolution. Embraced and penetrated by it, the question arises on how the body begins to behave in a space in which we no longer recognise ourselves.

“We can go forwards and backwards in the blackness without proof of having moved. At its extreme, this lack of orientation can even raise the question of whether it is accurate to speak of ‚self-awareness‘ in these circumstances. Entering such rooms can make one aware of one’s body, but as a loss: one does not sense one’s boundaries, which are dispersed in the darkness, and one begins to coincide with the space.”¹³

Eugene Minkowski first draws the revelations by saying that „the ego does not affirm itself in relation to darkness but becomes confused with it, becomes one with it.”¹⁴ Such confusion and blending of all objects lead to the search for one’s body image, position and their self-narrative. Who am I now? In the light, we are observers of the self-narrative we tell ourselves to be. Our body becomes a representation of our history. However, this symbolism disappears in darkness as the projection surface dissolves.

Consequently, our body image in daylight is larger in relation to our life story. In darkness, however, we enter our own story, the body image becomes smaller, and we become more vulnerable.¹⁵ Since we do not visually perceive our body in darkness, the perception is directed inwards instead of outwards. The disappearance of the horizon, and with it, the disappearance of hope, dehumanises us and makes the outer body die while the inner body rises. This allows the rediscovery of one’s own body in a non-visual way.

Yet, not seeing the body does not mean we cannot perceive it. Hearing, smelling and touching enables us to sense it forming a new understanding of one’s body perception and image. Over time these senses assume

¹³ Claire Bishop, *Installation Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), p. 82.

¹⁴ Eugene M. Minkowski, *Lived Time* (Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 429.

¹⁵ Handelman, p. 254.

the role of generating our self- and space perception. Our self-perception becomes increasingly sensitive and is directed inwards. Everything intensifies and at the same time merges with the environment.

How, however, does this newly created self-image interact with other people? If we can only sense our own bodies, how do others perceive us? George Barkley, an Irish philosopher, concludes that we can only experience what is perceived by us, which implies that the human being must be recognised in the world to exist for others. It does not necessarily mean that we have to see the other but rather need to perceive/sense them and to use all other senses to acknowledge what surrounds us.

“[...] all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind, that their being is to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit.”¹⁶

With regards to darkness, everything that envelops it exists, as far as we can grasp/perceive it. This perception is not limited to our sense of sight.

In his book “Notes on Blindness” John M. Hull, who lost his eyesight over the course of his adult life, describes himself as a passive component in an active world. Stating that not to be seen by others equals not to be existing. We start to lose the visual of our body/our existence and the face to ourselves. Not recognising who and where we are, eventually makes us become invisible to others and especially to ourselves. “This is what the archetype of blindness indicates, the loss of consciousness, the descent into sleep, the sense of nothingness, of becoming nothing. To be seen is to exist.”¹⁷

Alternatively, as Barkley stated it in 1999 “Esse est Percipi - to be is to be perceived”¹⁸, differs from Hull’s quote in one word. Whereas Hull still uses the word, “seeing”, Barkley states that we only need to be perceived. As mentioned in the section above, this perception is not limited to our sense of sight. Instead, it is an interplay of all our senses.

The compensation of our perception by the remaining senses, as well as the loss of the horizon as a visual point of orientation, are described in an article by Don Handelman. The alteration of the horizon not only impairs the visual seeing but also dims the social horizon and the related otherness. This can lead to a shortening and limitation of the physical

¹⁶ George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge and Three Dialogues*, ed. by Howard Robinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 14.

¹⁷ John M. Hull, *Notes on Blindness: A Journey through the Dark* (London: Profile Books LTD, 2017), p. 47. Kindle Edition.

¹⁸ Berkeley, p. 14.

¹⁹ Handelman, p. 253.

²⁰ Hull, p. 50.

horizon but allows the intimacy and inwardness of physical proximity.¹⁹ We start to lose not only our outer but also the inner contour of our being. We become the same or in concrete terms indistinguishable in a psychological sense as well. The mental horizon is reduced to the essential due to the absence of any distraction. At the same time, our horizon is broadened and creates new spaces for our mind and thoughts.

In this respect, the non-perception of ourselves can lead to the dissolution of our existence, but also the beginning of a new reality. The essence of this, metaphorically speaking, resembles a pure consciousness that allows us to be everywhere and become omnipresent. No longer feeling the significant damage of where one is in space and not concentrating on a particular location leads to a dissolution of oneself.²⁰

This contourless space shifts into space without borders, expanding to infinity. The resulting „free“ space becomes a place of unlimited possibilities. In it, creativity, thoughts and inventiveness flourish.

Darkness becomes something personal. Our self-image starts to shift, and our external view turns inwards. The space within us enlarges and offers the potential to reinvent ourselves. “I remain face to face with it; it is more “mine“ than clear space, which is if we can put it this way, a public domain.”²¹

²¹Minkowski, p. 405.

Chapter 3/
/Sensing Darkness

With the loss of sight and the newly created self-image, we open ourselves in this chapter to a perception that is hidden behind the eye.

In it, our other senses begin to sensitise and to blossom.²²

Sonic, olfactory, tactile and taste start to supply us with information we usually receive from the eye. The sensorium is transformed²³ and creates a multi-sensory perception of the dark.

This “change of senses” is often experienced by people who seek darkness in caves. The superficial void transforms into a stream of information, which emerges from other senses.

“The sound of the stream, which I had barely noticed when I entered the cave, now filled the whole chamber, unfurling in effusive patterns. Smells—mud, damp limestone—thickened to the point of feeling material. I could taste the cave.”²⁴

We become aware of our sensations, which we are otherwise too blind to perceive. Since the hierarchy of Aristotle, seeing has been the sense of trust and the one we use the most.²⁵ In the darkness, however, we automatically adapt and change the authority of the senses, start to trust in what is left. John Hull explains a similar change in sensory weighting that accompanies the loss of sight. “It is not all darkness. As vision, and inner vision, disappear, other modes of perception become more intense and important, most especially those of hearing and touch.”²⁶

Barkley and Plato’s *War of the Giants* go even further in their thesis. They state: “The real existence belongs only to that which can be handled and offers resistance to the touch.”²⁷ In return for seeing, touch creates a physical experience of the objects, which are touched. Seeing, on the other hand, is based on experience outside our body. It shows us how objects are physically arranged in space. According to Michael Martin, this is the difference between seeing and touching. The limits of one’s own body become conscious through the sense of touch due to the fact that the limits of space can only be experienced through one’s own body.²⁸ Consequently, in darkness, we must rely more on the sense of touch rather than sight, since it is merely the sense of touch, which can perceive the borders of space.

Ruth D. Whitehouse, an experienced speleologist, says that she uses all her senses to orientate herself in a cave. In terms of touch, she can not only estimate the proximity of the walls, floor, ceilings of the cave but also feel the humidity and the nature of the walls. Her hearing enables her to understand space through the echo. The sense of smell tells her about the fauna surrounding us and the wetness of the cave.²⁹

²² Will Hunt, *Underground: A Human History of the Worlds beneath Our Feet* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2019), p. 372. Ebook.

²³ Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 193.

²⁴ Hunt, p. 372.

²⁵ Anthony Synnott, ‘A Sociology of Smell’, *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 28.4 (1991), 437–59.

²⁶ Hull, p. 208.

²⁷ Plato, *Theaetetus*. *Sophist* (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1921), p. 373.

²⁸ Michael Martin, ‘Sight and Touch’, in *The Contents of Experience*, ed. by Tim Crane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 210.

²⁹ Dowd, Marion and Hensey, p. 32.

Understanding the space that surrounds oneself, creates an understanding of the character of the cave and a comprehensive experience without sight.

Sam Winston, a London-based artist who explores art in the dark, explains this shift in perception by the change of bodies. In the darkness, one transforms from the usual “sight-body” to a “touch- or sound-body” to learn the new language of this space.³⁰ Only such acquisition of the new language makes “seeing” in the dark possible. Hull aptly sums this up by saying that we build up a world that is beyond sight, trusting/ translating the signals of touch, taste, sound, and smell to form hypotheses outside the visual.³¹

Other senses like the sense of time and orientation vanish or get a different meaning.³² When we lose contact with the outside world, we forget our learned structures and behaviour patterns. Our sleep cycle changes as soon as we gain access to our inner clock again. Time expands and is perceived relatively, i.e. not consistently. So, we lose the feeling of passing time.³³

Michel Siffre, a French speleologist, explores these changes in the perception of time in darkness. He believes that through the darkness, the duration of time cannot be grasped; one begins to forget how long a minute, or a day is. Every day feels the same and is only marked by getting up and waking up. Our body begins to live according to its own time, when to sleep and when to eat.³⁴ The effects on our senses change and within the space or the scenery that surrounds us.

In summary, it can be said that in the darkness, the remaining senses determine perception. They transform our body into a sensitive resonant space. In this way, we find our way back to our instincts and our behaviour, which is characterised by basic needs.

//Feelings of darkness

In the darkness, the sensorial experience is changing; we notice and expand our senses to see beyond vision. Yet, how do our emotions behave in darkness? Opinions differ because the experience of darkness varies according to previous points of contact and circumstances. Often briefed from earlier times, we think of the dark as something frightening and dangerous. The absence of security spreads by the increased disadvantage

³⁰ Aaron Rosen, *Brushes with Faith: Reflections and Conversations on Contemporary Art* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2019), p. 2059. Kindle Edition.

³¹ Hull, p. 9.

³² Dowd, Marion and Hensey, p. 32.

³³ Joshua Foer and Michel Siffre, ‘Caveman: An Interview with Michel Siffre’, 2008 <<http://www.cabinet-magazine.org/issues/30/foer.php>> [accessed 28 April 2020].

³⁴ Foer and Siffre.

³⁵ Sorensen, p. 468.

that we have as visual animals - the consequence is fear of what can see us, but we cannot.³⁵ Edmund Burke illustrates this in his book "The sublime and beautiful" by declaring that "in utter darkness, it is impossible to know in what degree of safety we stand; we are ignorant of the objects that surround us; we may every moment strike against some dangerous obstruction; we may fall down a precipice the first step we take; and if an enemy approach, we know not in what quarter to defend ourselves; in such a case strength is no sure protection; wisdom can only act by guess; the boldest are staggered, and he who would pray for nothing else towards his defence, is forced to pray for light."³⁶ John Locke, however, believes that darkness is not naturally an idea of fear.³⁷ Locke claims that earlier stories about ghosts and goblins teach us to associate darkness with anxiety. This is not innate knowledge, but rather manifestations from childhood that lead to an understanding of the darkness in which horrors and monsters find their place.³⁸ Influencing factors can also be found in folklore, mythology and religion.³⁹ These manifestations can be bypassed or replaced by new patterns of experiences.

In Japanese culture, the celebration of darkness and shadow is deeply rooted. Tanizaki describes in his book "Praise of Shadows" the deep connection with darkness in the Japanese Culture and how growing up with darkness some can find the beauty in it.⁴⁰ This appreciation of darkness is also found in other cultures, as well as in the western world. Through new experiences, stories begin to live anew and overwrite negative ones. One of these stories takes place during the Second World War in Ukraine. Years later, a film named "No place on earth" was produced that retells the experience of 38 people who lived in a cave for 511 days. Hiding from the Germans, five Jewish families found their safe place in darkness.⁴¹ Not being seen by others creates a space for them. It became their home.

"I was safe in the darkness - I feel safety in the quietness"⁴²

and "the cave was fighting for me"⁴³ are both quotations from these people, which prove that darkness can also be understood as a place of refuge. It is the reason why these people survived. When they tell this story to their grandchildren today, the darkness becomes something precious.

What arises in darkness can be both, demoralising or fulfilling for us. Our experiences shape the feelings that go along with them. They determine how we approach the darkness. Therefore, darkness can be experienced in different ways. How we enter it and what we take from it is up to us.

³⁶ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, ed. by Adam Phillips (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 130.

³⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell Publishers, 1856), bk. 2, chap. 7,4. Locke, bk. 2.

³⁸ Locke, bk.2, chap. 33,10.

³⁹ Roger A. Ekirch, *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), p. 40. Ebook.

⁴⁰ Junichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows* (Sedgwick: Leete's Island Books, 1977).

⁴¹ *No Place on Earth*, dir. By Janet Tobias (Magnolia Pictures, 2013).

⁴² Tobias, pts 1:13:43-1:13:50.

⁴³ Tobias, pts 1:13:35-1:13:40.

//Expressions of darkness

Looking back on darkness experiences that have been made in human history, one can recognise different perceptions of the dark as well as varying purposes the dark was used for. Especially during wars, darkness became the scene of sensory deprivation and torture. Under the cover of darkness, people were robbed, warred and killed. Prisoners in war captivity were driven to madness in darkness and solitary confinement. At the same time, however, a few also experienced darkness as a place of refuge and security (see film: “no place on earth”). We can indeed examine that in “dark times” darkness often served as refuge and security, but it often also became the epicentre of fear.

In concentration camps, darkness was used as isolation. The dehumanisation, evoked by the allocation of numbers to all detainees and the absence of sensory impressions, creates a metaphor for darkness. Likewise, the withdrawal of the horizon, in this case, leads to the dissolution of hope. The ultimate authority in the camps led to an inner death, which was soon followed by physical death. Inner darkness seized these people and was much blacker than the darkest cave. Absolute darkness becomes a metaphor of death. There is no longer any difference between inner and outer, seen and experienced darkness.

This type of darkness is fundamentally different from a previously described feeling of security. It is a synonym for an inner emotional state, which allows for the hypothesis that there are at least two centrally different types of darkness: warm or cold or in other words as something that either creates feelings of security or isolation. It can, therefore, either become an emotional emptiness in which one is lost or a fullness which provides a retreat and security.⁴⁴

In various religions and mythologies, there is a positively attested image of darkness. They often show how darkness can serve as a safe haven rather than torture. In Buddhism, for example, there is a tradition of conducting retreats called “Yangti nagpo”. This retreat takes place in a pitch-black environment.⁴⁵ Here, darkness provides the perfect environment, as it encourages the necessary mental visualisation without distraction by any other visuals. Even today, these dark retreats are still offered as they help to find internal clarity and gain self-knowledge. The latter is equally known from Christianity or Greek mythology where prophets or poets immersed themselves in darkness in search of the divine truth.⁴⁶ These examples make clear that the usage of darkness varies according to our intentions, feelings and personal background we have when we enter the dark. In it, we withdraw ourselves from public life. The ab-

⁴⁴ Jana Maiworm, *Personal Experience* (KZ Dachau, 2020).

⁴⁵ *The Life of Shabkar* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2001), p. 63.

⁴⁶ Yulia Ustinova, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 7.

⁴⁷ Jack Fairweather, *The Volunteer: One Man, an Underground Army, and the Secret Mission to Destroy Auschwitz* (New York: Custom House, 2019), p. 628. Ebook.

sence of outer experiences strengthens inner experiences. Depending on how one enters, these become either a challenge to mental stability or consciousness and sensory expansion. Consequently, darkness offers space to rediscover oneself. Previous experiences can be processed, and new insights gained.

Looking back at the last chapters, we witness various uses of and entry point into darkness. We see in the dark as we perceive darkness. We look behind to what we know to get ready for the unknown. We use our senses to understand the world surrounding us and question what is coming. In the dark, we can gain both - freedom and bondage. The voluntary or involuntary walk into the black determines the outcome and experience.

"Days came and went, light and then dark, pain and then the memory of pain."⁴⁷

Chapter 4/ /Experiencing Darkness

The realisation that different factors influence the effect of darkness on our experiences explains why there is no universal cultural view of darkness. In this chapter, I will explicitly address the experiences that arise from a conscious and voluntary engagement with darkness.

As already mentioned, various religions and cultures recognise darkness as a retreat for self-exploration. It creates the space of isolation and blocks the logical and rational thought processes, to open up to non-mundane experiences⁴⁸ - entering another type of consciousness. Referring to Greek mythology or other cultures like Kung San, who searched for wisdom and knowledge in darkness, this was only achieved by leaving the body and reaching out to the spirit world (gods) solely with your soul.⁴⁹ This condition also called "ecstatic state," from the Greek *ekstasis*, meaning "to step outside of oneself"; psychologists call it an "altered state of consciousness."⁵⁰ In this state, we hover between our normal waking consciousness and our unconscious dream state - turning our vision inwards and diving into the "dream" world even though we are awake. This attempt to expand our consciousness, is often practised in the dark and has neither an intellectual nor a logical background but are rather used to venture beyond the earthly world.

Pythagoras was one of the many Greek philosophers who enclosed himself in dark caves to induce a form of altered state and search for true knowledge. Therefore, he spent extended periods in his so-called "House of Philosophy". In this cave, he sought, just like his predecessors Minos and Epimenides, for divine wisdom and superhuman abilities in darkness.⁵¹

Many other scientists and philosophers still find their realisations in darkness and dreams, including John C. Lilly.

John spent his whole life trying to find his meaning of life by entering different types of consciousness. With his invention of floating tanks and the concomitant intake of LSD, he succeeded in gaining access to this state.⁵² (Isolation tanks are a pitch-black, soundproof environment, where you float in (salt) water at body temperature.) He assumes that the entry into these new states of consciousness is necessary for the survival of the human species.⁵³ Even today, floating is still used as a means of entering a meditative phase and is taken up in films such as "Altered States."⁵⁴ Based on John Lilly's sensory deprivation research in isolation tanks, this movie enables the viewer to experience the effects of floating, in a more exaggerated sense.

Embellished in parts of the movie some isolation studies can be universally proven. Glowing orbs, simple geometric patterns or grids indicate the first

⁴⁸Hunt, p. 309.

⁴⁹Ustinova, p. 177.

⁵⁰Hunt, p. 307.

⁵¹Ustinova, p. 190.

⁵²John C. Lilly, *The Center of the Cyclone: An Autobiography of Inner Space* (New York: The Julian Press, 1972).

⁵³Lilly, p. 3.

⁵⁴*Altered States*, dir. by Ken Russell (Warner Home Video: 1980).

⁵⁵Jack Vernon, *Inside the Black Room* (London: Souvenir Press, 1966), p. 120.

stage of opening a new consciousness.⁵⁵ This proves that the entry into this altered state is usually generic.

Therefore, self-isolation in the dark and the associated visual and sensory deprivation leads us to a new state of consciousness.

Donald Hebb, a psychologist at McGill University Medical Center in Montreal, examined the effects on sensory deprivation in his "Project X-38." He invited (mainly) college students to spend days in soundproof cubicles. Additionally, he deprived the test persons of their sensory perceptions in various ways. He did so, for instance, by completely darkening the room and using frost-proof glass or cotton gloves.⁵⁶ Starved from any stimulation, students began to talk, sing, or do other things to break the monotony.⁵⁷ Twenty-five out of twenty-nine participants reported hallucinations and seeing visuals after time. Patterns of wallpaper, isolated figures, but also more complex scenes such as cartoon objects were experienced.⁵⁸ On this basis, it becomes clear that we are so accustomed to this visual input stream that by withdrawing these sensory stimuli, our brain begins to create its own input.

Cognitive psychologist Ian Robinson, who repeated this trial 2008, explains this by the senseless transmission of information from different nervous systems to the brain during sensory deprivation. However, after some time, the brain begins to give them meaning again and completes these fragments.⁵⁹ It tries to construct a new reality from known images. The resulting fantasy world is thus based on image fragments of a past experience. These are linked together in such a way that new creations of our imagination can arise from old picture fragments.

This phenomenon was also investigated by a collaboration between the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research and the German artist Marietta Schwarz. The artist spent 22 days in darkness to document how her perception and understanding of space changes.⁶⁰ They discovered that her brain only produces hallucinations in complete darkness and that despite the absence of the visual, the visual cortex is used. This implies that everything she hallucinates in the dark is as real as what she sees in the light.⁶¹

Is this construction of this newly created reality, the epitome of creativity? Surrealists like Salvador Dali were inspired by Freud's statement that dreams are encoded messages from the subconscious. They tried to tap into their dreams, subconscious mind and develop their creative ideas from these "hallucinations."⁶² It, therefore, seems like, as if the images, hallucinations and dreams that emerge from the void could be the gate-

⁵⁶ Michael Bond, 'How Extreme Isolation Warps the Mind', 2014 <<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20140514-how-extreme-isolation-warps-minds>> [accessed 28 April 2020].

⁵⁷ Michael Bond, *The Power of Others: Peer Pressure, Groupthink, and How the People Around Us Shape Everything We Do* (London: Oneworld Book, 2015), p. 559. Ebook.

⁵⁸ Vernon, pp. 119–20.

⁵⁹ Bond, 'How Extreme Isolation Warps the Mind'.

⁶⁰ Marietta Schwarz, 'Blindversuch', in *Grenzwertig*, vol. 5 (Cologne: Archimaera, 2013), pp. 99–118 (p. 103).

⁶¹ Hunt, p. 387.

⁶² MoMA learning, 'Salvador Dalí. The Persistence of Memory. 1931' <https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/salvador-dali-the-persistence-of-memory-1931/> [accessed 20 June 2020].

⁶³ Hunt, p. 319.

way to creativity that would otherwise be covered by our logical and rational thinking. The exclusion of a visual experience leads us into a changed state of consciousness from which we induce a new creative world.

“When we pass through this portal, we know that we are leaving behind the clarity of the surface world, withdrawing from the linearity and logic of ordinary consciousness, slipping into the fluidity of the unconscious.”⁶³

//Creativity in darkness

Many other artists deprive themselves of the visual or auditory to protect themselves from overstimulation and to find creativity in the void. Sam Winston finds an inner space for himself in the darkness, which he calls hypnosis or dream space. In it, he finds inspiration and security for his artistic work.

Interested in what he might see by not looking at anything at all, Sam Winston spent seven days in darkness. Deprived of sight, he starts to draw his breath and writes the same sentence repeatedly.⁶⁴

Various creatives, poets and artists follow Sam’s invite to spend some time in the dark to discover the “hidden spot of creativity.”⁶⁵ Many of them recognised this place as a creative goldmine where other inputs disappear, and the mind begins to be independent. Within this process, our mind jumps from one thought to the next. This results in combination strands, which our mind is otherwise not capable of.⁶⁶

Darkness thus becomes something liberating. The flood of everyday images no longer finds access⁶⁷ while inner images have the space to emerge. John Hull also speaks of a return of creativity when he goes blind. The cause is an imaginary vacuum cleaner that sucks away everything that is known. It is, therefore, up to you to reconstruct them anew.⁶⁸

“We are stepping outside the gyre of ordinary reality, and edging closer to whatever lies beyond the margins of the world.”⁶⁹

In the past, this very boundary of our experience has been associated with darkness. It was seen as a place where creativity could arise. The Greeks, for example, believed that poets who lost their sight enhanced

⁶⁴Sam Winston, ‘7 Days’, 2019.

⁶⁵‘Darkness Visible, The Artist Who Spent 7 Days and Nights in Darkness’, BBC Radio 6 Music, 22 October 2017. <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05klr87>> [accessed 27 April 2020].

⁶⁶Hobbs.

⁶⁷Schwarz, p. 100.

⁶⁸Hull, p. 157.

⁶⁹Hunt, p. 319.

⁷⁰Ustinova, pp. 174–75.

⁷¹Ustinova, p. 175.

their talents in writing - thinking that the gods gifted them in return for losing sight. Better concentration and the absence of distraction from human influence bring the desired inspiration.⁷⁰ "In a permanent state of visual deprivation, the mind can generate its own images."⁷¹ Deprived of sight, we can assemble the pictorial fragments of our memory into an incarnation of new ideas and discover in them a new poetic inspiration.

As we escape the images in the darkness, we are led to find freedom and to create something new. This conscious reduction of our perception resembles an empty canvas waiting to be filled. However, what kind of freedom do we experience there? Does the perceived freedom come with the consciousness of nothingness, which can only be filled when we experience an inner emptiness? Or is it the feeling of not being perceived, the state of the outer emptiness, which enables us to create something new without compulsion.

The psychologist's Anna Steidle and Lioba Werth conducted various experiments to find out how creativity responds to different light settings. In the process, they found out that darkness frees humanity from constraints. This promotes creativity, which means that by changing the room's light setting a global and explorative processing style can be caused and unconventional imaginations and ideas are possible.

This boost of creativity is triggered by a feeling of anonymity and the appearance of being unobserved.⁷² Hidden in the dark, we feel free from constraints and allow ourselves to think beyond the boundaries of ordinary reality.⁷³

These experiments also revealed that this increase in creativity often occurs only unconsciously – an automatic and context-dependent perception, which participants do not associate with the experience in the dark.⁷⁴

Based on this evidence, that darkness enhances creativity, the question arises what kind of freedom we obtain from it?

In my opinion, it is the emptiness of space but also the detachment from requirements that enables creative creation in the dark. By letting go of old ideas and consciously placing ourselves in a state of isolation, we start to create on the canvas of the void, which serves as a creative space for something entirely new. Julia Cameron agrees with this by saying that

"creativity [...] begins in darkness."⁷⁵

It triggers the space of the mystic and the time to evolve.

⁷² Anna Steidle and Lioba Werth, 'Freedom from Constraints: Darkness and Dim Illumination Promote Creativity', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 35 (2013), 67–80.

⁷³ Hunt, p. 319.

⁷⁴ Steidle and Werth.

⁷⁵ Julia. Cameron, *The Artist's Way : A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* (London: Souvenir Press, 1992), p. 428.

Chapter 5/
/My Darkness

Based on the theoretical foundations of the last chapters, I became aware that the collected knowledge about darkness requires additional personal analysis. The understanding of darkness results from direct experience. My experiments in darkness are accompanied by the search for space where I can act as a designer to find out what effects this experience has on my body and mind.

Corresponding to this approach and following the examples of different references, I spent three days in total darkness. Here I was interested in exploring the discrepancy between abundance and nothingness. This experiment took place in an obscured two-room apartment seeking to find the benefits of the dark and the room for creativity.

The light disappears, and the supposed emptiness unfolds. My eyes accustom themselves to the darkness that believed to exist. Nevertheless, the light finds its way to exist in darkness. Every source of light, however small, illuminates the room and prevents the authentic experience of absolute darkness. I start to fill the holes to create the perfect incarnation of darkness. When I finally succeed in obscuring everything, I am enveloped in the dark, and my body slowly blends with the blackness itself. The room seems to expand, too big but at the same time too small, the need arises to wrap myself in a blanket. The moving behaves similarly. The personification of darkness and the feeling of being its guest does not allow for complete relaxation. Movements are only possible with willpower and overcoming. It is a timid search for points of contact in order to orientate oneself in a space that is no longer known.

This feeling is familiar to me from an exhibition “Dialogue in the dark” in London, where one is guided through various reproduced everyday scenes in a pitch-black environment.

The insecurity and the lack of spatial awareness lead to a respectful subordination to the imaginary “dark being”. Other senses however evolved. Hearing but especially touch opens up a world to me that often lies hidden behind the eye. I begin to understand the space through the information of hearing and touch. My brain starts to compare pieces of information to my existing memories. This leads me to the construction of an entirely new reality. A self-created, subjective world that exists only for me, but at the same time remains a part of the objective reality. Starting to imagine, I can increase my creativity by the deficiency of images. The construction of a new reality, away from constraints, enables me in the creation of something unique – and this alone through the amplification and compensatory power of the other

senses. It is my escape from the outward-facing eye, into the inner view, to combine the fullness in the emptiness.

The self-confidence in space increases with the amount of collected sensory information and creates an inner picture that contributes to further orientation – often it is time that changes the understanding of space.

The apartment becomes mine, and I feel more comfortable moving around in it. So, I conquer the room bit by bit - taking little trips to the kitchen or bathroom. I gain confidence. Otherwise, the bed remains my sanctuary. Eating, however, becomes unimportant. The fun of eating disappears with the visual stimuli and the fiction of time and space. The initial assignment of food by sight is compensated by taste and touch. Nevertheless, a certain scepticism remains towards the “new” sensory impressions.

Comparable to this experience is a lunch I had at a dark restaurant in Wiesbaden (Germany). Not knowing what lay in front of me, I tried to identify the meal by exploring it with my fingers. The texture of meat and olives were soon evident.

Notwithstanding, some uncertainty remained. I tasted it. As soon as I felt the smell and texture in my mouth, the remaining impartiality disappeared, and the stored opinion came to the fore.

The days in the apartment feel long but pass by quickly; the sense of time disappears. Only sounds from the outside world give a reflection on the time of the day. It feels like I slept ages, meditating in a space where everything appears black. The evocation of colours by pressing the eyeballs fails and only calls up the same blackness as everything else. I know it will take a while until my brain starves from information and starts doing its own thing. I also experimented imaginary floating in a dark floating tank. While the latter experience is comparable to the darkroom experience they also strongly contrast each other as the floating experience was additionally accompanied by a complete sensory deprivation. Apart from the sense of sight, the floating tank is also devoted to the feeling of weightlessness. Whereas in dark retreats the other senses “awaken”, no distractions are possible when floating. Thoughts shoot through the head until silence spreads. As I lay in the water the tiny tank virtually changed into a barn, I could be anywhere. Figures begin to detach themselves from the darkness and start bending over me in the shadows of the dark. Everything is peaceful. Everything made sense.

The same “shadow figures” came to visit me in the dark retreat. Lying in bed, I divine them in front of the passage to the living room. I observe them, follow them with my eyes. I try to capture them in a sketchbook, but the creation of drawings is more arduous than expected (Fig. 1). Every time I put down my pencil, it leads to an aberration of the position. Continuous lines and wrong dimensions characterise the sheet of paper. Similar to writing notes. My index Finger shows me the beginning of each sentence as it slides down the paper. However, I get lost on the sheet. The sentences become crooked, the distance between letters irregular. Once or twice it happened that I overwrote the page. My sense of touch is tempted to assume that there was nothing on the paper. That nothing does yet exist here. Examining the notes and drawings in daylight, they look enigmatic, like kids’ drawings but somehow also like a work of art (Fig. 4).

Further visual impressions of creatures and pictures cause me to draw to capture them. These visuals frequently come and disappear. They form out of the dark. But as soon as I try to grab them, they disappear. They are swallowed by the dark back to nothing. Nonetheless, one of these images stays in my head. While taking a bath, laying in the water, eyes rise from the dark. Watching, disappearing, changing. Various eyes, not all human, not all real (Fig. 2).

My head starts to make itself independent. Not fighting against this incident permits the origination of images as well as the leap of thoughts and „day-“dreams. I probably spend several hours staring into the void and jumping back and forth between dream and reality, not knowing if my eyes are closed or open.

During another experiment, I came across a similar phenomenon. The Ganzfeld effect is a method where you spend 30 minutes staring into a red light with table tennis balls on your eyes and the sound of white noise. Eyes open or close, it is no longer possible to tell the difference. The red light turns black, and the colour disappears. Starvation of our senses facilitates the change of vision and access to an inner world. The phenomenon imitates the experience of a sleeping person dreaming, but at the same time, our consciousness is in a waking state. This discrepancy leads to an expanded perception, which we are creating a space where we are free from constrains, mixing memories and potentially creating something out of the ordinary.⁷⁶

Ultimately, the question arises whether this emerging space empowers

⁷⁶ Sorensen, *Seeing Dark Things*, pp. 243–245.

creative thinking and performing and whether it helps us to construct a space in which we find this emptiness? To create something with our other senses that the eye cannot design. A place protected (by observers) in which our brain can combine and develop information free from constraints to which we would otherwise be denied access.

For me, darkness means to change perspective. Allowing creative thinking in a non-visual way, trusting in what is within us. However, I believe that several factors like time, history, context and aim must be balanced to obtain the benefits of darkness. This interaction of factors and the balancing of these form the creative space. However, if one is afraid or involuntarily enters darkness, an imbalance may occur. The creative space closes itself, and one longs for the light.

During my experiments, it turns out that these contradictory experiences, which make darkness appear to us sometimes as a threat and at other times as a creative space, are not mutually exclusive. They are instead the expression of a parallel world of experience. For me, the loss of the spatial dimension (emptiness) was as much of an experience as the feeling of security, which covered me like a veil or a blanket (fullness).

“As creative channels, we need to trust the darkness. Let them grow in dark and mystery. Let them form on the roof of our consciousness.”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Cameron, p. 430.



Fig 1: Shadow people
(own illustration)

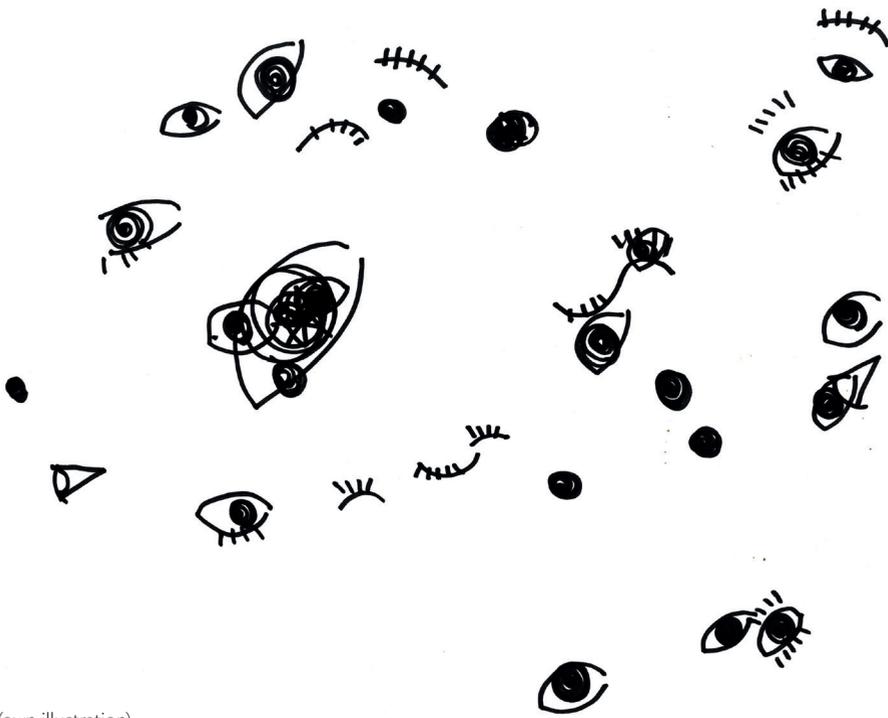


Fig 2: Eyes (own illustration)

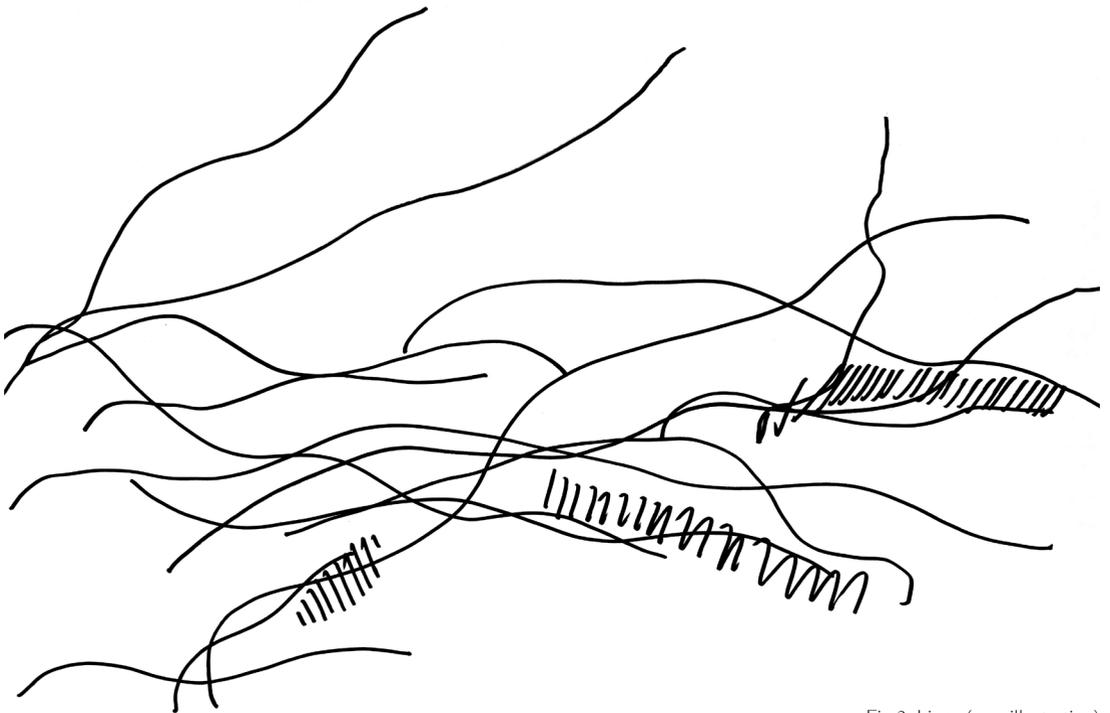


Fig 3: Lines (own illustration)

Dunkelheit ist die Abwesenheit von Licht
 Licht ist die Abwesenheit der Komplexität
 Komplexität ist die Abwesenheit der Simplizität
 Simplizität ist die Abwesenheit des Wissens
 Wissen ist die Abwesenheit des Gesamten
 Die Abwesenheit des Gesamten ist entweder
 Angst oder vollkommen

Fig 4: Notes in Darkness
(own illustration)

Chapter 6/ /Nothingness and Fullness

In the last chapters, we looked behind the visible, sensed what is beyond vision and experienced something surpassing the known. The insights we gained from this led us to the assumption that darkness is the incarnation of something and not the absence of everything.

Since the beginning, nothingness dominates the darkness. This impression is created by the loss of optical vision. Only through the expansion of our other senses and the entry into a new consciousness, the emptiness begins to fill with content. The previously perceived nothingness is thus transformed into a state associated with fullness. The result is an interplay of nothingness and fullness, which is regularly treated in this work.

If darkness implies the presence of something and nothingness does not imply the absence of everything - i.e. it can be assumed that darkness equals nothingness and that nothingness can also be fullness – the question that arises in this chapter then, is how to perceive and grasp the fullness in nothingness?

In the following section, therefore, we will examine the nothing through various disciplines such as physics and philosophy.

The origin of nothingness is deeply anchored in the eastern world view. For both Taoists and Buddhists, the ultimate reality “Sunyata” is emptiness/ void. Such nothing exists beyond form and resists descriptions and specifications. However, here emptiness is not to be understood as total nothingness. It is instead “the essence of all forms and the source of all life.”⁷⁸

Only, nothingness permits the form. Alternatively, as Laotse, a Chinese philosopher who presumably lived around the six century B.C., describes it the following way:

**“Thirty spokes surround a hub:
the nothingness in between forms the wheel.
One shapes clay into vessels:
the nothingness within makes the vessel.
Windows and doors are set into walls:
the nothingness within creates the dwelling.**

**The visible forms the body of the creation,
the invisible constitutes its value.”⁷⁹**

⁷⁸ Capra Fritjof, *The Tao of Physics*, 3rd edn (London: Flamingo, 1982), p. 234.

⁷⁹ Laotse *Tao Te King*, trans. by Jana Maiworm (Regensburg: Diedrichs Gelbe Reihe, 1978), p. 51.

Laotse defines the space in between as an essence{e}(ial). He gives it a meaning that goes beyond pure existence.

This ascription of meaning transforms the empty space into a space that is filled with something. This goes along with the previous statement of the Buddhists and makes nothingness the origin of all forms.

Nothing is, therefore, not the loss or absence of something, but becomes the essence of a thing. Similar to a spoken thought that leaves the vessel of our body and gives meaning to the lifeless space. In this way, the imaginable/thought can be transformed into fullness/form.

Since the one conditions the other, i.e. the one gets its justification from the other, one could conclude that they are the same.

“Form is emptiness, and emptiness is indeed form. Emptiness is not different from form, form is not different from emptiness. What is form that is emptiness, what is emptiness that is form.”⁸⁰

In the scientific context, Albert Einstein explains that spaces can only be perceived as interspace. That is because space in our world is mostly limited by something: The living space between walls, the habitat space through borders and fences etc. However, he describes this space as a parallel reality to the limitation that surrounds it. “These spatial relations are obviously real in the same sense as the bodies themselves.”⁸¹ Christian Morgenstern, a German poet, touches on the same aspect in one of his poems: “A picket fence stood on the green, with spaces you could see between”⁸², thus expressing that there is no picket fence without (in-between) space. The Pythagoreans at the same time saw emptiness as a kind of partition between neighbouring things and their demarcation. Emptiness creates the essence of the numbers.⁸³

Yet, as soon as we imagine a theoretical infinity or experience the dark, the perceptible or imaginable limitation is missing. This, in turn, implies that space in between becomes space.

In physics, the atomist equates this unlimited space with infinity, which enables an infinite emptiness which must exist between and around everything.⁸⁴ He is hence employing that the emptiness must be bounded by matter and subsequently matter must be bounded by empty space. However, according to current physics, this space is no longer called empty space, as it “became evident that virtual particles can come into being spontaneously out of the void, and vanish again into the void.”⁸⁵ These virtual particles appear and disappear so quickly that it is impossible to perceive them with the eye.⁸⁶ As already described in the Eastern void, the physical vacuum “is not a state of mere nothingness, but contains the potentiality for all forms of the particle world.”⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Fritjof, p. 238.

⁸¹ Albert Einstein, ‘The Problem of Space, Ether, and the Field in Physics’, in *Essays in Science* (Mineola: Dover Publication, 2009).

⁸² John Perry, ‘The Picket Fence’, in *Transference*, vol. 1.1 (Western Michigan University, 2013).

⁸³ Henning Genz, *Die Entdeckung Des Nichts: Leere Und Fülle Im Universum* (Carl Hanser Verlag, 1994), p. 93.

⁸⁴ Genz, p. 91.

⁸⁵ Fritjof, p. 247.

⁸⁶ Lawrence M. Krauss, *A Universe From Nothing*, Free Press (New York: Free press, 2012), p. 154.

⁸⁷ Fritjof, p. 247.

⁸⁸ Fritjof, p. 247.

⁸⁹ Genz, p. 82 pp.

“When one knows that the Great Void is full of ch’i, [Far Eastern term for life energy] one realises that there is no such thing as nothingness.”⁸⁸

The Greek philosopher Anaxagoras took a similar approach, stating the non-existence of empty space as inevitable. Like others, he declares that everything has its existing in the beginning and arises from the formlessness of chaos.⁸⁹ Therefore, chaos (formless) is for him the origin of nothingness. Out of it, everything appears. Similar to the understanding of the eastern void. In Greek mythologies, darkness also finds its roots in chaos. “Out of the Chasm came Erebus (the realm of darkness) and dark Night.”⁹⁰ In this case, the word chaos which is derived from the greek “chasm” or “void” describes the union of disorder and nothing. Hence, darkness can here be understood as the rise of nothing and chaos, which turn formlessness into the formal. With this emptiness can find its fullness and the thinkable its form.

Stating that nothing carries the fullness within itself and is awakened by the darkness is comparable to the idea of Erebus (darkness) arising from chaos or nothing and making room for the light. This is similar to the history of creation. The beginning of the world arises on the basis of nothing. From it everything originates, beginning with darkness.

“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”⁹¹

“In the beginning, there was darkness, and there was water everywhere. There was no light, and to lived alone in this immeasurable space. And from the deepest darkness came lo’s voice that said: Darkness, light up! And there was light. Then the voice said: Light, turn into darkness! And it was dark again.”⁹²

The darkness thus becomes a metaphor for a creative process of creation. Drawing back to a quote from the poem by Herman Hesse at the beginning “Truly, no one is wise who does not know the dark“, one can find a new reference to the theme of creativity and darkness.

It allows creativity to break away from form and merge anew with chaos – the possibility to bring out something completely new. This deconstruction is the characteristic of the antagonism of fullness and nothingness. Both find their place in the darkness. Emerging from nowhere, the fullness finds its meaning. It is never just one and they are always in balance.

⁹⁰ Hesiod, *Theogony Works and Days* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 6.

⁹¹ King James, *The Contemporary Parallel Bible* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 7.

⁹² Genz, trans. Jana Maiworm, p. 56.

⁹³ Three Initiates, *The Kybalion: A Study of The Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece*. (Chicago: The Yogi Publication Society, 1912), p.13.

Alternatively, as Kybalion explains it: "Everything is Dual; everything has poles; everything has its pair of opposites."⁹³

On the one hand, the nothingness can only exist having the fullness within. It surrounds it, forms the space in between and allows the fullness to take its place. The darkness, on the other hand, creates the space for the interaction of these two protagonists. Here the nothingness can be experienced but always accompanied by the fullness.

Chapter 7/
/The creative dark

The darkness as the origin of everything makes it a space in which everything may occur. At the same time, however, it is also the space in which the created can remain hidden.

In it, we merge with the chaos and adjust everything to our imaginations. This emerging space is influenced by what is within us. By consciously bringing in feelings, history, associations and external factors such as time, we determine the space we create. No one can harm us in here except ourselves. Far away from prejudices and constraints of others, we can create a creative space in which new ideas can emerge. We begin to form a safe place to “protect our artist child from shame.”⁹⁴

Like everything else in the darkness, the necessary inspiration comes from us. The uncontrolled linking of constantly new strands of ideas, but also the mixing of images, which happens through the darkness in our brain, creates an unlimited space for new inspiration. Additionally, the compensatory abilities of our other senses change our experience of space. We begin to develop ideas, which are independent of the experience of seeing, consequently developing new design processes that are experienced exclusively with the remaining senses. Alternatively, we transfer these creations into the light in order to make them accessible to the eye. Multi-sensory design thus no longer has its origin in seeing.

Darkness offers space to become one with the idea instead of keeping a distance.

The creative power in darkness is based on our presence. It is the empty space, which provides access to all the themes hidden within us.

It answers many of our questions and at the same time, raises new questions. In the end, darkness particularly serves for self-exploration.

“One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.”⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Cameron, p. 172.

⁹⁵ G. Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, ed. by Gehard Adler, *Alchemical Studies* (New York: Princeton University, 1967), XIII.

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Calming

Welcome

Supernatural
Silence

repulsive

Loneliness

Remote

Alienation
Lost powerful

treacherous

Disadvantage

soothing

teaspoony

Understanding

dreamy

intimidating
exhausted

Cover
Beauty

Protection
eyeless

Hidden

hazy
blind

Fascinating
melancholic
dying

Horror

Abscending
calmness

aware

Detachment
spitefulness

Excluding

Refuge

Vanished
Separating

Unguided
Ditch'ness
reptiles
overwhelmed

Solation

Spiritual
reduction
sadness

Covered

mythic

Security

Dark

and new experiences arise