

PROPOSAL OF *CREATIO EX PLENO*: NOTHING, NAMING, AND THE GENESIS OF REALITY

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ABSTRACT: My paper advances the Proposal of *Creatio ex Pleno*—creation out of fullness—as an alternative to the traditional *creatio ex nihilo* (“creation out of nothing”) and *creatio ex materia* (“creation out of matter”). In this model, “nothing” is not absence but the undifferentiated fullness—structured potential—from which all distinctions arise. One might picture it as a block of marble containing every possible sculpture, though none yet revealed: all forms latent, none yet chosen. Drawing from theology, philosophy, physics, linguistics, and cognitive science, it reframes “nothing” as the pre-named totality that underlies being, thought, and perception.

KEYWORDS: Scientific Philosophy; Philosophy; Creation ex nihilo; Technology; The point of technological singularity; Socrates; Plato; Big Bang theory

Part I — Nothing, Naming, and the Genesis of Reality

This paper advances the Proposal of *Creatio ex Pleno*—creation out of fullness—as an alternative to the traditional *creatio ex nihilo* (“creation out of nothing”) and *creatio ex materia* (“creation out of matter”). In this model, “nothing” is not absence but the undifferentiated fullness—structured potential—from which all distinctions arise. One might picture it as a block of marble containing every possible sculpture, though none yet revealed: all forms latent, none yet chosen.

Drawing from theology, philosophy, physics, linguistics, and cognitive science, it reframes “nothing” as the pre-named totality that underlies being, thought, and perception.

In the Hebrew Genesis narrative, creation begins not *ex nihilo* but through the ordering of pre-existent waters (*tehom*) by naming (King 1902). In Plato’s

dialogues, Socrates' declaration "I know nothing" mirrors this stance, reflecting direct acquaintance with pre-conceptual reality (Plato 2000). Modern physics reveals the vacuum as a field of latent energy (Davies 2006; Krauss 2012); linguistics shows that naming shapes perception (Whorf 1956); neuroscience confirms that awareness precedes categorization (McGilchrist 2009). True wisdom lies in sustained recognition of this inexhaustible whole—knowing "nothing" as the deepest form of knowledge.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE: PHILOSOPHY ACROSS DISCIPLINES

The argument proceeds through a comparative philosophical method, placing ancient religious texts, classical philosophy, and modern science in dialogue. This approach treats insights from theology, physics, linguistics, and cognitive science not as isolated truths, but as converging perspectives on the same ontological question. While each discipline has its own assumptions and limits, their overlapping insights reveal a shared recognition: "nothingness" is an origin state rich with possibility—a structured potential from which all forms emerge.

It is in this context that the Proposal of *Creatio ex Pleno*¹ is advanced, reframing creation as the emergence of distinction and form from a pre-existent fullness.

¹ *Creatio ex Pleno* ("creation out of fullness") is here proposed as a conceptual counterpart to *creatio ex nihilo* and *creatio ex materia*, describing creation as the structuring of undifferentiated totality rather than production from absence or raw matter.

NOTHING AS UNNAMED EVERYTHING

In common discourse, "nothing" is assumed to mean the total absence of being, value, or potential. Yet such an absolute void is conceptually paradoxical: if it is truly nothing, it cannot be conceived, spoken of, or imagined. This suggests that "nothing" may instead be the fullness prior to form—structured potential—everything that exists before differentiation or naming.

This aligns with Laozi's insight in the Tao Te Ching that "the Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao" (Laozi 1963, p. 57), and with apophatic theology, where ultimate reality is approached only through negation (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987). In this reading, "nothing" is not absence but undivided totality, becoming "something" only when language imposes boundaries.

NAMING AS ONTOLOGICAL ACT

Speech-act theory, as developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), holds that language is not merely descriptive but performative—words can bring states of affairs into being. Naming is thus an ontological act: it does not simply label reality but participates in creating and structuring it, carving divisions into the structured potential of undifferentiated reality.

GENESIS: NAMING AS THE FIRST ACT OF CREATION

Genesis opens: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1, KJV). Read alongside the Johannine prologue—“In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1, KJV)—this can be reframed: “In the beginning God created the word.”

Before this, “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). These waters—*tehom*—are not depicted as coming into existence in that moment; they pre-exist as structured potential (King 1902). This mirrors ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, such as the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, where creation emerges by ordering primordial chaos.

When God says, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3), this is not conjuring light from nothing, but distinguishing light from darkness within the whole. Naming follows: “God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night” (Gen. 1:5). These first names carve boundaries into an unbounded totality, structuring reality itself.

SOCRATES AND THE PARADOX OF KNOWING NOTHING

In Plato’s *Apology* (21d), Socrates claims, “The only thing I know is that I know nothing” (Plato 2000). Traditionally read as epistemic humility, this can also be interpreted through the lens of the “unnamed fullness.” Socrates is not admitting ignorance but affirming familiarity with the structured potential of pre-conceptual reality—that which precedes definition.

This interpretation connects to modern epistemology, particularly fallibilism—the recognition that all claims are provisional and that reality always exceeds our conceptual maps (“the map is not the territory”). In this light, Socrates’ wisdom lies in his refusal to mistake the named for the whole.

PHYSICS AND THE FERTILE VACUUM

Quantum field theory reveals that the vacuum is not empty, but a field of fluctuating particles and energy (Davies 2006). Krauss (2012) argues that universes can arise “from nothing,” but this “nothing” is already structured by physical laws—another form of structured potential. Just as *tehom* precedes creation in Genesis, the quantum vacuum precedes observable phenomena—an undifferentiated potential rather than absence.

LINGUISTICS AND THE WORLD-MAKING POWER OF NAMING

The Sapir–Whorf hypothesis holds that language shapes perception (Whorf 1956). God’s act of naming “day” and “night” in Genesis is an archetype for this process, creating categories that frame human experience. Socratic dialogue mirrors this by dismantling false names and definitions, making space for more accurate distinctions to emerge—restoring contact with structured potential.

COGNITIVE SCIENCE AND PRE-CONCEPTUAL AWARENESS

Neuroscience shows that perception precedes categorization. The right hemisphere processes holistic impressions before the left hemisphere applies linguistic structure (McGilchrist 2009). This mirrors the “pre-named fullness” model: before naming, there is continuous perception—a direct encounter with structured potential. Naming creates discrete analyzable units but also narrows the original wholeness.

COUNTERPOINT: THE CASE FOR ABSOLUTE NOTHING

Some philosophical and scientific perspectives hold that true nothingness—absolute absence—is coherent and possible. Metaphysical nihilists argue that there could have been no reality at all. Certain cosmological models suggest that universes can arise from a state without space, time, or law. Yet these accounts often redefine “nothing” into a minimal something—a set of conditions that make emergence possible—supporting rather than undermining the argument that our “nothing” is, in practice, a form of structured potential.

BRIDGE TO PART II

If Part I reveals the stage upon which reality first emerges—the undivided fullness from which form arises—Part II turns to the choreography by which that fullness takes shape. Here, the lens widens: from the theological and philosophical to the physical and functional, tracing the same creative principle as it operates in the structuring of matter, energy, and information. This shift rests on the recognition that the act of naming in Genesis, the questioning of Socrates, and the self-assembly of atoms after the Big Bang are not separate categories, but expressions of the same underlying process.

Part II — Technology as Energy, Creation, and Thought: A Universal Framework for Creatio ex Pleno

For the purposes of this argument, “technology” is used in a stipulative sense:

Any process, structure, or mechanism—whether naturally evolved or intentionally designed—that organizes, harnesses, or transforms energy, matter, or information to bring forth distinct functions or forms.

In this framing, technology is not confined to human artefacts but is the universal mode of structuring fullness into form. It is the operational arm of *Creatio ex Pleno*.

If Part One defined the origin of reality as *Creatio ex Pleno*—creation out of fullness—Part Two turns to the processes by which that fullness becomes articulated into form. In this framing, “technology” is how undifferentiated fullness transforms into distinct, functional configurations, from the self-organisation of atoms after the Big Bang to the cognitive systems that name and remember.

RETHINKING TECHNOLOGY

Conventional definitions situate technology within the human domain—tools, machines, and systems consciously designed to solve problems or extend capabilities. This anthropocentric view traces its origins to *Homo sapiens* and material culture, such as the Oldowan stone tools dated to ~2.6 million years ago (Semaw et al., 1997). Yet such framing obscures a more universal principle:

technology as the structured harnessing and transformation of energy, matter, or information to bring forth distinct forms and functions.

Aristotle's *technē* encompassed both practical craft and artistic creation, denoting skillful making (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VI). Francis Bacon emphasized the application of knowledge to command nature (*Novum Organum*, 1620). In both, technology is not simply the artefact, but the act of creation—the bringing-into-being of new configurations through organized processes.

When reframed functionally, technology is no longer exclusively human. It operates at multiple scales—cosmic, biological, cognitive, and cultural—wherever energy, matter, or information are structured to produce a function.

CREATION AS TECHNOLOGY

If tool-making is technology, then the act of creation itself—in any domain—qualifies as technological. This expanded definition encompasses human-designed machines, artistic works, the genetic replication of DNA, and the self-assembly of protein complexes within cells.

The bacterial flagellum, a nanoscale rotary engine powered by proton gradients, operates by the same mechanical principles as a man-made turbine (Berg, 2003). Photosynthetic complexes in cyanobacteria are solar energy converters that predate photovoltaic panels by billions of years (Blankenship, 2014). Under this broader lens, technology is a universal capacity for patterned creation, expressed in both evolutionary processes and human invention.

THOUGHT AND MEMORY AS TECHNOLOGY

When technology is defined as the structured manipulation of energy, matter, or information, thought itself becomes a form of internal technology. Thought organizes information, harnesses neural electrochemical energy, and generates novel configurations: concepts, decisions, actions.

Memory is the enabling infrastructure for this cognitive technology. In

biological systems, memory encodes, stores, and retrieves information across time, allowing thought to extend beyond the present moment:

Genetic memory — DNA and RNA as molecular storage media for life's instructions (Watson & Crick, 1953).

Neural memory — synaptic changes that preserve patterns of experience (Kandel, 2001).

Cultural memory — language, symbols, and writing that externalise and preserve knowledge (Assmann, 2011).

These systems meet the criteria of technology: they are structured mechanisms that harness and stabilize information for adaptive or creative ends. Molecular memory predates neural memory by billions of years, making it arguably the first information technology.

A UNIFIED CHRONOLOGY OF TECHNOLOGY

Era	Milestone	Technological Principle
~13.8 Ga	Big Bang; energy condenses into matter; nuclear fusion in stars forms heavy elements	Energy self-organizes into complex matter
~4.54 Ga	Earth forms; water cycle regulates planetary energy flows	Planetary systems as energy transformers
~4.2–3.8 Ga	Prebiotic chemistry produces amino acids, lipids, nucleotides; protocells form	Enclosed systems harness energy gradients
~3.8 Ga	First microbes; ATP synthase, photosynthesis, flagella emerge	Molecular machines for energy capture and motion
~3.5–1 Ga	Genetic memory stores and transmits life's code; nervous systems store experience	Information storage as adaptive technology
~2.6 Ma	Early hominins create stone tools	Thought transforms memory into physical artefacts
~1 Ma	Mastery of fire	Harnessing chemical energy for survival
~100–40 ka	Language, art, symbolic thought emerge	Information becomes a cultural technology

~200 y–present Industrial, digital, and AI revolutions Recursive design:
technology creates technology

Present–future Synthetic biology, space engineering, mind–machine
integration Convergence of natural and cultural creation

PHILOSOPHICAL AND EVIDENTIAL DEFENCE

Intent and Function — The functionalist definition advanced here prioritizes operation over origin: any system that organises energy, matter, or information to produce a function qualifies as technology (Dennett, 1995).

Memory as Technology — DNA, synaptic patterns, and written language are all information storage and retrieval technologies.

Precedents in Scholarship — Kroes & Meijers (2000), Arthur (2009), and Ihde (2009) support expanding technology beyond human artefacts.

Empirical Foundations — Protocells, ATP synthase, and photosynthesis are pre-human energy-information systems that qualify as technologies.

CONCLUSION

The Proposal of *Creatio ex Pleno* redefines the origin of existence not as emergence from absence (*creatio ex nihilo*) nor from pre-shaped material (*creatio ex materia*), but as the structuring of undifferentiated fullness into form. This fullness—structured potential—is present in the tehom of Genesis, the apophatic “nothing” of mystical theology, the fertile quantum vacuum of physics, and the pre-conceptual awareness identified in neuroscience.

Naming, as an ontological act, transforms this fullness into discrete realities. Technology—understood universally as the structuring of energy, matter, and information—functions as the operative arm of *Creatio ex Pleno*, bridging the primordial fullness with the multiplicity of forms we inhabit and create.

By integrating theology, philosophy, physics, linguistics, and cognitive science, this model dissolves false binaries between sacred and secular, natural and artificial, human and cosmic. To “know nothing” in the Socratic sense is not ignorance but alignment with the inexhaustible fullness that precedes all form.

In embracing *Creatio ex Pleno*, we recover both humility and responsibility: humility before the infinite whole, and responsibility in every act that gives it form.

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