

Marcus Steinweg
FOR THE LOVE OF PHILOSOPHY

DIAGRAMMATIC THINKING

The diagram stands between order and chaos – just like the human subject. It is mistaken to believe that the subject does nothing else than oppose chaos. Providing we define chaos as incommensurability that, instead of describing a crackpot world, indicates the world in its truth value, which is our divided world without an exterior, it is not an external somewhere.¹ It is a world without a world behind it, a world without guaranties, a world without God. A world as a non-homogenous universe of explosive heterogeneities and implosive intensities. A world collapsing into itself and expanding without finite borders. A world of entropic processes subject to no final state, destabilising even the minutest control procedures. The subject has absorbed this world into itself. It belongs in the midst of this world, yet does not mark its centre. The subject is in the middle of chaos and chaos is in the middle of the subject. For this reason, one can say that the subject is a diagrammatic subject regulating the chaosmotic traffic between interior and exterior as well or poorly as it can. In his book on Francis Bacon, Gilles Deleuze writes: “The diagram is indeed a chaos [...] but it is also a germ of order [...]”² Philosophy’s diagrammatic moves on the separation line between order and disorder, complexity and complexity reduction. This is the implicit violence in a diagrammatic practice which reductively attempts to tame the overcomplexity of reality’s confusing structures in a way analogously to the subsumptive violence in abstract thought which conceptualises the heterogeneous manifoldness of the existent and, by so doing, reduces it to something it is not.

M.S.

¹ One needs to express it – in Lacan’s terminology – as directly as possible: The real *is* reality!

² Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon. The logic of sensation*, trans. D.W. Smith, Continuum Press London and New York, 2002, p. 102

In a review of Michel Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* (1966), Gilles Deleuze, responding to the analytic of finitude elaborated in that book, brings a thinking into focus that "would of itself be in relation to the obscure." A thinking after the death of God, it investigates and traces the radical finitude of man to the bounds of his inexistence. This new thinking, which owes much to the "Nietzschean revolution," rives all humanisms that trust in a stable identity of homo humanus. It rives all those phantasms that promise the finite subject an infinite future and guarantee it an absolute origin. By beginning thinking from the "rift in man," by beginning to think that rift itself, it rives man as such, not in order to make him disappear without a trace but in order to define him as the vanishing trace of himself (of what he never really was). This rift "cannot be filled in, because it is the highest object of thought: the Human does not fill it in or glue it back together; the rift in humanity is the end of the Human or the origin of thought. A cogito for a self underneath ..." A thinking after the death of God must take its beginning from the impossibility of man, from an originally evacuated subject, a primordial splintered cogito, whose task will henceforth be to confront this void and fragmentation rather than strive for a substantial beginning and a reasoned finality. Let us recall the famous sentences Foucault wrote: "It is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man's disappearance. For this void does not create a deficiency; it does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think." It is clear—and Deleuze underscores—that this thinking that arises in the space of the void by seeking to leave God and the humanisms of the tradition with their compatible conceptions of the subject behind, begins to outline "a new image of thought": "a thinking that no longer opposes itself as from the outside to the unthinkable or the unthought, but which would lodge the unthinkable, the unthought within itself as thought, and which would be in an essential relationship to it." At issue, patently, is a thinking that conceives itself as a primordial being-open toward the unthinkable and unthought, a thinking that does not simply resist the void and its own limitations, instead understanding these limitations to be elemental and constitutive of itself. At issue is a thinking that is aware of its originary (or "archaic") ties to the unthought, which we may call the "unconscious" in order to associate it with "dim mechanisms" and "faceless determinations." "Man and the unthought," Foucault writes, "are, at the archaeological level, contemporaries." This is a thinking, obviously, that has broken free of the illusion of its own omnipotence—not in order to indulge in the phantasm of total impotence, the narcissism of impotence-worship, which is nothing but an indicator of luxurious self-victimization and intellectual laziness of the sort often manifest in the celebration of the celebrant's own weakness and vulnerability—but in order to confront both at once, the object-status of the subject as much as its subject-status, its capacity for receptivity as much as spontaneity, or to put it in Heideggerian terms: itself as geworfener Entwurf, thrown projection. The dimensions of a radical passivity and a hyperbolic activity intersect in the subject. The subject is the scene of this intersection. Translated into categories of ontotopology, this means that the subject is the place where the future intervenes in the past and the past determines the future. Intervention and determination are strictly compossible, however forcefully they seem to exclude each other. Foucault consigns thinking to its indeterminate future as much as its complex arché, "an unthought which [thinking] contains entirely." Let us quote the following important passage in full: "The unthought (whatever name we give it) is not lodged in man like a shrivelled-up nature or a stratified history; it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and at the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality. This obscure space so readily interpreted as an abyssal region in man's nature, or as a uniquely impregnable fortress in his history, is linked to him in an entirely different way; it is both exterior to him and indispensable to him: in one sense, the shadow cast by man as he emerged in the field of knowledge; in another, the blind stain by which it is possible to know him. In any case, the unthought has accompanied man, mutely and uninterruptedly, since the nineteenth century. Since it was really never more than an insistent double, it has never been the object of reflection in an autonomous way; it has received the complementary form and the inverted name of that for which it was the Other and the shadow: in Hegelian phenomenology, it was the An sich as opposed to the Für sich; for Schopenhauer it was the Unbewusste; for Marx it was alienated man; in Husserl's analyses it was the implicit, the inactual, the sedimented, the non-effected—in every case, the inexhaustible double that presents itself to reflection as the blurred projection of what man is in his truth, but that also plays the role of a preliminary ground upon which man must collect himself and recall himself in order to attain his truth." It is surprising that Foucault does not see this spectral man-beside-man emerge until the nineteenth century; as though thinking were not accompanied from the very outset by a phantom double, be it the Socratic daimon or, at all times during which thinking interprets itself as male, the figure of female assistance; not even to mention all the animals that haunt the subject in order to assure it of its animal origins, which, like all that is repressed, acquire the presence of a phantom. What is decisive is that within the subject or beside it, in extreme proximity to it, something non-subjective is lodged or abides, an element that is now blind and obtuse, now clairvoyant but forever lays claim to its presence. We might address it as the elemental itself, as chaos or wild nature, as a pre-subjective stratum of orderless materiality and Dionysian-archaic groundlessness that allows no thinking to come to rest, for it appeals to any thinking to be thought as long as the status of the unthought applies to it.

The subject circles its emptiness by spinning around. Theologically, this means that it is greeting an absent god. Going in circles means not getting anywhere. You move without making any progress. Following the circle proves to be a standstill. The subject finds itself in a motionless dynamic. We're accustomed to speaking of closing the circle. The end becomes a new beginning. The subject circles its emptiness by spinning around. Theologically, this means that it is greeting an absent god. Going in circles means not getting anywhere. You move without making any progress. Following the circle proves to be a standstill. The subject finds itself in a motionless dynamic. We're accustomed to speaking of closing the circle. The end becomes a new beginning.

The
subject has never been
anything but a specter. The rift that
divides it cuts through it from the very be-
ginning by making it teeter on the cutting edge
between presence and absence, infinity and fini-
tude, ideality and reality. That man disappears “like a
face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea” means that
this disappearance is the mode of his being, that he must
resign himself to being the index of his own inexistence; yet an
efficient inexistence, an agile and, if we may say so, an operative
absence. We might also say that the subject, though impossible (as
a full subject of consummate autonomy, self-transparency, etc.),
nonetheless asserts, as this impossibility, a certain subject-status. For
what is the subject if not the relation to its own impossibility? Within
the horizon of the analytic of finitude that supplants the “metaphysics of
the infinity,” Deleuze writes, man is “traversed by an essential disparity,
almost an alienation by rights, separated from itself by its words, by its
works, and by its desires.” It would be wrong to misconstrue this
alienation as coming upon man a posteriori. It is part of man or of the
subject as a sort of originary possession. The rift, the disparity, the
différance (the spatialization, the split, etc.) are elemental struc-
tural features of a subject that, instead of resting (and taking a
rest) on an eternal apriori that would serve it as the stage on
which to act the owner of its realities, represents the
placeholder for the inexistence of such an apriori, a
shaky entity not substantialized by any ontological
guarantee. We might also speak of an uncov-
ered credit, a credit to be redeemed by
the future, by its indeterminacy
and contingency.

The
thinking that is of itself
in relation to the obscure is the
thinking of such contingency. It owes its
agility and flexibility to the absence of sub-
stantial structures that would absolutely prefigure
its being in the sphere of objective finitude: in reality.
And yet this very sphere—the space of socially, economi-
cally, politically, culturally, historically, technologically, etc.
codified fact—burdens the subject that inhabits it with hete-
ro-affects that distinctly structure it. We ought not to regress to
the Rousseauism of a clean separation between an innocent nat-
ural state of the subject and its empirical alienation. The law of
alienation affects the subject from the very outset. There is no pure
subject, unconcerned by heteronomies: not outside the fantasies of
those beautiful souls who interpret any contact with reality as a
threat to their narcissistic integrity and must accordingly shun it at
any cost. The obscure to which any subject is related qua subject
marks the incommensurability of its world (of a world, however,
that is not its), the uncontrollability factor of the reality of fact.
Control and self-control are fundamental parameters of occi-
dental metaphysics. The aim was always to furnish the sub-
ject with instruments that were to help it minimize the
share the uncontrollable had in its existence and its
external realities, which is to say as much as, to
shrink the incommensurable down to commen-
surabilities in order to generate at least
the sentiment of improved protec-
tion against contingency
affects.

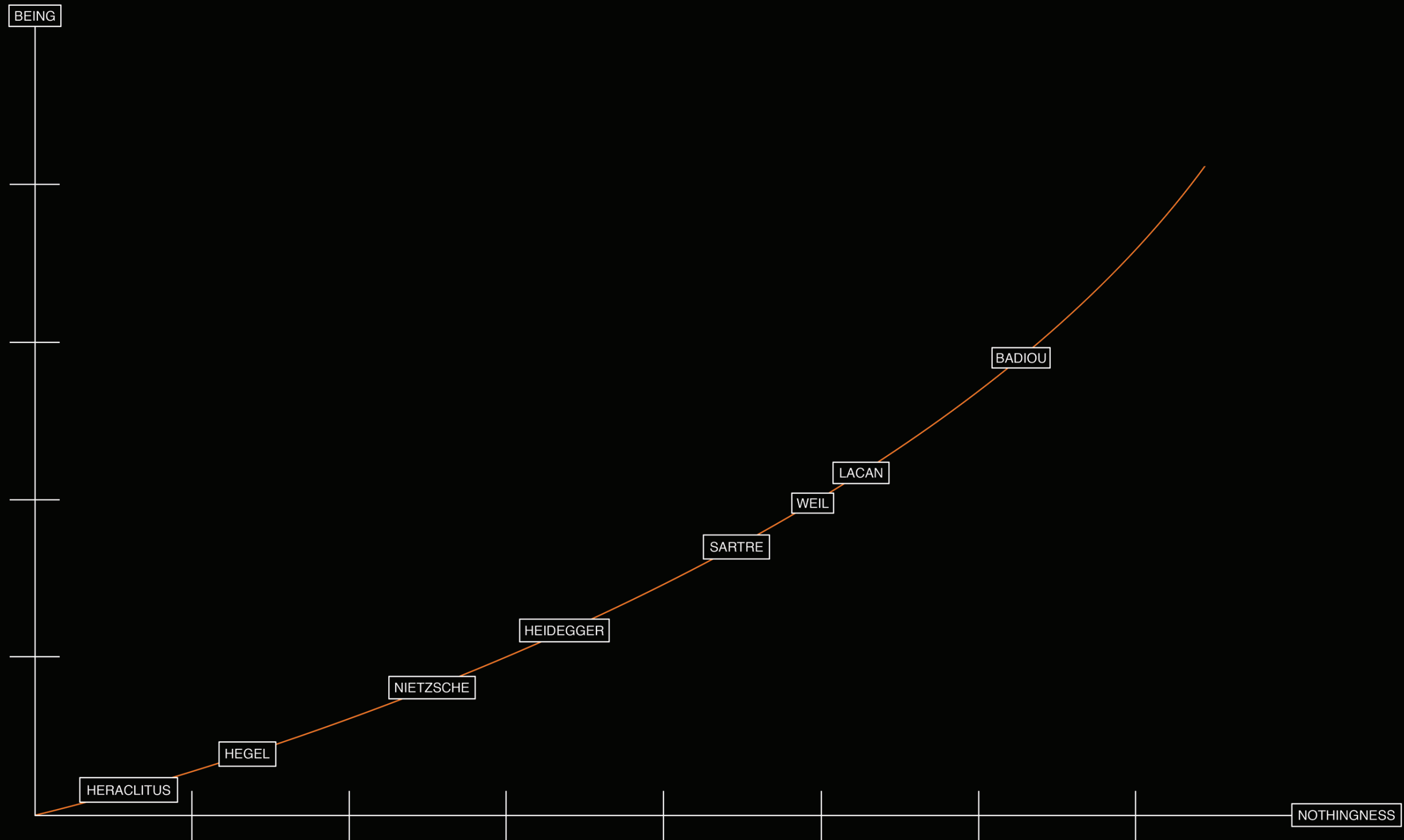
In the
bursting of soap bubbles,
our dreams burst, our hopes, il-
lusions—that is, our reality . It would
be naive to believe that our realities
aren't soap bubbles. They have the same
fragility and seductiveness. That doesn't
mean that they have no substance at all and
are nothing but chimeras. They're flying
spheres, floating clouds, evanescent worlds
like gliding orbs. Neither are they anchored to
solid ground, nor do they metamorphose
into some celestial substance. They're
clouds of insubstantiality, which know
only time and space, no earth and no
sky. They are dream entities that
emanate from our reason. But
it's the sort of reason that
can fly.

In
What Is Called Thinking?
(1951/52), Heidegger says of man
that he points into the withdrawal in that
what must be thought eludes him. That that is
so means that the event (Ereignis; the belonging-to-
gether of Being and beings, or of Beyng and beyngs)
shows itself at the current moment in the history of Being in
its withdrawal-form, as disown-event (Enteignis), and as we
know, Heidegger does not cease to insist that this is not a lamen-
table circumstance but historic necessity: "What must be thought
about, turns away from man. It withdraws from him. But how can we
have the least knowledge of something that withdraws from the be-
ginning, how can we even give it a name? Whatever withdraws refus-
es arrival. But—withdrawing is not nothing. Withdrawal is an event. In
fact, what withdraws may even concern and claim man more essentially
than anything present that strikes and touches him. Being struck by ac-
tuality is what we like to regard as constitutive of the actuality of the
actual. However, in being struck by what is actual, man may be de-
barred precisely from what concerns and touches him—touches him
in the surely mysterious way of escaping him by its withdrawal. The
event of withdrawal could be what is most present in all our pres-
ent, and so infinitely exceed the actuality of everything actual."
The "object" of thinking—the point toward which it remains di-
rected even if that point withdraws from it—veils itself in ob-
scurity. Once again it is necessary to insist that this ob-
scurity is not simply the darkness of obscurantism.
By no means does it equal the diffuseness that
esoteric non-thinking conjures. It is what is
most concrete; it is utterly present,
presence par excellence.

We
can speak of a subject
once the willingness appears
to substitute for the esotericism of
the quest of self-discovery a self-inven-
tion; that is to say, once a little of the courage
to address oneself as something other than an
object comes into play. With the death of God, the
subject loses orientation yet at once also gains new
leeway, understanding itself as a player-subject whose
future is more contingent and hence more unpredict-
able. It opens up to happenstance and indeterminacy. It
gains access to its realities as products of universal in-
definiteness. The indefinite is what is not limited without
therefore being eternal in the theological sense of that
word. That is the concept of infinity in the horizon of
the discovery of finite subjectivity: that nothing seems
absolutely determined. There is nothing that might
not also be different. Once again it is the relation
to the obscure and unthought that, raising the
question of contingency, calls on us to
define it. Reason itself is obscure;
the subject reaches into the
dimension of subject-
enclosure.

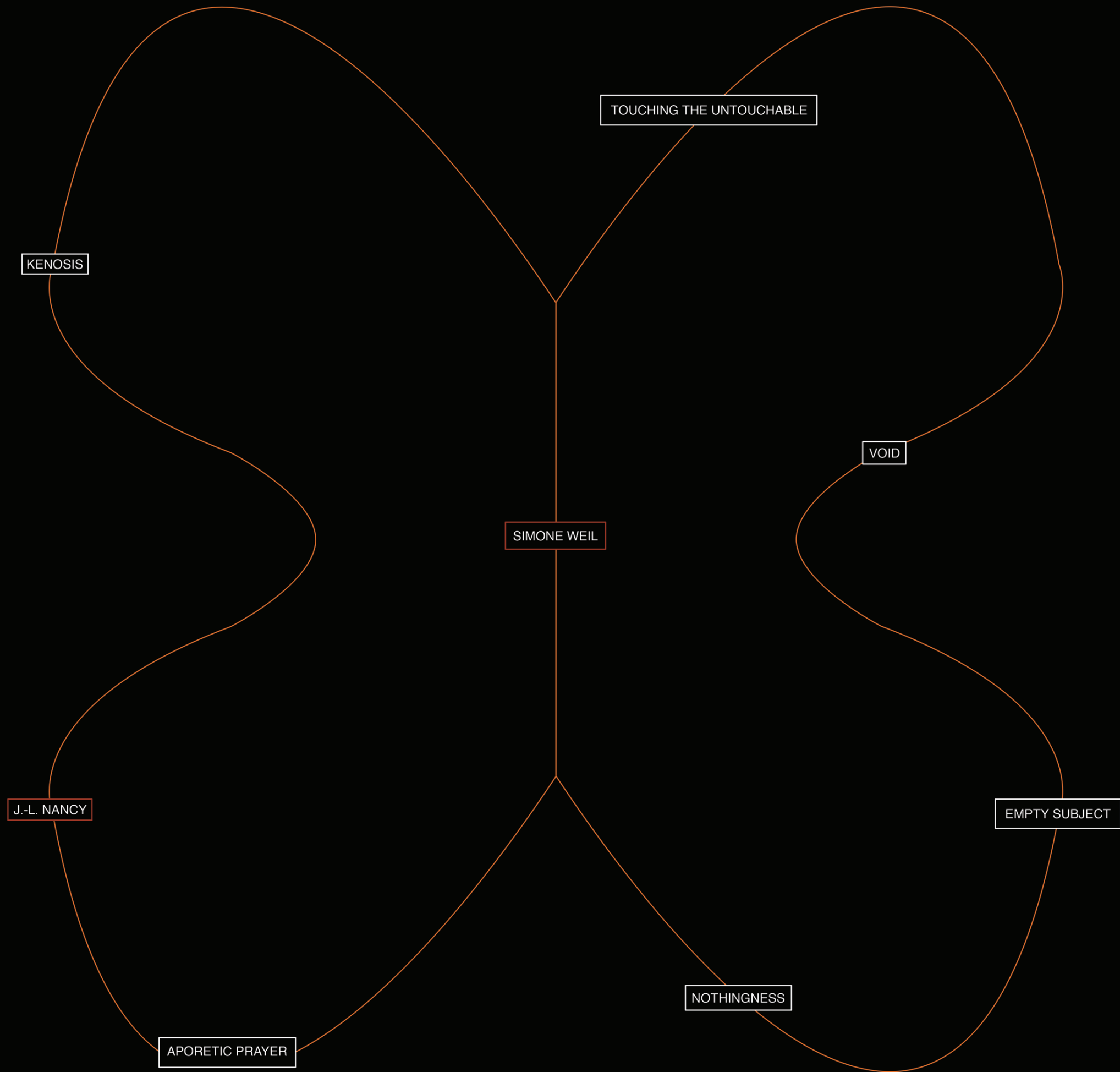
The
dead God is the
only God with whom
the modern subject can
live. It is once God has died
(or seems to have died) that he
becomes relevant to man. The
inexistence of God is the condi-
tion of the possibility of the sub-
ject. Because this is a subject
without God, it is a subject
without substance and
without essence, a sub-
ject without sub-
jectivi-

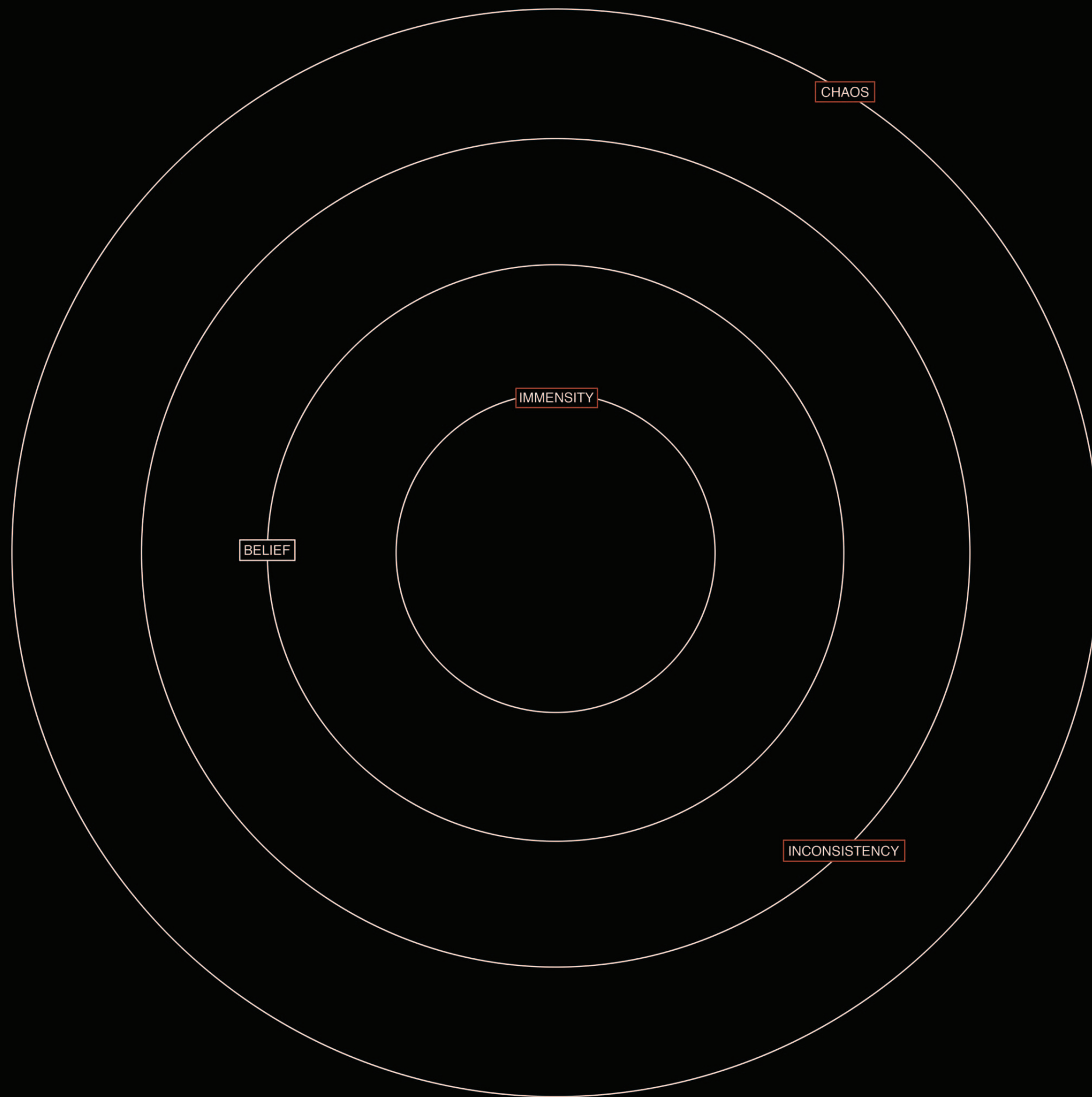
The
death of God punches
holes into the notion of an abso-
lute programmer. It punches holes into
the notion of the existence of an ontological
program. There is no program. There is no one
who has a plan; there is no one who knows. No one
vouches for the meaning of the subject and its reality; or
to put it in a variation on Sartre's words, everyone has noth-
ing but his own plan and his doubts about its correctness.
Much as Sartre is to be blamed for not having gone beyond the
framework of the phenomenology of self-consciousness, instead
trusting in a conception of the subject that, by evoking the image of
a more or less undisturbed self-address in freedom, is guilty of mis-
apprehending the efficiency of that anonymous texture, that struc-
tural fabric we call the space of fact, his insistence on a certain irre-
ducibility of the concept of the subject and its freedom remains im-
portant, at least unless we wish to switch directly from the narcis-
sistic egocentrism of idealist provenance to the narcissism of total
self-objectivation, or mauvaise foi. As always in thinking, the goal
must be to complicate the binary logic. At issue is neither a
conception of (structuralist) subjectivity without subject vs. a
subject without subjectivity, nor vice versa. Rather, the
challenge is to affirm the compossibility of the subject
without subjectivity with a subjectivity without sub-
ject. The subject in the horizon of God's inexis-
tence is not the owner of itself; therefore
does it constitute itself as an inventor
in the labyrinthine terrain that
remains its life.



The reality of the real is not itself real, just as the visibility of the visible is not visible. That is the great theme of the Platonic *idea tou agathou*, the idea of the good or the highest idea, of which the *Politeia* says that it is located beyond being, *epekeina tes ousias*. Thinking remains directed toward this beyond, but in such a way as to acknowledge its non-integral immanence, its status as immanent transcendence. The concept of such an implicit real that indicates the bound of the field of immanence (of reality) represents the culmination of what we can call the Platonic Lacanianism of Alain Badiou. Badiou, as he is wont to, bases his argument on mathematics: “The most banal example is that the series that makes a finite whole number is not a finite whole number; indeed, it is an entity that is truly inaccessible. The immanent principle of that which is repeated or succeeded is neither repeated nor succeeded.” Is Heidegger saying anything else when he incessantly repeats that Being cannot itself be a being? Is not Heidegger’s Being in precisely this sense beyond being (beyond “metaphysical” being)? Does not therein lie the meaning of the ontological difference, in the distinction between transcendent Being and immanent being, between the Real and reality? Everything, no doubt, revolves around the question of how these two dimensions are connected (their separation is phantasmatic!). It is, “as always” when thinking touches upon the utmost, “about immanence and transcendence,” about their compossibility or, as Nancy writes, about the “‘outside the world’ in the very midst of the world,” a “transcendence of immanence.” Perhaps we should speak not of a transcendence of immanence but rather of a transcendence in immanence. Everything would henceforth depend on defining this in, which—in analogy to the analyses in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* that distinguish the being-in of being from mere insideness (the way, for instance, the water is inside the glass)—evokes a fundamental ontological trait of reality (of the world as immanence-space): that it is real in the Lacanian sense, i.e., ontologically inconsistent!

The absence as absence does not exist.





2: For the Love of Philosophy 4 (Detail)
3: For the Love of Philosophy 13 (Detail)
4/5: For the Love of Philosophy 5
6/7: For the Love of Philosophy 7
8/9: For the Love of Philosophy 16
10: For the Love of Philosophy 8 (Detail)
11: For the Love of Philosophy 10 (Detail)
12/13: For the Love of Philosophy 17
14/15: For the Love of Philosophy 9
16/17: For the Love of Philosophy 11
18/19: For the Love of Philosophy 12
20/21: For the Love of Philosophy 14
22/23: For the Love of Philosophy 15
Umschlag / Cover: For the Love of Philosophy 6 (Detail)

2017
Digialdruck auf Leinwand / digital print on canvas
42 x 59,4 cm

The
world—if we set it
aside as a world of fact, a ho-
mogeneous sphere of objective con-
sistencies—resembles a “projection with-
out project,” as Nancy has put it in a neat for-
mula: “fallen from a black exhalation of sudden
energy, elemental wave, flickering of photons amid
the density of a void cast into the abyss, turned into
itself, dark and resounding cistern: pure being-out-
side-of-itself, crashing expansion far and wide, rift of
the quarks, drawn-out metrical scansion, projection
without project [jet sans projet], all-around projection,
creation of eruptions, tossing motion.” Projection with-
out project and pure being-outside-of-itself, riven and
endless text composed of innumerable blind and
mute ciphers: that is the place where we are. It is
here that every subject breathes, here that it lives
and dies: in this ocean of inhuman matter. That
God is dead means that the subject has no
other choice but to make itself at home in
this acosmic disaster, to confront in it
the truth of its consistencies
and of itself.

**Texts to the World –
as it is and as it should be**

issue no. 26

You can't buy Texts to the World –
you can only get them as a present

publisher:
Sammlung Haus N, Kiel, Germany
www.sammlung-haus-n.de
info@sammlung-haus-n.de
in cooperation with BQ, Berlin
© idea and concept: Sammlung Haus N
© text and diagrams: Marcus Steinweg

**Texte zur Welt –
wie sie ist und wie sie sein sollte**

Heft 26

Texte zur Welt kann man nicht kaufen –
man bekommt sie geschenkt

Herausgeber:
Sammlung Haus N, Kiel
www.sammlung-haus-n.de
info@sammlung-haus-n.de
In Zusammenarbeit mit BQ, Berlin
© Idee und Konzept: Sammlung Haus N
© Text und Diagramme: Marcus Steinweg